
ENVIRONMENT COOPERATION BETWEEN THE PROVINCE OF OVERIJSSSEL AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE OF THE CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

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SUMMARY

The province of Overijssel and the Environmental Committee of the Chamber of Commerce (representing the trade industry) joined forces in a cooperation program. The province and the Environmental Committee consult each other regularly (three to four times a year). Agreements made in these meetings are agreements between the province, the Chambers of Commerce, and the Federation of Netherlands Industry and Employers Central Region. These parties consider it important that the Overijssel environmental partners develop their mutual activities in cooperation, which is why they want to stimulate the coherence by consultation and by developing mutual activities. In 2004, the first collective program was implemented. This paper discusses the targets achieved, the projects continued in 2005, and the outcomes of the cooperation project.

1 INTRODUCTION

The province of Overijssel and the Environmental Committee of the Chamber of Commerce (representing the trade industry) joined forces in a cooperation program to achieve concrete results. The province of Overijssel is convinced that the economy and the environment should be balanced, with room for both entrepreneurship and limit the burden on the environment. As it is, we strive for safer and healthier living conditions in Overijssel.

This cooperation program contributes to a cleaner environment by removing a number of impediments. The program combines knowledge and skills of the trade and industry and the authorities of Overijssel. The province and trade association have agreed on projects they will implement together. Such a far-reaching cooper-

ation is unique in the Netherlands, and only possible due to two crucial aspects.

First, both the authorities and the industry group feel responsible for approaching a number of collective spearheads of the environmental policy. We also want to start and implement them together. No fat documents, but actually off to work and using knowledge, skills and financial means as effectively as possible!

Second, acknowledging the own responsibility has been of major influence in forming the cooperation. Respect and room for the typical roles of the authorities and the trade and industry give both parties the necessary room to implement projects collectively. "Trust" is a key word!

Environmental policy is one of the main subjects of the Chambers of Commerce in Overijssel. Environmental policy remains an important surrounding factor.

Companies are stimulated more and more to comply with the environmental regulations and to work on environment management. On behalf of the trade and industry the Environmental Committee speaks with the Executive Council of Overijssel about the environment. The Environmental Committee is a committee of experts of the trade and industry who give advice to the managements of the Chambers of Commerce in Overijssel. Both the employers (the Federation of Netherlands Industry and Employers (VNO/NCW) and the small and medium-sized enterprises sector) and the employees (Trade Union Confederation (FNV/CNV)) are represented in the Environmental Committee.

The Chambers have entered into a covenant with the regional departments of VNO/NCW in order to cooperate closely in analysing problems and preparing views on affairs that affect them mutually. For this reason also the VNO/NCW Central Region is represented in the Environmental Committee.

2 COOPERATION TARGETS

The Environmental Committee (and thus the environmental network) has the following external targets in the environmental area:

- influencing the integral national policy with regard to the environment in the interest of the trade and industry in Overijssel;
- collecting information from the trade and industry and transferring it to the authorities, in the interest of the trade and industry, including the initiating and supporting of projects in Overijssel;
- communicating relevant policies and regulations with regard to the environment to companies in Overijssel.

The province of Overijssel strives for a sustainable development of the Overijssel economy. This involves an optimal balance between the environment, the economy and the social quality. A central theme within that strive is the deregulation

and simplification of regulations. The province contributes as follows by:

- stimulating the sustaining development of sectors and companies with special attention for an economic use of space and sources, and applying and developing sustainable sources of energy;
- stimulating the situation that the right companies will be in the right places, with special attention for fitting them into the physical surroundings and the social and economic structure;
- aiming at the active cooperation with the trade and industry, other authorities and interested parties.

The province and the Environmental Committee consult each other regularly (three to four times a year) on the basis of these targets. Agreements made in these meetings are agreements between the province, the Chambers of Commerce and the VNO/NCW Central Region. These parties consider it important that the Overijssel environmental partners develop their mutual activities in coherence, which is why they want to stimulate the coherence by consultation and by developing mutual activities. The province can also invite the ISP Twente (Information Service Department of Twente), the Twente Region and the IJssel-Vecht Region to these meetings.

The environmental cooperation takes place through the ISP Twente. It attempts to realise a flexible and continuous form of environmental cooperation between the municipalities themselves in Twente. The tasks, working methods, targets and the financial foundations were laid down in a collective regulation which was signed by all participating municipalities. The Environmental Program, which is drafted annually, is based on this regulation.

The Twente Region is a cooperation of fifteen municipalities (fourteen from Twente and one from Gelderland). It plays an important role on the field of industrial sites. The IJssel-Vecht Region is a form of cooperation between twelve municipalities in the North-West and North-East of Over-

jsel and Gelderland. It also plays an important role on the field of industrial sites. Apart from that, it has a role on the field of environmental cooperation.

3 COOPERATION SPEARHEADS

In 2002 it was concluded that the quality of the cooperation between the province and the Environmental Committee could be improved further. Both the province and the Environmental Committee have their own working programs which were not tuned. As a result of that, the possible synergy between the programs remained unused.

After comparing the working programs of the province and the Environmental Committee, five spearheads were named which the province and the Environmental Committee want to give shape to, namely:

- Projects of sustainable industrial sites;
- Environmental permitting and compliance control;
- Noise limits for companies;
- Environmental management in small and medium-sized enterprises;
- Tuning environmental policy and spatial planning.

4 STARTING POINTS ENVIRONMENT COOPERATION PROGRAM

As of 2003 the collective activities on the field of the spearheads named were laid down in a mutual cooperation program. The province and the Environmental Committee have agreed that the latter will submit a proposition for collective activities to the province, including the financial aspects. In preparing this, both parties will cooperate closely.

The cooperation program is based on activities, which the Chambers of Commerce, the VNO/NCW Central Region and the province could develop in order to contribute to the development of sustainable industrial activities in Overijssel. Below you will find an outline of these activities.

The activities of the Chambers in cooperation with the VNO/NCW Central Region are meant to indicate possible bottlenecks as soon as possible, such as lack of: space, acting room or adequate accessibility. This concerns groups of enterprises, which have the same or similar bottlenecks. Together with representatives of such groups, they reflect on the character of the problems, indicate the possible directions of solutions and organise the beginning of the solutions to those problems.

The Chambers of Commerce, in close consultation with the VNO/NCW Central Region, dedicate themselves to starting cooperation projects in their regions for the trade and industry on the fields of the spearheads named. In order to do this, they accumulate the necessary support (financial as well), and dedicate themselves to convincing entrepreneurs and municipalities to participate in this collectively.

In Overijssel the Chambers of Commerce have started an "environmental network". This is a closely operating network of organisations and companies, in which the companies are informed in an optimal way about environmental affairs which are relevant to them, and in which the promotion of interests is tuned well on local, regional and provincial levels. The members of the Environmental Committee act in this network. Concrete activities of the environmental network are the periodical newsletter, theme meetings (e.g. on the new Noise Abatement Act and the liberalisation of the energy market) and cost saving projects for companies (on the fields of energy, water, and waste streams).

Through its network, the province stimulates the IJssel-Vecht Region, the Twente Region, the ISP Twente and the municipalities towards participation in those initiatives of the trade and industry it thinks useful, on the fields of noise limits for companies, environmental permitting and compliance control and environmental management in the middle and medium-sized enterprises sector.

The province assesses the cooperation program which the Environmental Committee submits. After a positive

assessment it may put financial means available for projects which have been approved. The province shares its skills and experience in these projects. With regard to content, it contributes from its skills in giving information to the trade and industry.

5 COOPERATION PROJECTS 2005

In 2004 the first collective program was implemented. Of the projects named almost all targets were achieved in 2004.

5.1 Projects of Sustainable Industrial Sites

In general, the province faces a huge task with regard to revitalising existing sites, which is why this task is one of the policy priorities of the province and the municipalities involved. Apart from the municipalities and the province, many parties are active on the field of sustainable industrial sites. In order to revitalise the existing sites it is imperative that the municipalities and the trade and industry want to cooperate on this subject. Both the province and the Environmental Committee want to contribute to that cooperation. Aim of the contribution is to stimulate that revitalising existing sites will be sustainable. The three starting points are:

- a decrease in environmental burdens by companies;
- a more efficient use of space and a better site planning and management;
- cost saving and better functioning of companies.

Projects

- Drafting the framework for the provincial policy on sustainable reinforcement of existing sites: It is the target to involve the Environmental Committee in drafting the framework for a policy aimed at the reinforcement of existing sites. Tuning is necessary between the regional platforms of industrial sites and the Environmental Committee.

- Stimulating sustainable reinforcement existing sites in the regions of the Chambers of Commerce of the Zwolle region and Veluwe region, by both Chambers and the VNO/NCW Central Region: The Chamber of Commerce of the Zwolle region is the initiator and the chairman of project groups on the field of sustainable reinforcement of existing sites and as such stimulates the municipalities and companies to develop existing sites in a sustaining way. In Twente all involved parties will implement the action program for sites (SKB Plus) in cooperation with the Chambers of Commerce for Veluwe and Twente.
- Development manual/checklist for market-oriented restructuring of existing sites: It is the intention to assess in a simple way, by means of a checklist/manual, whether redevelopment of (a part of) an existing site can be achieved in both a market-technical and financial way, and which conditions market parties and/or developers make in order to invest herein.
- Development of an ICT-tool for park management: A research into the possibilities of considerably reducing the cost of park management by using the internet. By using a practical internet-tool the practical and administrative work can be done in a simpler, and thus cheaper way. In this way the amount of time a park manager spends on all kinds of work can be limited. The research project may contribute considerably to a further innovation of the trade and industry.

5.2 Environmental Permitting And Compliance Control

In the past few years the interest in the environmental permitting and compliance control has increased considerably. Among other things, this led to setting national quality standards, which the controlling institutions have to comply with. The aim behind it is a uniform control. The trade

and industry have interest in this too.

Target of the cooperation between the province and the Environmental Committee is to cooperate on a simple, safe and practicable environmental policy for companies, including a well-tuned compliance control. This concretely expresses the provincial strive for deregulation and simpler regulations. Due to the large extent of the autonomy of the municipalities in this area, the cooperation is limited to the provincial tasks in this field. Within its possibilities the province will stimulate that there is sufficient consultation between the municipalities and companies.

Projects

- Checklists for companies that are subject to general administrative orders: A checklist is drafted for all the companies in Overijssel that are subject to general administrative orders. The aim is to improve the cooperation between the trade and industry and the province within the framework of controlling through information and assistance for companies and controllers. Stimulating the uniformity of control.
- Permit information leaflet: Development of a leaflet with regard to the regulations on the fields of spatial planning and the environment by means of a survey: procedures, necessities and deadlines will be placed next to each other in one survey on zoning plans and permits for building, environment, use, advertising and demolition.
- Information on permits for use, and fire safety: Giving specific information to companies on the legal requirements for companies with regard to fire safety, permits for use, the room these requirements leave and which points of interest. This can be done by a sheet developed for this purpose.
- Improving the quality of permits (procedures): At the end of 2005 the quality of permits procedures will be improved due to the fact that: it is clear what companies may expect from

the Overijssel provincial unit EMT (Economy, Environment and Tourism) and vice versa; the dilemmas and problems of both parties have been mapped, along with the (possible) solutions; parties have made suggestions for improving the quality of the environment permit with regard to the application, the period of time from the application until the permit is granted, and the contents of the permit itself.

5.3 Noise Limits for Companies

In many municipalities there are companies for which the noise limits are insufficient in order to function optimally. It seems there is more and more a 'clash of functions' in which companies and houses have been located too closely to each other. In the interest of both the inhabitants and the companies it is advisable to look for creative solutions together. For their further development, it is important for companies that their noise limits are sufficient. The aim of the cooperation between the province and the Environmental Committee in this field is to set a course for the approach of the noise limit problem for the trade and industry.

Projects

- Anticipating to the new noise regulations by the province and the municipalities: Making an inventory of the amendments in the Noise Abatement Act and discussing collectively their consequences for the municipalities, the province and the trade and industry.
- Setting up and implementing four research projects in Almelo, Hardenberg, Zwolle and Deventer: The target of this project is to research the reason for the noise limits being insufficient and to research whether the noise limits for the trade and industry on the zoned industrial sites can be extended, by a different method of calculating noise, adaptation of the noise limit zone, or a more efficient

allocation of the existing noise limits (e.g. by buying or exchanging each others noise limits). The province is preparing one integral project proposition, in consultation with the Chamber of Commerce (Zwolle region) and the VNO/NCW. An external bureau researches four fields of interest.

5.4 Environmental Management In Small And Medium-Sized Enterprises

The Environmental Committee and the province of Overijssel aim at increasing the awareness of companies on environmental management. As it is, many companies still lack sufficient information about their chances in this field. Apart from that, due to the extended implementations of the Environment Management Act companies have more obligations to put in efforts on the field of environmental management for which they will have to answer to the province. Environmental management may contribute to the target of the cooperation between the province and the Environmental Committee on the field of sustainable industrial sites.

Projects

- Prevention projects for the small and medium-sized enterprises in Zwolle (Voorst): In these prevention projects the chances for cost saving are being researched. Also, agreements are made with the participating companies on how recommendations to save on costs can be implemented (implementation plan). It will also be considered whether the recommendations can be tuned to the most important requirements of the general administrative orders companies have to comply with. The assistance to be developed (see environmental permitting and compliance control) will be an important tool. In these projects there is stress on researching whether sustainable energy and innovation can started and implemented as chances.
- Sustainable energy project in Twente: Making an inventory of chances, and an

implementation of sustainable energy on an industrial site in Twente. This is meant as a pilot project to achieve knowledge and to explore the support.

- Exploring bottlenecks and chances for large-scale use of wind energy on industrial sites: It is permitted to place large wind turbines (axis height 80 meters and more) on the larger industrial sites (50 hectares and more). In fact, this has not really been started yet. Target of this project is to explore bottlenecks and chances for large-scale use of wind energy on industrial sites in cooperation with the Environmental Committee.
- Distributing the results and upgrading the pilot project on sustainable energy: Distributing the results of the pilot project in Twente and the project on exploring the chances of wind energy on industrial sites, and possibly the upgrading to other industrial sites in Overijssel.

5.5 Tuning Environmental Policy And Spatial Planning

The environmental policy usually has a spatial component. Therefore, parties may cooperate on the common grounds of the policies on the environment and the spatial planning in future.

One possibility through which this can be done is the permit from the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Housing and the Environment (VROM). It strives for one decision, regardless the number of Acts and rules that have to be met, for inhabitants and companies that want the permission of the authorities for a certain activity which influences the living conditions. One should only have to go through one procedure with regard to the application (or report), participation, objections and appeal. Also, inhabitants and companies should have to refer to one department only.

As introducing the VROM permit means much and brings changes for both the one who applies and the one who grants the permit, two projects are started besides the legislation procedure which will

prepare the introduction of the VROM permit: the pilots “permit management” and “VROM permit”. The pilot “permit management” is aimed at having a fast insight in all procedures, so that it is possible to accelerate the building of houses. The pilot “VROM permit” means that other decisions will be made apart from the decision to

amend the zoning plan, in order to realise the various parts of the zoning plan. This means that the preparation of the necessary decisions (such as the permits for environment, demolition, building, cutting, construction and use) will take place as simultaneous and coordinated as possible.