

**Advice on the  
Draft European Spatial Development  
Perspective**

English translation  
March 1998



# Foreword

In contrast to many environmental advisory councils in other European countries, the Netherlands' Council for Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment (VROM-council) focuses on all policy directed at the living environment. In its standpoints it not only tries to anticipate the drawbacks of policy in one domain on both others, but it seeks to develop strategies for long term policy from perspectives that do not respect the traditional divisions between policy fields.

The Ministers for Spatial Planning and the Commissioner for Regional and Cohesive Policy decided to initiate a discussion on the draft European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) both in the respective member states and on the European level. The goal of this discussion is to find out:

- how the ESDP policy targets and options relate to existing policy,
- how coherence and coordination between sectoral policies having spatial impacts can be improved through the spatial perspective suggested in the ESDP,
- if new policy options need to be developed or if existing options can be adapted.

The Netherlands' Minister for Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment requested for advice by the VROM-council as a preparation for the discussion on the ESDP in the Netherlands.

The VROM-council is proud to contribute to this discussion through this advice. The VROM-council gratefully made use of some suggestions by the Council for the Rural Area in drawing up this advice.

This advice has been offered to all relevant Netherlands' ministers, the Commissioner for Regional and Cohesive Policy, Mrs. M. Wulf-Mathies, and the chair of the commission on Spatial Planning, Environment and Energy of the Committee of the Regions, Mr. A.Ph. Hertog.

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# Summary

The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) merits acceptance, support and further development.

Government policy in the Netherlands, whether at central, provincial or municipal level, has for many decades, and possibly throughout the century, been very attentive to the spatial dimension of policy measures. Not only is spatial planning a fully-fledged policy area in its own right, complete with instruments such as regional structure plans, land-use plans and national policy documents, but in various other policy areas (agriculture, infrastructure etc.) the spatial planning implications of the policies are also addressed. There is a conviction in the Netherlands that careful thought for spatial design not only enhances “beauty as an autonomous value”, but also living standards and well-being. Nowadays the benefit of such policy is often stated as enhancing the quality of the living environment to improve economic competitiveness, social cohesion, ecological sustainability and cultural identity. Now that the living environment is becoming increasingly a European one, it is important that there should be more focus on the spatial dimension at the European level. The draft ESDP is in this sense a significant step forwards.

The publication of a draft ESDP is a major achievement in policy terms, particularly given the prevailing European climate which allows little latitude for new initiatives regulating Europe.

The European Spatial Development Perspective (expressly not a plan) is now in the first phase of the policy cycle, that of research and exploration. There is as yet no question of its formulating a European ‘facet’ policy; and such a policy does not exist in some European countries. The emphasis will for the moment be on the further bottom-up development of a coherent spatial policy and on accounting for the spatial consequences of European sectoral policy.

The ESDP will have to be implemented cautiously; a policy which overreaches itself could easily be counterproductive at this stage and bring the gradual development of European spatial policy to a halt. There is no point in trying to incorporate spatial planning into the Treaty of Amsterdam within the near future. In due course the ESDP will be a factor helping to determine how the European Structural Funds are allocated, but this will, for the same reasons, not be explicit. In implementing the ESDP for the moment limited objectives should be set corresponding to European policies already accorded clear priority, and only mild instruments should be deployed. A careful assessment should also be made well in advance as to the presidency under which the ESDP has the best prospects of moving forward, and the process planned accordingly.

Generally speaking, the ESDP does not contain specific proposals which will

necessarily disadvantage Dutch spatial planning or other sectoral policies. The Council does however point to a certain economic bias in the ESDP, and to the undesirable possibility that an unbalanced European sectoral policy could thwart careful Dutch efforts to shape our own space.

While the focus is still on research and exploration, the Council makes some suggestions for enhancing and extending it; at present there is, in its opinion, too much emphasis on simply extrapolating trends. By extending and developing cartographic images, a contribution can be made to the eventual creation of images of European structures.

More specific observations of the Council are set forth below.

An active international cooperation is vital if the Netherlands is to achieve its planning goals. This can best be done selectively and on a small-scale in thematic, cross-frontier, bilateral or transnational, problem-oriented cooperative ventures.

There is great diversity in Europe, and preserving this will actually benefit European cooperation. The spatial development of Europe must be such as to ensure equivalent economic opportunities for all the various regions while maintaining diversity.

The desirability of improving the spatial coordination of European sectoral policy is self-evident. Such improvement must begin at home, however. The key government departments concerned with land-use planning must enable the minister and unit responsible for spatial planning to discharge this coordinating function also on the European stage.

It will have to be made clear in the future how spatial developments can further the cause of sustainable development, one of the basic objectives of the ESDP. The Council regards the concept of sustainable development as applying at all geographical levels. The sustainable quality of the living environment is one aspect of sustainable development. The regional level is an appropriate level to develop this notion of quality.

A more integrated cooperation should also be instituted on spatial issues for the large international rivers on a river basin basis.

The relationship between urban and rural areas is becoming increasingly important. The focus of the European funds needs to be shifted from agriculture and the countryside to the urban regions, and particularly the weak spots in these regions. Those European regions need to be strengthened which can contribute to the economic strength of Europe in the global marketplace.

The forthcoming reform of the common agricultural policy will have a major spatial impact, and will have to leave space for strategic choices by national and regional government about their rural territory. More attention is needed for the ecological, social and cultural features of the countryside. Economic diversification is desirable.

It is important that the Netherlands should continue to do what it is good at:

efficient commercial transportation which is also environmentally efficient, subject however to the caveats: that the notion of sustainable development be brought to bear on transport policy, particularly in relation to freight transport, and that there is an also spatially and environmentally rational allocation of functions between the 'mainports' of Rotterdam and Schiphol airport and other sea and airports in North-Western Europe. This will involve cooperation between the member states, regional and local authorities and the industry involved with these mainports.

The concept of corridors needs to be one of the central themes of the ESDP. Furthermore, the ESDP needs to devote more attention to technological innovation.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Request for advice

In a letter dated 26 June 1997 the Minister of VROM<sup>1</sup> requested an advice from the Council for Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (the Council) on the first draft of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP). This first draft ESDP was accepted by the ministers responsible for spatial planning in member states and by the Commissioner for regional and cohesion policy. In this request the Minister describes the nature of the ESDP and indicates that the draft ESDP will be the subject of a broad political and administrative debate. She regards an independent and strategic advice by the Council as being a first result of this broad debate in the Netherlands. Two central questions are identified in the request for advice:

1. To what extent will the policy elements contained in the ESDP help the Netherlands to develop optimally in the European perspective, with particular regard to:
  - the ability of Dutch regions and cities to compete;
  - the concern of the Netherlands, as a small, densely populated country, to pursue sustainable development and environmental management;
  - Dutch transport and distribution interests;
  - Dutch concerns for the future of agriculture and the quality of the countryside?
2. How can the development of a more integrated approach to regional planning issues, particularly at the transnational level, serve Dutch interests?

## 1.2 Procedure followed

As is customary, the advice was prepared by a Council working party. In addition, the Council in this case sought the cooperation of a number of other advisory councils, organised a round table discussion with a number of external experts (see Annex 1), and had meetings with several members of the European Parliament and a representative of the European Commission. The Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management and the Council for Culture stated that that they would not be able, in the short timescale available, to produce a well-considered contribution. The Council for the Rural Area, on the other hand, was able to do so.

The Council would like to thank all those contributing to this advice for the material contributions they made, and grateful use has been made of their input to this advice, for the content of which the Council nonetheless takes full responsibility.

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<sup>1</sup> Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment

### **1.3 Structure of this advice**

After this short introduction in section 1 the Council makes, in section 2, a number of general observations about the draft ESDP before proceeding to the questions posed by the Minister. The Council also considers in this section the further development of the ESDP and of international spatial policy, partly in response to the Minister's second central question. Section 3 then examines a number of topics requiring attention, i.e. sustainable development and environmental management, regions and cities, rural areas, distribution and transport, corridors and technological innovation, thereby also dealing with the various elements of the Minister's first central question.

## 2 General observations

The Council would like to state at the outset that the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) merits acceptance, support and further development.

Government policy in the Netherlands, whether at central, provincial or municipal level, has for many decades and possibly throughout the century, been very attentive to the spatial dimension of policy measures. Not only is spatial planning a fully-fledged policy area in its own right, complete with instruments such as regional structure plans, land-use plans and national policy documents, but in various other policy areas (agriculture, infrastructure etc.) the spatial planning implications of the policies are also addressed. There is a conviction in the Netherlands that careful thought for spatial design not only enhances “beauty as self-interest”, but also living standards and well-being. Nowadays the benefit of such policy is often stated as enhancing the quality of the living environment to improve economic competitiveness, social cohesion, ecological sustainability and cultural identity. Now that the living environment is becoming increasingly a European one, it is important that there should be more focus on the spatial dimension at the European level. The draft ESDP is in this sense a significant step forwards.

### 2.1 Status and significance of the draft ESDP

The request for advice contains the following: “The ESDP is non-binding and the policy elements it proposes are directed mainly towards influencing existing policy-making frameworks at not only the European, but also the trans-national, national and regional levels. The document furnishes new insights, from the spatial angle, into how these policy frameworks can be made more effective and spatial coordination can be promoted, and advances new ideas for a more multisectoral and integrated approach to European policy-making. This against the background of achieving consistency between policies directed towards cohesion, sustainability, competitiveness and increasing inter-dependence within Europe as a result of, in particular, economic and monetary union. This ESDP is not intended to create new powers for the Union at community level.”

This means that the ESDP is accorded quite a low status in European relations, and that its influence will be mainly informal. The major differences between member states as to the sophistication of their land-use planning policy and the institutional and legislative forms which embody it make it impossible for Brussels to formulate general policy recommendations which impose obligations on member states. What is possible, however, is for Brussels to provide overall guidelines - the ESDP might be an example - for action by member states, depending on circumstances, taking account of their own specific possibilities and problems. Member states might be induced to make casual inter-country policy comparisons, in turn resulting in gradual modifications to their

institutions and instruments. *De facto* 'bottom-up' modifications can occur through horizontal harmonisation by which countries adopt, and modify to allow for local conditions, solutions developed elsewhere.

Transnational and regional cross-frontier cooperation and policy initiatives with spatial implications are likely in the long run to produce some harmonisation within the EU, though with variations reflecting national specificities. This bottom-up approach is preferable to top-down attempts to impose harmonisation. It is in practice neither possible nor desirable to standardise the regulations and planning systems. Planning systems are closely related to the political structure (*vide* the federal structure of Germany) and of the division of powers between the different government levels (*vide* the differences between France and the Netherlands). Rigorous standardisation would also jeopardise the distinctiveness of member states, and could lead to a backlash in some countries (how, for example, would the Mediterranean member states react?).

The Council considers it has been a major achievement for the ministers responsible for spatial planning in member states and the Commissioner responsible for regional and cohesion policy to have accepted this first draft ESDP and to have it discussed widely in political and administrative circles in the various member states and at the European level<sup>2</sup>. The Council considers the ESDP to be a significant development, and broadly endorses its long-term intentions. The Council accepts an ESDP for the moment modest and vulnerable in its conception, but which could ultimately advance, by small steps, to a much more important status. Undue haste in institutionalising this process is unlikely to be very productive. If the matter is tackled on a step-by-step basis the common interests of these developments for member states will gradually become apparent. The Council urges that the appropriate lesson be drawn from the indifferent experiences with the (first) Benelux Structural Outline<sup>3</sup>.

Despite the improvements needed (see section 2.4), the draft ESDP already provides clues as to the broad aspirations of its drafters. The Council broadly endorses these aspirations, even though these probably cannot be fully achieved for the moment. For the time being, the activity and the process are more important than the direct result

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<sup>2</sup> The absence of hard commitment in the ESDP may of course have made it easier to get the draft accepted.

<sup>3</sup> The first Benelux Structural Outline was effectively stillborn. Serious attempts were made in the Second Benelux Structural Outline to formulate common policy. "For this very reason, this Outline was greeted by the parties concerned with scepticism. There is little sense (left) of a unified Benelux identity, and those involved focused on those proposals in the draft Outline which harmed their interests." M.J. Barendrecht and W. Zonneveld in *'Van Delta naar Europees Achterland'*, NIROV, The Hague 1997.

This process will in fact partly depend on developments which in political terms transcend European spatial planning, such as the expansion of the EU to incorporate the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, making the EU more effectual, and accomplishing economic and monetary union. The Council is not in a position to pronounce on these general developments, but it does indicate what their structural influence will be<sup>4</sup>.

The Council considers international cooperation crucial to the realisation of the spatial objectives of the Netherlands. The construction of good connections with the hinterland is the most obvious example. The interdependence of EU countries is growing. Furthermore, cooperation can increase efficiency and can for example prevent large and unprofitable investments being made, in accordance with the dictum 'think globally, act locally'. Not every issue with supranational aspects or a coordination problem requires the involvement of the European Union. Much can be resolved directly between the states concerned or by cross-border cooperation. This cooperation should, for a range of reasons, be pursued far more than at present.

Given the vulnerability of the ESDP, however, it is not advisable, with some exceptions, to attempt at present to incorporate into the ESDP a whole raft of provisions regarding the coordination of and cooperation on planning issues needed at the European, transnational and cross-border levels, even if that were regarded as desirable. Opportunities in other areas and running in parallel with or even anticipating the ESDP must be grasped, and many other spatially relevant activities pursued. This applies, for example, to the Structural Funds, and to urban development policy and policy for the countryside (preferably in relation to one another). Such actions can actually be more important in the short term, because they can lead to real decisions being taken. The spatial component of these decisions, while being mindful of the ESDP, will generally not derive directly from or be on account of it. These actions may of course eventually have an impact on the ESDP.

In the Council's view this way of thinking is appropriate for the EU Structural Funds, for example. In the long run it is desirable that the ESDP should influence the detailed structural fund policy because this policy is very relevant in planning terms. In the short to medium term such an influence is impossible, however. This policy is one of the key political issues in the enlargement of the EU, and has therefore long been of considerably greater political importance than policy related to the ESDP. Furthermore the Mediterranean countries see the ESDP as threatening the structural fund policy, which is

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<sup>4</sup> The Central Planning Bureau highlighted this possible influence in its 1997 Long Term Forecasts in which there are major differences between the three scenarios for 2020: 'Divided Europe', 'Global Competition' and 'European Coordination'.

why in Noordwijk they stressed that the ESDP must be a non-binding reference document, without implications for the allocation of funding stemming from community policy such as that on Structural Funds.

The importance of the Structural Funds for spatial policy is obvious. For the moment, however, the ESDP does not form a feasible vehicle for spatially improving the distribution of these funds for the period 2000 - 2006. The relevant Dutch ministries must therefore act now, separately from the ESDP, to bring about such an improvement. Should that no longer be possible, then they will have to be very careful when in due course they come to elaborate the Structural Fund policy for the period after 2006. They may be able to draw inspiration from the ESDP at that time.

Following on from the above, the Council recommends that no efforts be made in the short term to incorporate spatial planning into the Treaty of Amsterdam. The position of spatial planning in the context of Europe has not yet crystallised out. It is at present too early to embark on a discussion about the inclusion of spatial planning in the Treaty while the value added of spatial planning at the 'Brussels' level is still unclear. It would be more sensible to begin by gradually developing ideas about what such policy would comprise before regulating powers<sup>5</sup>. The Council shares the fear<sup>6</sup> that there is more to be lost than to be gained from formalisation.

The German Council for Spatial Planning adopts a completely different tack<sup>7</sup>. It argues for the relevant powers of the European Commission to be incorporated in the Treaty specifically to ensure they remain limited. This would pre-empt moves by the Commission to develop an, in the eyes of the German Council, over-strong spatial policy of its own, to the detriment of the powers of member states and regional authorities. This attitude can be explained in terms of the federal structure of Germany, with the *Länder* having extensive responsibilities for spatial planning.

The Council does not rule out in the long term the approach of the German Council in some form or other if the above-mentioned arguments against formalisation no longer hold. For the moment, however, a debate about formalisation seems counter-

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<sup>5</sup> Advice on European Spatial Planning. Council for Spatial Planning, 15 March 1995.

<sup>6</sup> See Kroesse-Duijsters J.A.M. in *'Van Delta naar Europees Achterland'*, NIROV, The Hague, 1997. She fears that a formalisation would mean excessive interference by the European Commission and would run counter to the subsidiarity principle. She also points out that many countries would not countenance formal powers for Brussels because this would be regarded as infringing national sovereignty or would create fears of the diversion of subsidies under the Structural funds. These countries might drag their feet in any attempt to develop spatial planning at the European level.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted by Professor A. Faludi in *'Van Delta naar Europees Achterland'*, NIROV, The Hague, 1997.

productive, particularly since a better spatial coordination of EU policies is likely without such formalisation. The Council therefore notes with approval the formation of an ‘Interservice Group’ within the organisational apparatus of the European Commission. This will in itself actually lead to a very gradual *de facto* formalisation.

## 2.2 Diversity and the subsidiarity principle

Ubiquitous internationalisation does not mean that a complete standardisation is occurring within the European Union. Considerable diversity both within and between EU countries is to be found across a range of areas, and certainly in that of land-use. This diversity is primarily due to the major geographical, cultural and economic differences in their historical origins. The Council considers this diversity one of the strengths of Europe, and therefore worth preserving and even strengthening. Spatial policy at the various levels of government, and certainly therefore also at the European level, has a particular task to continue to reassert and strengthen identity and authenticity. Area-specific policy appears to be the way of achieving this.

The desire to preserve and strengthen diversity also applies to competition between Europe and the rest of the world. Europe should not sacrifice its values, such as equal opportunities or the quality of the living environment, in competing in the global marketplace.

The Council sees as one of the merits of the subsidiarity principle that it favours diversity. The principle does justice to one of Europe’s most characteristic features and strengths, i.e. the heterogeneity of its cultures and landscapes. The principle means that:

- decisions should be taken at the appropriate geographical level, i.e. at that of the Union, the national states or regional or local government;
- not only national but also regional and local governments should be given a say in the exercise of spatially relevant powers within the Union<sup>8</sup>.

The Council understands that there is not always agreement on the application of the subsidiarity principle. Moreover, relations between the Union, member states and regional and local government are becoming increasingly complex, with the result that the principle is losing applicability, and is sometimes replaced by the complementarity principle.

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<sup>8</sup> Advice on European Spatial Planning. Council for Spatial Planning, 15 March 1995.

### 2.3 Dutch interests and European solidarity

The Minister's request for advice is predicated on an optimum development of the Netherlands in the European perspective and of Dutch interests. These interests are legitimate, and form a good criterion on which to assess the ESDP, but they are subject to different interpretations: for example short-term self-interest in a restrictive sense or based on a longer-term, broader view. Assessments based on short-term self-interest is the everyday reality in all aspects of the European Union's activities, and is a cause of much stagnation. The Council notes that self-interest of this kind, or the interests of other countries, do not play an explicit role in the draft ESDP. In view of the sensitivity of the subject matter, this is just as well. The various Dutch interests named in the request for advice are examined in more concrete terms in section 3.

The Council suggests that Dutch short-term interests should not be the only criterion adopted, and advocates a broader, long-term view. The Netherlands is strongly dependent on European cooperation and the satisfactory development of Europe as a whole for the realisation of its social, economic and cultural potential. The European interest therefore includes a clear element of self-interest. The Council does not regard the European mission as being a quest for standardisation, which would jeopardise diversity. It prefers to see this mission as one of making the regions stronger and more self-reliant and ensuring equivalent economic opportunities, implying a certain solidarity with weaker countries and regions in Europe. This underscores the basic objectives of the ESDP, which were agreed when work started on it in Leipzig<sup>9</sup>:

- economic and social cohesion;
- sustainable development;
- balanced competitiveness of the European territory.

In the Council's view, however, the ESDP draft does not fairly reflect these objectives. The ESDP in fact devotes disproportionate attention to economic cohesion - for which read: closing economic gaps - and too little attention to the other two objectives. As a result the orientation is too economic at the expense of social, cultural and landscape/ecological considerations. Although the draft ESDP does consider issues of cultural heritage, urban and spatial planning are also a cultural activity: space as a physical reality with which people identify (the French *'aménagement du territoire'*).

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<sup>9</sup> Informal meeting of ministers responsible for spatial planning, 1994.

## 2.4 The functions of the ESDP

### 2.4.1 Four functions

The ESDP will ultimately have four main functions:

1. to provide an analysis of international developments and of European policy which are important for national spatial developments;
2. to further exchange of knowledge on how common problems, such as those of inner cities, can be approached;
3. to offer a spatial framework for the establishment of European sectoral policy;
4. to offer a spatial framework for cooperation with European countries not (or not yet) a member of the Union.

In this phase of the still informal development of a European spatial policy, the main focus should, in the Council's view, be on exploration and research, i.e. on functions 1 and 2 above. By degrees, this exploration and study can where appropriate be translated into policy. For the time being, however, this would be limited to selected topics only, mild instruments and a focus on European policy issues which already enjoy priority. It would be counterproductive for European spatial policy to try to overreach itself.

In order that it can best fulfil these functions the Council recommends that the ESDP be adapted to the structure and coordination of European institutions and not, for example, to the sector-facet structure developed in the Netherlands. This will for a start make it more effective in influencing existing Community policy frameworks. It should strive for a multisectoral approach which produces win-win situations.

### 2.4.2 More and better analysis

The quality of the analyses in the draft ESDP, particularly in Part II - Spatial issues: the European dimension, should be improved. This would also serve Dutch interests, since the ESDP, with its underlying studies, should help to provide a clear perspective on Dutch problems and opportunities in Europe. Themes must be chosen which are future-oriented and which are given priority in the analysis (see also section 3 of this advice). The analysis needs also to give more consideration to countries outside the EU, particularly those countries which may accede in the shorter or longer term to the EU, but also the Maghreb<sup>10</sup> countries, in part because of important links of present member states with these countries.

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<sup>10</sup> The North African countries, specifically Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.

Part II deals at present with issues which have been around a long time and which national policy often considers itself to have gone some way towards solving. Those countries with the most developed spatial planning systems appear to have made the strongest marks on the ESDP draft; it looks as though it drew considerable inspiration from the Dutch 'VINEX' (Supplement to the Fourth Policy Document on Spatial Planning). This means that the ESDP has only limited value as an information source for our national policy.

The primary value of the analyses must be in highlighting spatially relevant developments at the international, including the European and global, level in the medium and long term. At the global level, for example, policy competition between the US, Europe and South-East Asia influences the siting of the decision-making centres of companies. The analyses must be made considerably more future-oriented, involving more than simply extrapolating trends. This is in fact recognised in section II.E, which raises several interesting topics and recommends the development of typologies of areas. The European Spatial Planning Observatory Network, ESPON, could be useful in this regard, and should be set up promptly.

For many years, the spatial development of EU countries, and certainly of the Netherlands, has been strongly influenced by the formation of the European Communities and later the European Union. This influence will continue for many more years, even if there is no further broadening or deepening of European cooperation. The single European market and the wholesale dismantling of internal barriers to the free flow of people, goods and capital have provided a major impulse, the effects of which are still making themselves felt. More and more companies are being exposed to competition within Europe. The disappearance of internal frontiers in Europe allows large companies to operate more effectively. It is to be expected that increasing numbers of EU citizens will move to other member states, attracted by job opportunities and the quality of life or culture. There may be large-scale flows of people seeking the sun, the mountains or cultural cities. Internationalisation is a phenomenon which is not confined to the infrastructure and the economy, but which also touches the day-to-day living environment. The latter is becoming a facet of the competition in a Europe in which frontiers are becoming irrelevant. If people are not satisfied with living and working conditions in the Netherlands they can seek their fancy in other member countries. The Council does expect, however, that North-Western Europe will for the moment remain a strong pole of attraction because of, amongst other reasons, its high degree of economic development.

But 'Europe' is making itself felt in quite different areas from those of the economy and migration. One example is in relation to gender issues, where judgements

made by the European Court of Human Rights have had a major impact. These for the moment virtually autonomous socio-economic and cultural trends are likely to sustain their momentum for a long time to come as a result of the implementation of European regulations and further judgements of the Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights.

The physical development of the Netherlands and spatial processes and patterns such as the locational and transportational behaviour of individuals and businesses are being increasingly influenced by the European Union, and Dutch planners within the different government echelons will have to take account of this fact. This has little to do with explicit European spatial policy but rather with the influence, direct and indirect<sup>11</sup>, of spatially relevant European policies: competition policy<sup>12</sup>, agricultural policy, environmental policy, fiscal policy<sup>13</sup>, etc.

It is difficult to predict how the influence of these policies will develop in the future. It is not inconceivable, for example, that restrictions will be imposed by competition policy on public (mega-)investment projects which would benefit a particular sector (e.g. the construction of a second Maasvlakte harbor or certain measures in support of the countryside), because they could be seen as distorting competition. The same competition policy could also circumscribe the extent to which spatial planning is used to regulate company siting decisions.

European regulation will increasingly act as a constraint on spatial policy. This will mean that it is often impossible to implement a desired national spatial policy without international cooperation. Under these circumstances, national policy 'will not work', and it will be necessary to cooperate at the European, or at least with neighbouring countries at the transnational, interregional or transfrontier level. Analyses will also have to be made at these levels within the ESDP or elsewhere.

### 2.4.3 Exchange of knowledge

The Council recommends that the exchange of knowledge should focus particularly on the issues which are stretching national policy at present, for example in the 'Survey of Spatial Perspectives', and not only those problems which came up in the VINEX.

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<sup>11</sup> For example through market requirements influenced by internationalisation.

<sup>12</sup> The single market requires the harmonisation of locational conditions for economic activities, equal environmental standards in all member states, the standardisation of infrastructure and communications networks and the access to these networks, etc.

<sup>13</sup> Through the regime applying to resident companies and citizens. Some Dutch nationals, for example, go and live just over the Belgian frontier for tax reasons. The trend to be seen towards harmonisation will considerably curtail such practices.

Part III of the draft ESDP contains a number of policy options. An improved analysis in Part II will undoubtedly also have an effect on Part III. In the Council's view, Part III should be made more convincing by including concrete examples of spatial co-operation and multisectoral win-win situations, with the intended results. At present the benefits of spatial cooperation are more often asserted than demonstrated. Proposals for making Europe more competitive against other continents would also strengthen Part III.

The Council regards the interchange of experiences between the various national (and regional) planning systems as being of vital importance. The Dutch planning system is decentralised and organised on sector-facet lines, largely without its own specific resources, and is based strongly on spatial plans covering given geographical areas, while some other countries have adopted a more centralised, project-oriented, interventionist system. It is not inconceivable that such systems might offer better solutions to spatial problems.

#### 2.4.4 Map images

In the Council's view more map images need to be developed. Although the draft ESDP does contain attractive cartographic material, the Council considers there is room for improvement. Migration and tourist flows should be portrayed to widen awareness of the scale of these phenomena at the transnational and European scale. Maps often illustrate spatial analyses better than text, and permit a more selective policy.

Referring back to our observation in section 2.3 about urban and spatial planning as a cultural activity - space as a physical reality with which people identify - we would draw attention to the role of maps in creating a sense of identity. It was only through portraying it on maps that the Randstad region of the Netherlands was given its identity and made part of people's mental 'maps'<sup>14</sup>. Images of Europe help to create a sense of identity for Europe, and will therefore help to advance the cause of the still controversial 'Project Europe'<sup>15</sup>.

The Council also advocates that in the longer term broad, overarching spatial images of European structures be developed in the ESDP in order to provide insight into the spatial relationships and conflicts between various policy sectors. These spatial images should as far as possible be based on the sectors used by Brussels. There could therefore be one spatial image for transport and towns and one for agriculture, water and nature conservation. These spatial images should be developed in an iterative process

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<sup>14</sup> And only a city on the map of Lucas Verwey who, by using a whole range of different scales, makes it comparable with the major metropolises with their metro networks, etc.

<sup>15</sup> Various images for the future development of the European territory have been created. See Professor P. Nijkamp in *'Ingrediënten voor een duurzame samenleving'*, 1997, of the Advisory Council for Research on Nature and Environment.

using a judicious mix of top-down and bottom-up approaches. These spatial images should give expression to the subsidiarity principle and diversity on the basis of choices made using clear criteria. These spatial images would certainly not be intended as a general model for European spatial development: the ESDP is not a plan but a perspective.

#### 2.4.5 Administrative consequences

The spatial development of Europe is already being affected by European policies. Many European sectoral policies have spatial consequences. Sectoral compartmentalisation means that the spatial consequences of different policies are not related to one another, and may even conflict with one another. The desirability of improving the spatial coordination of European sectoral policy is self-evident. It is mainly up to 'Brussels' to ensure that the various sectoral policy measures reinforce, rather than conflict with, one another. The formation referred to above of an Interservice Group under the Secretary-General in Brussels will be a step in the right direction.

The draft ESDP does not yet make the spatial consequences of European sectoral policy sufficiently clear, and does not therefore adequately fulfil the function for which it was primarily intended. The Council understands that this deficiency will be rectified in due course. The Council advocates that this argument be extended, and that where possible Part III 'Policy aims and options for the European territory' and particularly Part IV 'Carrying out the European spatial development perspective' should differentiate different policy areas, and particularly, the levels of government being addressed. The draft ESDP contains few specifics in this regard, and is not yet appropriate for directing European policy. In its present form it also leaves the door open to misunderstanding. It could be interpreted as a very major claim by, or remit to, the European Commission to pursue a spatial policy, while that is not the likely intention.

## 2.5 Approach ESDP and European spatial policy

### 2.5.1 Strategic process approach for ESDP

The ministers for spatial planning in member states and the Commissioner for regional and cohesion policy have decided to assign one year for a broad political debate on the draft ESDP, both in member states and at the European level, after which the first ESDP will be finalised, and will remain in force for a number of years. The Council questions whether this is the best way of going about things. From the autumn of 1997 there will in fact only be half a year available for the broad political debate, since a number of months will also be needed to process the results before the ESDP can be formally adopted under the British presidency in Glasgow in June 1998. The Council advocates that the ESDP should not be accorded too formal a status on its adoption, and that its process nature be stressed. This is more consistent with a bottom-up development, and

will make it possible to allow for the fact that consultations at the transnational level will take more time than at present allowed for.

The Council also advocates that a careful assessment be made well in advance of the presidency under which the ESDP process has the best prospects of moving forward, and that the process be planned accordingly. For the time being it is the feeling of the Council that the German presidency (first half of 1999) will offer good prospects.

#### 2.5.2 Regional approach by themes

In her request for advice the Minister asks how the development of a more integrated regional approach, particularly at the transnational level, can serve Dutch interests. In the broad political debate of the draft ESDP there has until now been quite a heavy emphasis on an integrated regional approach at the transnational level based on the Commission's territorial classification. If this regional approach helps to identify opportunities for a successful multisectoral approach, the Council would regard it as useful. It can however also lead to unfocused philosophising about the development of an entire transnational region, while a sharp focus is actually what is needed. Furthermore the Commission's transnational territorial classification is based on areas with similar properties, while the relationships which are actually relevant and give rise to problems may be those between dissimilar areas. In addition, the seven transnational areas are too large to provide a basis for concrete actions.

Partly for this reason, the Council certainly considers that there should not be an exclusive focus on the transnational approach of the Commission. Other everyday partnerships are also needed for tackling thematic, transfrontier, bilateral or transnational problems, small-scale, with some political backing and with support from the various policy sectors. An example for the Dutch national spatial planning policy can be that of the Rhine-Scheldt delta.

Government agencies will however have to emulate business, and think in a more entrepreneurial manner about the opportunities for tackling problems by means of international alliances with suitable partners. It is a question of getting together with the right partners at the right time. If such an approach is to have any chance of succeeding the parties concerned must first define why they are to cooperate. Making the motives explicit ensures a proper dialectic and a business-like approach. The cooperation does not even have to lead to spectacular, costly projects, for example in the fields of infrastructure or large nature development projects. Smaller projects, exchange of information, joint workshops etc. are also needed in order to establish good networks.

The Council applauds the provision of funding, through schemes such as INTERREG II-C, TERRA and URBAN, for pilot and other projects for, *inter alia*, coope-

ration in the field of spatial planning. It is advisable, however, that the relevant Dutch ministries comply with the cofinancing condition set by Brussels. The Council understands that, with the exception of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the land-use departments, including the Ministry of VROM, have no provision in their budgets for this, and are therefore missing opportunities to exert influence on international projects.

### 2.5.3 Better spatial coordination

As mentioned above, the main function of European spatial policy has until now acted been to deal with and accommodate the spatial consequences of European sectoral policy. This raises a number of questions about coordination of various kinds which have to be addressed.

Firstly, Brussels needs to coordinate better the divergent forms of European sectoral policy with spatial consequences. The formation of the Interservice Group in Brussels could be significant in this regard. In any case the Netherlands and other member states must continue to urge such coordination.

In this connection, it is important that the Dutch policy sectors keep under careful review the spatial consequences of actual and planned European policy. Sometimes this can and must lead to the alteration of intended policy so that it fits better with national spatial policy. In other cases it will be a question of accommodating policy from Brussels as best possible into Dutch spatial policy. It will also sometimes occur that Dutch spatial problems need to be raised in an international forum for their resolution. In each of these cases, coordination is needed in the Netherlands. The key government departments concerned with land-use planning must enable the minister and unit responsible for spatial planning to exercise this coordinating function also on the European stage. At present such coordination is too often lacking.

In the Netherlands, spatial planning is an activity in its own right with its own instruments within all three tiers of government. Municipal land-use plans have been drawn up since 1901, provincial structure plans since 1924 and since 1950 national spatial planning policy documents have been drawn up. 'Facet policy' of this kind is not at present an option at the European level. The focus is on sectoral policy based mainly on economic considerations. Examples include the 'mainports' of Rotterdam and Schiphol, the high-speed rail network, the forthcoming Betuwe rail line, the issue of the policy document on the strengthening of the spatio-economic structure alongside the spatial policy documents, etc. If the development of a European spatial policy could disadvantage the Netherlands in any way, this would be due to a many-sided Dutch facet-based spatial policy being thwarted by a more one-sided sectoral policy. Dutch territory needs a carefully considered spatial policy. The traditional great concern for spatial resources in the Netherlands is part of our cultural identity.

# 3 Topics requiring attention

## 3.1 Sustainable development

### 3.1.1 Sustainable development

The Council regards sustainable development as an integral part of Europe's mission. Sustainable development is one of the main principles shaping Dutch government policy, and is also a core objective of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP). The draft ESDP does not make it sufficiently clear how spatial policy at the European level can contribute to sustainable development. The present draft only contains policy options for cities, infrastructure and water, and fails to discuss policy options for the countryside or include reference to the dwindling availability of natural resources.

In the Council's vision, the concept of sustainable development extends to all geographical levels: 'think globally, act locally', and refers to ecological, economic, social and cultural sustainability. The sustainable quality of the living environment is one aspect of sustainable development. In the Council's view, the regional level is an appropriate level to develop this notion of quality. This is in fact a convenient level to approach the relevant fields of policy, and one at which policies can be applied which reinforce one another. Lessons can be drawn between the regions, and also at the higher national, transnational regions and EU levels. The Council expects good results from such a bottom-up approach, also for the further development of the ESDP. Qualitative regional development of this kind does require resources, however.

In applying sustainable development at the European level there are various European and Dutch policy documents which need to be taken into consideration<sup>16</sup>. The Council recommends that the anticipated accession of the various Central and Eastern European countries be considered from a broad perspective of sustainability. These countries generally have many environmental problems and weak environmental and conservation policies but relatively modest consumption of raw materials and relatively large areas of natural parkland. Taking a broad perspective on sustainable development is likely to have direct and indirect positive effects on spatial quality, which could also be reflected in the ESDP.

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<sup>16</sup> See for example the 1993 White Paper 'Growth, competitiveness and employment, towards the 21<sup>st</sup> century' and 'Options for a sustainable Europe', 1997, both of the European Commission, and the Dutch 'Policy Document on the Environment and the Economy'.

The ecological/environmental aspect of sustainable development is important. Community environmental law - in the form of minimum quality standards and maximum emissions standards to water, soil and air - has major spatial consequences, and must also be assessed on the basis of these consequences. Conversely, European measures and policy with a major spatial component must contribute to the realisation of environmental objectives<sup>17</sup>.

### 3.1.2 Water

The draft ESDP announces that water-related problems both qualitative and quantitative are expected to increase. These problems are often of a transnational nature. Water quality has long been a concern of European environmental policy. The standards for water, air and soil and the regulations on land-use have had a beneficial effect on the quality of surface waters and groundwater. For some time Europe has also realised that quantitative water management also needs to be considered<sup>18</sup>. The recent European draft framework water directive rightly incorporates both qualitative and quantitative considerations<sup>19</sup>. Policy for managing both water quality and quantity has become an absolute necessity. Spatial strategies are essential for this, e.g. by ensuring that building does not obstruct river drainage and incorporating buffering into water drainage.

The Council notes with approval that during the recent conference on high water levels in the Rhine, a great deal of attention was paid to regional cooperation. In its opinion, a more integrated cooperation should also be instituted on spatial issues for other large international rivers on a river basin basis. Win-win situations can then be sought in which nature conservation and development are combined with water management measures. Anyway more local measures can be useful too in this respect. The forthcoming accession of a number of Central and Eastern European countries with major trans-frontier rivers with water quality problems makes a river basin approach of this kind all the more urgent.

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<sup>17</sup> The European Environmental Bureau fleshes this out in reducing the consumption of natural resources, minimising the adverse environmental consequences of tourism and leisure activities and broadening the scope for public participation in planning policy and decision-making.

<sup>18</sup> At the European level, water quantity is already the subject of the INTERREG IIC, one of the purposes of which is to prevent flooding. This programme also includes special programmes to combat drought in Mediterranean areas.

<sup>19</sup> The Committee of the Regions supports the view that integrated water management should cover water quantity as well as quality. It also argues for more attention to be paid to the specific characteristics of member states in relation to regulation and the decentralisation of powers to local and regional authorities. See advice CDR 171/97.

### 3.2 Regions and towns

A number of demographic and economic trends are mentioned in the draft ESDP which will impact (generally adversely) on developments in European towns and regions. In order to avoid this as far as possible, and to ensure that Europe retains its competitiveness in global markets, the draft ESDP sets forth a number of policies spear-headed by the development of a more balanced and polycentric system of cities, parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge for all regions and a prudent management and development of the European natural and cultural heritage.

The Council applauds the attention paid by the ESDP to the problem of urban areas because this is one of the major spatial issues at the European level. Various European institutions, such as the European Commission<sup>20</sup>, are beginning gradually to take an interest in European urban regions. The ministers responsible for urban policy hold informal discussions together at EU level, and various urban cooperative ventures and partnerships have been formed in which policy and institutional facets of urban problems are discussed<sup>21</sup>.

For decades the attention of Europe has concentrated almost exclusively on the countryside: grants from Brussels, in particular, were intended to support agriculture. With the declining importance of agriculture as the economic powerhouse of the countryside, the attention and funding are shifting towards a more broadly-based rural development. Few rural areas have the strength needed to compete on their own with other areas. Furthermore they are having to face major challenges as a consequence of increasing world competition. The modernisation of agriculture is not sufficient to provide for the economic development of the countryside, and even integrated rural development is not enough unless a link is established with the urban hub to which it relates. There is a growing interdependence between a town and the surrounding region<sup>22</sup>. On one hand, some medium and small towns are enormously important for certain rural areas. On the other hand, the countryside is vital for (large) cities, both in terms of the social and cultural living environment and in terms of their ability to attract industry and commerce.

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<sup>20</sup> Towards an urban agenda in the EU - Communication of the European Commission, 6 May 1997.

<sup>21</sup> METREX (Metropolitan Regions Exchange) is an example of a network set up for the exchange of information, expertise and experience between conurbations with about 500,000 inhabitants. METREX was founded in Glasgow during the Metropolitan Regions Conference in 1996.

<sup>22</sup> Nor can the concept of the sustainable town be considered in isolation; a sustainable town can only be seen in its development in relation to the surrounding countryside.

A more widely-based application of resources essentially destined for agriculture, as mentioned earlier, is not an adequate solution, however. Towns house some 80% of the population and employment in Europe and, as mentioned, face major problems. In the enlarged European Union, resources should flow not only from West to East, but also from agricultural/rural areas to the towns which fulfil an important support function for the rural areas, and to the urban regions, and particularly the weak spots in these regions. In view of the increasing extent to which towns need the countryside in order to operate and compete properly, funding cities will also benefit the countryside. The ESDP will in the long run be able to provide the rationale for a more balanced distribution of resources from the European funds.

The Council emphasises the need to strengthen those European regions which can contribute to the economic strength of Europe in the global marketplace. If core economic areas cease to be able to cope with their economic, social, cultural and environmental problems their position in world markets will be threatened; this will have consequences across the entire EU, including the peripheral regions. Apart from the policy which of course continues to be needed for the weaker, often peripheral, areas, an enabling policy is needed for the economic nuclei and the areas where the economic strengths of Europe face opportunities and threats. These are often related to the ability to attract enterprises, and the role of the economic-cultural dimension, insufficiently considered in the ESDP, as a component of economic competition in the global economy. The Netherlands needs to project the Randstad as a major metropolis and an internationally competitive location for industry.

The ESDP can play a role in coordinating and exchanging information related to approaches to urban issues and to solving urban problems. It will have to create a closer interface with the many existing urban cooperative ventures and partnerships. This is consistent with the bottom-up approach argued for earlier. These specific cooperative structures clearly reflect the themes and geographical areas for which there is really a need for cooperation, and where complementarity could be a real option. Working in this way can bring about a win-win outcome: the ESDP can benefit from the successes of urban cooperation, allowing spatial planning to gain support at the European level.

### **3.3 Rural areas**

#### **3.3.1 Rural development**

For centuries, agriculture has been the dominant economic, ecological, social and cultural force in the European countryside. The European common agricultural policy is presently evolving from a purely agricultural policy to a more integrated policy for the countryside.

At present there are major visible differences between the countryside in the different member states. Some rural areas are highly productive while others have been marginalised, some of them suffer urban pressure while others are almost entirely depopulated. In some member states (including the Netherlands) there is increasing competition for scarce spatial resources and land is used multifunctionally, while in others this is less or not so. Policy at the European level has to take account of this diversity<sup>23</sup>.

The forthcoming enlargement of the European Union and increasing worldwide competition will lead to a review of the common agricultural policy (CAP). The CAP will have to become more sustainable<sup>24</sup>. The spatial effects of this policy are considerable. The review of the CAP therefore needs to be considered in the ESDP. This review will have to leave space for strategic choices by national and regional authorities, particularly in relation to matters such as multifunctional land-use, the future role of agriculture 'proper' and policy for the countryside. The various specific rural areas will then be able to develop in their national and regional context. In preparing and adopting the European agricultural policy all member states will have to bring in their own conception of the development they desire for their countryside. It will also be expedient for member states and regions to exchange experiences on the success of certain policy instruments for the countryside.

The draft ESDP identifies 'diversification' as the keyword for the spatial strategy, both for highly productive agricultural production and for uncompetitive agricultural sectors. The Council is also in favour of this economic diversification having regard to the economic, ecological, social and cultural values of the countryside<sup>25</sup>. On a smaller scale, there are opportunities for characteristic local products, stimulated by the growing feeling for quality on the part of consumers. On a larger scale there will be developments such as the cultivation of non-food products, forestry, nature and landscape management, recreation/tourism and renewable energy development. The use of agricultural land fully or partially for these purposes is in the Council's view particularly relevant<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> See also the contribution of the Council for the Rural Area.

<sup>24</sup> Consultants CLM (*EG-Landbouwbeleid en milieu - Een verkenning van kansen*, 1991) state that sustainable agriculture should be the central objective of the CAP: an agriculture which produces high-quality products, uses resources sparingly, protects the environment and also contributes to nature conservation and landscape.

<sup>25</sup> This is also consistent with the final report of the '*Landelijke gebieden en Europa*' ('Rural areas and Europe') project, RPD (Dutch National Spatial Planning Agency), 1997: "A sustainable prospect of a broader rural development occurs particularly when a broadening of farming methods coincides with the development of new economic generators in the countryside". The Counsel for the Rural Area also argues for diversification. In an advice (*Tien voor de toekomst*, 1997) it proposes an integrated multi-track agricultural policy which could be transferred to the European level.

<sup>26</sup> Committee of the Regions: "The less developed areas in the Community often possess substantial potential for renewable energy. Harnessing this potential will be a significant part of the regional and structural policy" - advice CDR 173/97.

The cultivation of biomass - particularly woody crops - for energy production will probably be an important component of this<sup>27</sup>.

In the Council's view, more account must be taken of social and cultural factors in developing a vision of the role of the countryside in the future, both at the national and European level. These factors have not been sufficiently highlighted so far. This vision must include a clear description of the position and role of women in rural areas. Women are important in economic, social and cultural terms. Expected future trends like diversification will increase their role further.

The aforementioned vision includes a role for technology: technology will in the Council's view have an indispensable role in creating a multifunctional countryside which preserves important cultural features. Information and communications technology can help rural dwellers keep in contact with wider society, and will be an important means of achieving this in isolated, sparsely populated rural areas.

### 3.3.2 Nature

The draft ESDP stresses the importance of Europe's natural heritage. The latter requires specific measures adapted to regional characteristics and circumstances. In order to avoid further loss of biodiversity, all spatially relevant policies must allow for specific local circumstances. Serious degradation of the natural environment has been occurring throughout Europe in recent decades, in particular in coastal areas and in the Alps. Agriculture, transport and tourism are important causes of this. The protected areas face a serious risk of fragmentation. A broad spatial approach is needed to deal with these problems, and in this regard the Council welcomes the draft ESDP.

At the European level, the Habitats Directive (1991) is important. The European Natura 2000 environmental network of important ecosystems is being developed in various actual and prospective member states and regions. The Council supports the draft ESDP when it advocates the energetic development of this network, going beyond simply marking the core areas on maps. It anticipates conflicts between national and European desiderata, however. Firstly, certain member states are doing little to meet their obligations, thus vitiating the essentially large-scale nature of the European network of important ecosystems. Secondly, national efforts can clash with developments desired at the European level<sup>28</sup>. The Council suggests that, as far as the Netherlands is concerned, priority should be given to the wetlands in Zeeland, South and North Holland and

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<sup>27</sup> Little is yet known about the land available for biomass, or its impact on the quality of the local/regional living environment. According to its recent white paper on renewable energy, the European Commission is aiming for 10 million hectares of energy crops by 2010/2020.

<sup>28</sup> In international terms it is the coastal areas and wetlands in the Netherlands which are of greatest significance, whereas nationally there is a greater focus on the dryer ecosystems.

South-West Friesland; these are the areas of greatest ecological value<sup>29</sup> in the European perspective and on the basis of the North Sea ecosystem. In the Council's view, coastal areas in general require special attention, because of the loss of habitat and landscape features. National and international tourism represent both a threat (to wildlife, the countryside, the environment) and an (economic) opportunity<sup>30</sup>. This is also an area where cross-border cooperation can help to bring solutions closer.

The Council recommends that a common set of conservation goals be set at the different relevant levels, with a view to increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the vulnerable nature conservation function. The expected enlargement of the European Union will bring opportunities in this regard, due to the often large tracts of natural parklands which many of the acceding countries possess. Opportunities could be explored of joint measures under Article 3c of the Habitat Directive. The Council considers that this possibility merits serious consideration.

The requirement that core areas be developed will demand major financial efforts from member states. In many member states, efforts are being made in this regard by the public authorities and private organisations. Some member states are running into problems, however, and will therefore not manage to undertake activities under Article 3c of the Habitats Directive in the short term. In the Council's view the present trend to broaden the purpose of the agricultural funds to cover rural development in a wider sense could present opportunities in this regard. It recommends that where possible, further functions be explicitly assigned to the environmental network of important ecosystems, e.g. recreation, nature management and water conservation.

It is also important that member states exchange their experiences in developing the ecological network<sup>31</sup>. This will strengthen support for the further development of the European Ecological Network. This development will need to be steered by public authorities at various levels. However there must be opportunities for initiatives from the grass roots, including NGOs, in setting up nature conservation projects (possibly including transfrontier projects).

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<sup>29</sup> *'Landelijke gebieden en Europa'*, RPD, 1997.

<sup>30</sup> See 'Threats and opportunities in the coastal areas of the European Union' RPD, 1997.

<sup>31</sup> By the beginning of 1997, in the Netherlands 60% of the intended 250,000 hectares of new nature conservation areas had been delineated, but these do not yet include larger units, and the environmental quality is not yet satisfactory, according to the *Natuurverkenning 97*, (RIVM *et al*, 1997). A problem occurring in the Netherlands is that high land prices make it more difficult to finance the ecological network.

### 3.4 Distribution and transport

The main priority for the draft ESDP in regard to infrastructure is to open up and provide access to all European regions. The policy elements proposed place emphasis on helping the peripheral areas to catch up and on achieving a balanced intercontinental access through links from and to the major sea and airports while using infrastructure more efficiently and sustainably and disseminating knowledge and innovative technology as widely as possible. The draft ESDP outlines policies to discourage car-use and to promote multimodal and/or combined transport along the Euro-corridors in order to provide for the more sustainable use of infrastructural facilities.

Having regard to the function of the Netherlands as a distribution centre, the Council supports the proposals in the draft ESDP to improve the infrastructural facilities in all European regions, particularly in relation to the 'mainports' of Schiphol and Rotterdam, subject to the sustainability constraint.

Specialisation (in this case distribution) and large scale are important characteristics of a modern economy, and comprehensive air, water, rail and road networks are needed. The Council concurs with the former Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management<sup>32</sup> which recognised the importance for Dutch transport policy of the Netherlands continuing to do what it is good at: efficient commercial transportation which is also environmentally efficient. Transport is needed by commerce and industry, and is often a factor which helps to determine the competitiveness of industrial sectors. The distribution sector is itself, together with the various ancillary value-added activities, a source of income to the Netherlands. The Council would add that infrastructure is also a major locational factor, and it has an impact on the countryside and on the quality of the living environment.

The Council would attach some caveats to this thesis of "continuing to do what (the Netherlands) is good at". It is vital that the notion of sustainable development be brought to bear on transport policy, particularly for freight<sup>33</sup>. It is only at the European level that all the social (including infrastructural and environmental) costs associated with transport can be properly imputed to it. This will not only improve the logistics, but will also make transport more efficient. It is vital if sustainable development is to be achieved that a transition is effected in a number of the more highly developed EU member states from industrial economy to high-value knowledge-based economy.

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<sup>32</sup> In its advice on the Netherlands in Europe, March 1994.

<sup>33</sup> The volume of goods being transported in Europe is not growing fast, but the mean transport distance is, with negative environmental consequences.

In terms of infrastructure, this means that there will be a growth in the transport of capital and information alongside that in traditional goods. The reinforcement and enhancement of the infrastructure will have to target these areas particularly: to develop as a 'brainport' as well as a 'mainport'. Schiphol and Rotterdam will have to aim to become directive nodes for freight flows. Transport will have to become more intelligent.

In the Council's view, the division of tasks between the mainports and other sea and airports, at the North-West European scale or smaller, needs to be rationalised in spatial and environmental terms<sup>34</sup>. Although the Dutch mainports should continue to develop further on the basis of comparative advantage and environmental benchmarking<sup>35</sup>, this must not be such as to increase traffic flows to such an extent that they become less environmentally friendly because freight has to be transported over greater distances along increasingly circuitous routes to the hinterland, and the environment around the mainports gets overloaded.

The Council therefore considers that member states, local and regional government and industry involved with these mainports will need to cooperate actively. By seeking to complement one another they can improve their competitiveness and avoid spatial and environmental disadvantages relative to more distant mainports. Together they can also avoid duplication or overlap in investment. For example it would be possible to examine whether both Rotterdam and Antwerp both need to construct their own 'second Maasvlakte' harbor.

Better utilisation of the existing infrastructure is vital in many parts of Europe to ease congestion and reduce environmental intrusion, and is at least as effective in policy terms as laying new infrastructure. Mechanisms for exchanging information about the success or failure of particular devices to improve the utilisation of the existing infrastructure can be very effective. The international development and application of innovations in transport is also recommended.

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<sup>34</sup> The existing cooperation within the Rhine-Scheldt Delta including the ports of Rotterdam, Antwerp and others is a good example of this.

<sup>35</sup> In the case of Rotterdam, for example, environmental benchmarking would reflect the high component of environmentally friendly inland waterway transport in and out of Rotterdam.

### 3.5 Corridors

The corridor concept should be one of the chief themes in the ESDP. Although it has not been, and probably never will be, rigorously defined<sup>36</sup>, corridors occur in the form of broad axes at the European scale in a whole range of different areas, including transportation, urbanisation, communications and information and nature conservation. The corridor concept can create links between transport, infrastructure, economic development, urbanisation and open spaces. The relationships and conflicts between these different corridors and the fact that corridors have until now developed in a bottom-up manner make them an important topic for spatial analysis. Where necessary, however, they can also be designed by planners, and can be the subject of cooperation at the transnational or even EU-wide level, and can act as crystallisation point for European spatial policy in the ESDP. The importance which the Council attaches to corridors at the European level does not mean that it already has adopted a position on corridors in the Netherlands. European corridors can manifest themselves spatially in very different forms within the Netherlands.

The Council considers Euro-corridors to be of particular importance in relation to metropolitan agglomerations, such as the Randstad, and other complementary urban nodes, because these agglomerations and nodes can form a coherent network of location sites which can compete in the global marketplace. These may be poles of attraction for selective large-scale investment, concentrating on goal-oriented infrastructural projects, preferably involving a quantum leap in quality. Generally, transport corridors develop primarily bottom-up as countries and transporters between them find solutions for particular routes. Transport corridors need to be well planned because of their pivotal role in multimodal transport and for the siting of businesses.

From a Dutch perspective, the North-West of Europe is the key region, particularly relationships with the 'Flemish Diamond' and the Rhine-Ruhr. Corridors linking with these agglomerations need to be actively planned and equipped in conjunction with the relevant Belgian and German authorities. Complementing this, high-grade rural areas straddling national frontiers could also be involved in this cooperation.

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<sup>36</sup> The policy document 'Space for an Economic Dynamic' of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, 1997, distinguishes between:

- the corridor as an infrastructural axis: coherent infrastructural components along a given route;
- the corridor as an axis of economic development: economic opportunities occurring along major transport axes; the precise demarcation of the corridor is of minor importance;
- the corridor as an axis of urbanisation: the infrastructural network as a basis for the development of housing and work facilities.

### **3.6 Technological innovation**

Far more attention needs to be paid to technological innovation in the ESDP. Globally, technology is a driving force which pervades all walks of life, with a major impact spatially. The advent of the Internet, for example, means that contracts can be awarded more easily across national and continental boundaries, resulting in an intensification of international competition. The same applies to commerce, logistics and capital flows. Teleworkers will be able to live in any country they like, and teleworking will therefore provide a stimulus to migrate internationally to attractive regions.

Technological innovation may help to solve many of the problems signalled in the draft ESDP, such as the mediocre knowledge infrastructure in peripheral areas and transport bottlenecks. The innovative capacity of regions constitutes a major challenge. Information and communications technology (ICT) may be able, by making courses and employment more accessible, to prevent the depopulation of rural areas. New forms of transport will rectify environmental and spatial problems. Infrastructural ICT can help increase the productivity of the mainports, decreasing the need for expansion. Unmanned, underground freight transport will reduce the demand for surface infrastructure.

Cooperation between member states and with the Commission is necessary to stimulate technological development and to create the necessary networks for information and communications, also to boost competitiveness vis-à-vis other trade blocs. In the US the infrastructure for Internet 2 is already in place, and that for Internet 3 is in development. A comparable development is necessary in Europe. Too few projects of this nature are notified to the European Investment Bank compared with hard infrastructural projects. The same applies to the software needed to improve the utilisation of infrastructure. Cooperation is also needed in relation to new forms of transport and underground construction.

## **ANNEX 1: External participants in round table discussion and interlocutors in Brussels**

### **Round table discussion**

#### **Professor F.L. Bussink**

Kolpron Consultants  
Director

#### **Professor A. Faludi**

University of Amsterdam  
Amsterdam Study Centre for the Metropolitan Environment (AME)

#### **Dr R.J.G.M. Florax**

Free University  
Department of Spatial Economics, Masterpoint

#### **Dr R.H.G. Jongman**

Wageningen Agricultural University  
Land-use planning

#### **Mr R.J. van der Kluit**

Association of Water Boards  
Managing Director

#### **Mr C. de Lange**

Rotterdam Municipal Development Board  
Head External Funds & EC Coordination

#### **Mrs M. Langeveld-Hermesen**

Netherlands Association of Rural Women

#### **Mr P.H.R. Langeweg**

ANWB (Royal Dutch Touring Club)  
Head General Members' Interests

#### **Mr D.J. Martin**

National Spatial Planning Agency  
International Coordinator

**Mr J.J. Modder**

Netherlands Institute for Spatial Planning and Housing (NIROV)  
Director

**Mr H. Pluckel**

Association of Dutch Municipalities  
Head Department of Spatial Planning, Traffic and the Environment

**Mr F.J.D. Wiegerink**

Transport and Logistics Netherlands  
Deputy Director Policy & Public Affairs

**Professor J. Witsen**

Chairman NIROV Programme Committee -Europlan

**Study visit to Brussels**

**Mr R.L.F. Brieskorn**

Permanent Delegation of the Netherlands to the European Union  
First Secretary (Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment)

**Mr F.W.C. Castricum**

European Parliament

**Mr P. Doucet**

European Commission - DG XVI

**Mr D. Eisma**

European Parliament

**Mr J. Heidsma**

Permanent Delegation of the Netherlands to the European Union  
Environmental specialist

## **ANNEX 2: Composition of Council for the for Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment**

**The Council for Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment is made up as follows:**

*Dr Th. Quené, Chairman*

*Ms M.M. van den Brink*

*Mr L.C. Brinkman*

*Ms M. Daalmeijer*

*Professor W.G.J. Duyvendak*

*Professor R. van Engelsdorp Gastelaars*

*Mr J.J. de Graeff*

*Professor W.A. Hafkamp*

*Ms F.M.J. Houben*

*Professor J. de Jong*

*Ms M.C. Meindertma*

*Mr P.G.A. Noordanus*

*Professor I.S. Sariyildiz*

*Professor J. van der Schaar*

*Professor W.C. Turkenburg*

*Mr T.J. Wams*

*Ms L.M. Wolfs-Kokkeler*

### **Observers**

*Mr P.J.C.M. van den Berg, on behalf of the Central Planning Bureau*

*Professor N.D. van Egmond, on behalf of the RIVM*

*(National Institute for Public Health and Environmental Protection)*

*Mr Th.H. Roes, on behalf of the Social and Cultural Planning Bureau*

### **General Secretary**

*Mr W.A. Haeser*