

Focus on the regions in the National Energy and Climate Plans

The Northern Netherlands is one of the European regions that are committed to making the energy transition a success. SMEs, research institutes and knowledge centers, citizens and regional governments are working together to speed up one of the greatest current societal challenges: Transition towards a sustainable, reliable and affordable energy supply. The versatile energy sector in the Northern Netherlands is the hub of West-European gas and power supplies and offers an optimal testing ground for trying out the ideas, innovations and models that are crucial for this energy transition.

The three provinces of the **Northern Netherlands (Groningen, Fryslân and Drenthe)** are positive about the European ambitions as proposed by the European Commission in the Clean Energy Package. Our region considers the proposed directives as an important step towards the creation of a stronger, more sustainable energy supply in Europe. However, in order to reach the ambitious energy goals proposed by the Commission and the Member States we stress that it is crucial that an organizational framework is set up that ensures and enables the commitment, participation and support at **all levels; European, national, regional and local level**. In this respect we support the position of the European Parliament on the directive on the governance of the energy union. Our region calls for an in depth multi-level consultation and involvement should be formalized in the directive on the governance of the energy union. Therefore, the region of the Northern Netherlands urge the Commission and the Member States to take the following aspects into account in setting up the governance of the energy union in general and the national energy and climate plans in particular:

1. The Northern Netherlands call for the **establishment of a permanent climate and energy dialogue platform** in order that citizens, regional authorities and all stakeholders have their say in the formulation of long-term strategies and national climate and energy plans, enhancing more transparency and inclusiveness in policy-making and making sure regional authorities have a say.
2. The **impact of the national energy and climate plans on regions** should be properly and thoroughly assessed and evaluated and become an integral part of these plans.
3. Member states should formulate how **societal support** is secured in their plans in a fixed part in the national energy and climate plans. Regional governments have a central role in creating societal support for the energy transition. It is not at national but predominantly at regional level that large businesses, SMEs and local citizens are stimulated to participate in initiatives that are needed to achieve the energy goals at both European and national level. Without considering the need for societal support and acknowledging the leading role the regions play in this, the EU and the member states risk not achieving the ambitious goals they have committed themselves to.

Regional challenges

Furthermore, there are three regional issues that need to be addressed and taken into account in the creation of the national energy and climate plan.

Suitable legislative framework at national level

Regional governments are highly ambitious in the energy transition and they are key in enabling the necessary steps that lead to the long-term structural change for a more sustainable energy future. However, regional governments operate within a legislative framework that is determined at national level. This framework is often not suitable for supporting the transition towards the use

renewable energy. This is limiting the efforts that contribute to the goals at European and national level and therefore needs to be adjusted.

Fair division of regional contribution in energy production

The Netherlands can be seen as a small scale model of the European Union. It consists of both densely populated areas and rural areas. The urbanized western part of the country consumes more energy than it is able to produce from renewable sources. On the contrary, the peripheral areas produce more energy than they need and therefore, they are the ones providing the cities with the required energy. The EU demands the member states to formulate how they will address this challenge. The national government determines to which extent each province or region should contribute to the national energy production. This results in a responsibility that needs to be supported by regional stakeholders. Citizens in particular can be motivated more easily to support an energy initiative that relates to their own region, than for national energy ambitions. The issue of societal support can lead to political difficulties.

Connecting stakeholders and supporting businesses

Regional governments have a central role in connecting stakeholders, such as companies, and stimulate them to contribute with their businesses to the energy goals. Although SMEs can potentially hugely benefit from the energy transition, it is very hard for SMEs to keep up with the rapid technological and organizational developments on a short-term basis, let alone invest in or commit to long-term targets. This makes it hard for regional governments to stimulate and facilitate regional companies in their needs and enable them to grow to their full potential.

A closer look at The Northern Netherlands: Top region in the energy transition

Being a national frontrunner region, the Northern Netherlands, situated at the North Sea coast, have close cross border cooperation with Germany. Together with all stakeholders, the three provinces of Groningen, Fryslân and Drenthe focus on (1) Large scale development of renewable energy production and (2) enabling bottom-up initiatives by their own citizens. With this approach, the Northern Netherlands are achieving concrete results. We have seen the fastest growth in renewable energy over the past years. With a production of 5,1MJ per resident, the Northern Netherlands are already supplying twice as much renewable energy per resident than the national average.

(1) Large scale Renewable Energy production and the Green Hydrogen Economy

As a coastal region, the Northern Netherlands are supporting both the development of large scale off shore wind farms in the North Sea and an increased interconnectivity with the German and Scandinavian power grid. The large-scale renewable electricity production (especially offshore wind) creates new challenges to maintaining balance in the regional energy system. In order to face this challenge, the Northern Netherlands developed a Roadmap towards a Green Hydrogen Economy, which will facilitate the energy transition in the fields of chemistry, transportation and electricity.

The large scale energy production, combined with the existing knowledge infrastructure and the large-scale chemical cluster make the Northern Netherlands uniquely positioned in order to develop this Green Hydrogen Economy. The existing gas infrastructure can be retrofitted to transport green hydrogen in both an easy and affordable way.

(2) Enabling bottom-up initiatives

All three Northern Netherlands provinces have their regionally tailored approach. Each province is organizing a societal dialogue on the requirements for the regional energy transition. In these processes local communities are asked to take part in the spatial translation of the energy targets in their own area. At the same time, every province takes a leading role in stimulating home-owners, SMEs, knowledge centers, and local and regional governments to contribute to energy efficiency.

Examples of regional initiatives:

- **The Province of Drenthe** is the initiative of the Expedition towards Energy Neutral living 2040: a regional network of over 100 stakeholders consisting of local governments, housing associations, construction- and installation sector, private local energy cooperatives, tenants associations and banks and estate agents.
- **The Province of Fryslân** is organizing local “Sinnetafels” in which local residents, SMEs and other stakeholders decide together on how to achieve in its goals regarding the Energy Transition in their neighborhood, town or village.
- **The Province of Groningen** with its cluster of heavy-industry has developed an approach to save energy in several major factories.

Production of renewable energy per resident



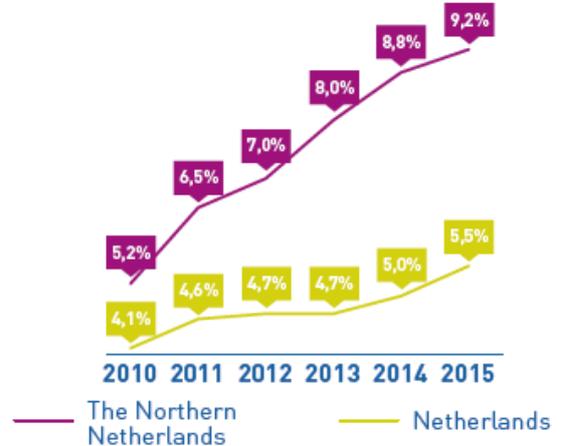
The Northern Netherlands
(5.071 MJ)



Netherlands
(2.515 MJ)

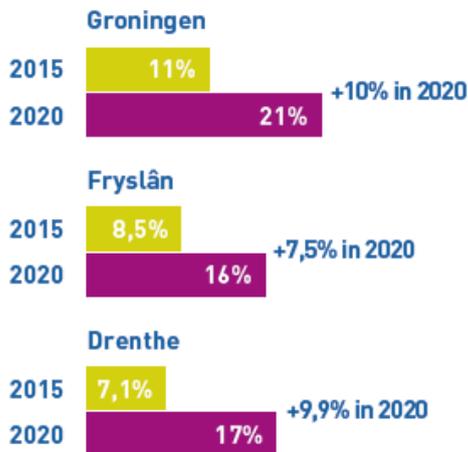
The Northern Netherlands are already supplying twice as much renewable energy per resident as the national average

Renewable energy (%)

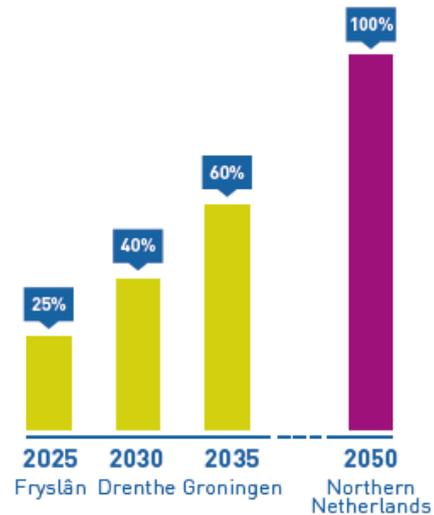


The Northern Netherlands have seen the fastest growth in renewable energy over the past few years

Results and targets for energy neutrality per province, short-term



The energy-neutral ambitions per province, long-term



More than
6,3%
of households have solar panels
(national avg = 4,4%)



more than
30.000
jobs in the energy sector



more than
15,5%
of the green jobs in the Netherlands



of which more than
7.000
are jobs in the sustainable energy sector