

Publication

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Opportunities for strengthening the position of the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany in the economic core area of continental Northwest Europe

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Preface

This advice from the Advisory Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management differs in a number of aspects from the recommendations normally produced by the Council.

The advice clearly has an international orientation: the Council propagates a wider European regional collaboration among the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany, in an area characterised by a large degree of economic interdependency that has been given the working title of "Eurodelta".

The advice goes beyond the policy and work areas of transport, public works and water management: the Council propagates for the Eurodelta area a close coherence between policy and implementation activities in spheres such as economic development, spatial planning, construction and maintenance of infrastructure facilities, traffic, transport and logistics.

The advice is not so much aimed at analysing and solving problems and bottlenecks, but is rather focused on actively mapping and utilising opportunities and challenges.

The advice is still in an exploratory stage, and is in certain aspects based upon 'working hypotheses' rather than upon hard conclusions from existing policy research or the Council's own research.

The advice points mostly to possible courses of action and makes no claim to be exhaustive; in fact, never in the past has the Council encountered an advice procedure where in every subsequent discussion new information emerged that had not been touched before. All discussion partners appear to have one or more pieces of the Eurodelta 'jigsaw', but there is no shared information to complete the puzzle.

Against this background the Council has decided to label this advice as an "observation advice".

And finally: when discussing the draft advice in various circles, the Council encountered a diversity of reactions to the line of approach the Council has taken and to the courses of action proposed by the Council in this advice. Those reactions ranged from highly positive to very negative. The subject matter of this advice is therefore controversial, to say the least.

That is one of the reasons why the Council's recommendations are particularly inviting those who feel themselves addressed by this advice to move into action, in order to utilise any opportunities that may be created as a result of wider European regional collaboration among the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany.

ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR TRANSPORT, PUBLIC WORKS AND WATER MANAGEMENT

F. de Zeeuw
Chair

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Summary

Collaboration in the economic core area of continental Northwest Europe

In this advice the Advisory Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management calls for attention to opportunities for strengthening the position of the Netherlands through active and broad-based European regional collaboration between those parts of the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany that show a strong economic coherence. The areas in question in the three countries together comprise the economic core area in continental Northwest Europe, referred to by the working title of "Eurodelta" in this document. The Council believes that wider European regional collaboration in fields such as economic development, spatial planning, construction and maintenance of infrastructure facilities, traffic, transport and logistics may lead to a win-win situation for all three countries involved.

Demarcation of the research area: a working hypothesis

By way of a working hypothesis, the Council has drawn the research boundary lines around an area that is thought to have much in common in the fields of the economy, spatial planning, traffic, transport and logistics. This hypothetical area consists roughly of the "Randstad" urban agglomeration in the west and the "corridor provinces" in the east and south of the Netherlands, Flanders including Brussels and Liège in Belgium, and the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany.

The ambitions of a metropolis, but how to achieve them?

Looking at this geographically united area in continental Northwest Europe on a world scale, it appears that we are dealing with the number three in the world of areas with metropolitan characteristics in terms of urbanisation, density of population and economic productivity. Number one on this list is the area from Tokyo to Kyoto in Japan, while the area from Boston to Washington in the USA ranks as number two.

The Eurodelta area has four large urban clusters, each with its own international 'ambitions of a metropolis': the Randstad/Delta metropolis, Brabantstad, the Flemish Diamond and the Ruhr Area. Would it be wise for each submetropolis individually (or even cities or wings individually) to compete on the world market for business locations, investments and the like, or would it be better to look as a group for an effective mixture of complementing one another and mutual competition? Such questions emerge when the focus is on the greater economic coherence within the entire area.

This wider European regional area also includes less densely populated and built-up areas profiling themselves (formally or factually) as a so-called 'Euregion': Euregion Twente, the Arnhem-Nijmegen region, Euregion Zuid-Limburg, the Rhine/Schelde Delta and others. Some of the relevant questions in this respect include: Can we observe any changing patterns within the border regions, and if so, which ones? What initiatives are taken in the border regions, are there any specific border region problems, and to what extent would they need support from the national governments in order to break down barriers?

European regional cooperation receives little consideration in major policy documents, more attention in various implementation measures

Since the Eurodelta area covers three different countries, it is seldom seen as one coherent area and in practical terms there is (as yet) little administrative and policy collaboration from the three national governments involved in this area.

In the three major Dutch policy documents for 2004 (Peaks in the Delta, Space and Mobility) hardly any consideration is given to possible international regional coherence in this area. Although the Eurodelta area is visually indicated in the policy documents on space and mobility, no concrete policy conclusions have been formulated as yet.

This situation is now changing quickly in various implementation measures prompted by the major policy documents. The implementation agenda of the Policy Document on Mobility shows more specifically international perspectives and resolutions for action. In line with the Policy Document on Space, the relationships with the neighbouring countries are explicitly dealt with in a position paper. Very recently (November 2005) the Netherlands and North Rhine–Westphalia signed a declaration of intent to further strengthen their mutual economic ties.

The Council wholeheartedly supports these recent developments, and advocates far more attention to a wider European regional collaboration. The Council believes that the options of mutually coordinated, broad-based European regional policy in the Eurodelta area between the European and national authorities have not been sufficiently explored, i.e. in those parts of the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany which show a strong economic coherence.

Economic coherence and interrelationship in the Eurodelta area

The Council has tried to obtain figures on the actual economic coherence and interrelationship in the Eurodelta area. The figures warrant the following conclusions (source: NEA sample survey for 1995 and 2002, as well as the prognosis for 2020).

On average, half (50%) of the (value of) goods imports in parts of the research area comes from other parts of the research area (approx. 30% comes from other EU countries, approx. 20% comes from countries outside the EU).

As regards the Dutch part of the area, the percentage is well above the area average: almost 60% of imports in the Dutch part of the research area comes from other parts of the research area. As for the Belgian and German parts of the research area, the import figures are 42% in both cases.

The export figures are similar: on average half (50%) the value of goods exports from parts of the research area goes to other parts of the research area (approx. 40% goes to other EU countries and approx. 10% goes to countries outside the EU).

As regards the Dutch part of the area, the percentage is well above the area average: more than 60% of the export from the Dutch part of the Eurodelta area goes to other parts of the Eurodelta area. For the Belgian and German parts of the research area the percentages are 43% and 37% respectively.

The mutual import/export relationships (source: NEA figures for 2002) also indicate a very strong mutual economic interrelationship between the three regions of the Eurodelta area: of the overall Dutch exports to Belgium (33 billion euro) no less than 94% (!) remains in the Belgian part of the research area, consisting of Flanders with the inclusion of Brussels and Liège. Of the overall Dutch exports to Germany (58.5 billion euro) no less than 45% (!) remains in North Rhine–Westphalia.

Of the overall German exports to the Netherlands (EUR 39.3 billion) almost 89% remains in the Dutch part of the research area, consisting of the Randstad, Overijssel, Gelderland, Zuid–Limburg, Noord–Brabant and Zeeland. Of the overall German exports to Belgium (EUR 33.2 billion) almost 85% remains in the area of Flanders, with the inclusion of Brussels and Liège.

Of the overall Belgian exports to the Netherlands (EUR 19.4 billion) 95% remains in the Dutch part of the research area, consisting of the Randstad and the provinces Overijssel, Gelderland, Zuid-Limburg, Noord-Brabant and Zeeland.

Of the overall Belgian exports to Germany (EUR 37.5 billion) 45% remains in North Rhine-Westphalia. Almost all these figures have risen since 1995 and are expected to keep rising for the next 15 years until 2020.

Availability and reliability of figures

The magnitude of these figures and ratios points unmistakably at a very large degree of economic coherence and interrelationship in the Eurodelta area. Nevertheless, there is quite some confusion among those involved about the correctness and reliability of the figures. For although there are national and domestic regional statistics available, as well as statistics on the smaller NUTS regions in Europe, there are hardly – if any – reliable figures available on the larger regional interrelationships in Europe.

In the opinion of the Council there is an urgent need for more specific figures on the internal coherence within the economic core area of Northwest Europe, which the main national and international players can agree upon.

Changing patterns in the border areas

With regard to the border areas, the Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management has formulated the following working hypothesis: in the years to come, the abolition of European internal borders and the consequential harmonisation will lead, particularly in the border regions, to accelerated economic, social and demographic pattern changes.

In practice, the following two types of pattern changes can be observed in and around the border regions:

- In recent years an increasing number of collaborative organisations have tried to formulate and monitor cross-border initiatives and projects at a regional/local level.
- There is an active shift in cross-border traffic through actual changes in areas such as business location, doing business, working, living, shopping, going out, studying, etc.

There are countless collaborative organisations and initiatives in the border regions. Examples include the Euregion Twente, the Arnhem-Nijmegen Region, the Euregion Maas-Rhine around Zuid-Limburg, the Rhine/Schelde Delta organisation, the consultative body of the Rhine Chambers of the Chambers of Commerce, the Acceleration Agenda Task Force in Zuid-Limburg, the consultations taking place between the cities of Maastricht, Aachen, Hasselt and Liège, and many other permanent or temporary project-based collaborative organisations.

In virtually all the discussions held during the exploratory study between the Council and those directly involved from the border regions the same arguments were heard: there would be an active shift in cross-border traffic through actual changes in areas such as business location, doing business, working, living, shopping, going out, studying, etc. This document provides various examples.

As with the figures, there is no authorised information available on what is actually going on in the border regions. For both observed types of 'pattern change', targeted research is needed to establish the extent of cross-border collaboration initiatives and the pattern changes in the behaviour of people and businesses that actually occur in the border regions.

Administrative incongruence

The term “administrative incongruence” refers to the political-administrative problem whereby parts of the economic core area, as defined by the Council in this advice, are located at different levels in a political-administrative sense. For instance, the prime ministers of the German federal states are primarily supposed to consult with their Dutch administrative counterparts – the royal commissioners – and the Dutch prime minister mainly does business with the German federal chancellor. In the relationship with Flanders it is not always clear whether the Flemish or the federal Belgian prime minister is the one to go to. Experience shows that this leads to complications in the political and administrative arena. Questions are regularly raised as to who should be the (equal-level) administrative discussion partners and under what circumstances they should consult with one another.

Effective collaboration and proper consultation in the Eurodelta area will therefore only be achieved when the parties involved are prepared to resolve the existing problem of administrative incongruence. This issue demands explicit consideration. Meanwhile there are some hopeful signs that at the highest political level the relationships between the Netherlands and Flanders and between the Netherlands and North Rhine-Westphalia are becoming more and more flexible. But the issue demands continuous consideration, particularly at the ‘lower’ levels of contact.

The major cross-border issues

The so-called ‘large projects’, often politically sensitive issues, play an important and recurring role in the relationship with our neighbouring countries Belgium and Germany. In addition there are some central policy themes demanding a cross-border approach by definition. Generally speaking, these complex and politically awkward issues, each with their own history.

In the relationship with Belgium, the main issues at stake are the Westerschelde and the southern section of the HSL high-speed railway link. In the relationship with Germany, it concerns the Betuwe railway line and the eastern section of the HSL. In the relationship with both neighbouring countries, the issues at stake are the so-called Iron Rhine, as well as fresh water, water quality, and air quality (fine dust, NO₂ content, CO₂ content). Most of these issues have a lead time of many years. In some circles as well as in the media, these projects are regularly referred to as “a pain in the neck”.

From the discussions the Council held with regional and local authorities and representatives from the business world, it even appears that people in those circles feel that the complexity and/or political sensitivity of some of these issues forms an obstacle to other collaborative relationships that could be effective among the three countries.

The Council does not wish to enter into an evaluation of these signals, save to say there are positive developments in various areas as well.

Firstly, that goes for the water dossier, where there is – so to say – a “natural need” for consultation between countries sharing one or more rivers, or who depend on one another in other ways in the area of water management and water quality. Positive developments have also recently been observed in other major cross-border projects, such as the recent decision by North Rhine-Westphalia regarding further research into the connection between the German and Dutch sections of the Betuwe railway line, or the breakthrough in the use of the Westerschelde as a shipping route earlier this year.

It is essential that these important cross-border issues are carefully studied in the next few years, bearing in mind the strong economic coherence and interrelationship that exist among large parts of the Netherlands, the greater Flanders area, and North Rhine-Westphalia.

Recommendations: towards a common vision of the future

In the opinion of the Council, the ultimate aim of the recommendations provided in this observation advice is:

To develop a *joint Dutch-Belgian-German strategic vision* of the future of the economic core area in continental Western Europe, which for each of the three countries involved is a crucial pillar to support their own national economy. This vision of the future can then be translated into specific policy action (coordinated if necessary) in the fields of economic development, spatial planning, improvement/construction of infrastructure facilities, mobility, traffic, transport and logistics, and improvement of water and air quality.

For some people this may sound as many bridges too far, as well as absolutely unachievable for now, or even undesirable. For others it may sound as a logical and in the long term unavoidable development in a rapidly globalising world. It will be clear that the Council shares the latter opinion.

The international business world is already used to collaborating with competitors in one area while remaining rivals in other areas. Similar alternating strategic relationships may also be effective among governments and intermediary organisations, although these are not that common as yet.

The Council would argue in favour of targeted experiments involving joint international promotion of the Eurodelta area, with the subsequent actual acquisition taking place in the usual manner at an individual level (of a country, a sub-region, a municipality or a company).

The following recommendations are directed at the three most important central government departments involved: the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, and the Ministry of Economic Affairs. However, the process that the Council would like to see started would benefit if mainly others would set the ball rolling. The ministers involved are therefore asked to play a stimulating and actively supportive role and/or to commission research reports in certain areas. The Council recommendations are therefore particularly meant for "those who feel themselves addressed" in order to utilise any opportunities that may be created as a result of wider European regional collaboration among the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany.

1. Encourage *enthusiastic organisations and individuals* from the Netherlands, Flanders and North Rhine-Westphalia to join forces in a public/private initiative in order to formulate an agenda for the path along which closer collaboration in the Eurodelta area can best take shape, and to define the priority actions which should be implemented first.

The potential initiators could include representatives from the four so-called sub-metropolises (Delta metropolis/Randstad, Brabantstad, Flemish Diamond and the 'Ruhr metropolis'), but also organisations in the border areas, such as European regional collaborative arrangements or the Arnhem-Nijmegen Region (KAN). Other initiators and/or active pioneers of a Eurodelta initiative could include nationwide intermediary organisations (e.g. the Holland International Distribution Council), groups of companies for whom the Eurodelta area is an important market, directly

involved individuals from Provincial and City Councils who deal with cross-border activities, Chambers of Commerce, etc.

The Council is pleased to see that the Board of Governors of the Arnhem-Nijmegen Region (which will acquire the formal status of city region as of 1 January 2006) is prepared to take the initiative for a "Eurodelta conference" to be held in the spring of 2006. At this conference, participants will work out together with other interested parties the best way to formulate an agenda for wider European regional collaboration between relevant organisations in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany.

2. Encourage *planning agencies and research institutes* in the Netherlands, North Rhine-Westphalia and Flanders to make more use of each other's data and to formulate more "borderless" research projects in which the research area is not restricted by national administrative borders.

Encourage policy-preparing authorities to make available clear and authorised figures on economic interdependence in the entire Eurodelta area, and on relevant pattern changes in the border regions as soon as possible.

Special consideration should be given to specific research and development projects jointly presented to the European Union by the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. These projects would have a much greater chance of success in the allocation procedure when supported by two or even three member states right from the start.

3. Carry out a *comparative study of other existing large urban networks* in the world, where economic interrelationships also play an important role; find out which unique propositions are available in the economic core area of Northwest Europe; and also investigate whether the Eurodelta area, as provisionally defined by the Council, is the most workable demarcation in practical terms. One could, for instance, elaborate on experiences gained during the so-called Eurbanet studies in 2000, which involved a comparison of four Northwest European Metropolitan Areas, i.e. the Randstad conurbation, the 'Flemish Diamond', the Ruhr Area and the area around Edinburgh-Glasgow.
4. Investigate, partly on the basis of the study results from (3), the most effective manner of *promoting the Eurodelta area in other countries as one single area*. To American, Chinese or Indian companies, or companies from other emerging economies, it does not really matter whether a company location is situated in the Netherlands, in Belgium or in western Germany. They are far more concerned with the required level of facilities and with accessibility, rather than the administrative borders within Europe. From outside Europe, the European northwest coast is regarded as simply a single "Western Gateway to Europe". For that reason it is important to promote the area in other countries as a single, interconnected network of facilities.
5. Encourage governments to place the issue of *broad-based European regional collaboration* between the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany on the various *political agendas* and explicitly consider the available options for effectively resolving the problems of administrative incongruence. Stimulate bilateral consultation at various levels. Conduct tripartite discussions as necessary, where the immediately responsible administrators can sit around the table without this being regarded as "administratively inappropriate". A good example is the summit currently being prepared for the spring of 2006 for senior officials and politicians

from the Netherlands and North Rhine-Westphalia. Organise similar meetings with Flanders and jointly take the initiative to bring these three parties together.

1 Introduction

In this observation advice the Advisory Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management is calling attention to opportunities that can strengthen the position of the Netherlands through active and broad-based European regional collaboration between those parts of the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany with strong economic interrelationships. This area is the economic core area in continental Northwest Europe, and is in this advice referred to by the working title of "Eurodelta", further explained in the appendix. In the opinion of the Council, a stronger position in and of the Eurodelta in coming years will be stimulated through targeted coordination and collaboration in policy fields such as economic development, spatial planning, infrastructure, traffic, transport and logistics, quality of water and air, etc. Such wider European regional collaboration may lead to a win-win situation for the three countries concerned.

The Council also believes in the urgency of considering the Eurodelta area as an integrated whole in the years to come. Large international shipping companies from the US, and especially from China and other emerging economies, appear to be interested in the first instance in integrated, cohesive information on logistical facilities in continental Northwest Europe. They wish to be informed on the total network of seaports and airports, and the logistical facilities around Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Antwerp and other cities, on the various transport links, and particularly on the various types of links to the German hinterland via North Rhine-Westphalia. Only then will these international companies be interested in the national differences that are relevant to setting up a business, specific facilities in sub-regions and the like. The international trading motto for the Eurodelta area should therefore be: "Joint promotion, individual acquisition". But there are also other reasons that underline the importance of wider European regional collaboration between the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. These reasons will be discussed in this document.

This observation advice will first address the demarcation of the research area the Council has chosen as working hypothesis (chapter 1) and the figures on economic coherence and interrelationship in this area that the Council has come across (chapter 2). This is followed by an overview of the specific initiatives and bottlenecks occurring in the border areas between the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany, and the pattern changes that can be observed (chapter 3). Attention is then devoted to two potential obstacles that could hinder any mutual collaboration (chapter 4). The advice concludes in chapter 5 with a call for drafting a common vision of the future by the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany for the Eurodelta area, which is a crucial pillar supporting the national economy in each of these countries. The chapter ends with a number of specific recommendations for continuing to explore the area, by joining forces and information flows and by taking coherence and mutual dependency seriously. The appendix contains an explanation of the Council's working methods and an index of reference materials.

In conclusion: given the fact that the term of office of the Advisory Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management in its current composition expires at the end of 2005, the Council was restricted to drafting a general, exploratory overview of the situation. The various aspects of the issues could not all be substantiated with hard figures. However, in the opinion of the Council the results of these explorations are such that reporting to the Cabinet is deemed desirable. Our observations go beyond the policy terrain of the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, and require, within the Netherlands at least, further coordination and collaboration between the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, and the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

Because of the exploratory character of the analyses the Council conducted in preparation of this advice, the Council deliberately chose to contact only those involved in the Netherlands, and not to approach the relevant Belgian and/or German contact persons during the exploratory study. The Council noticed that the subject matter appears to stir quite some emotions, both in a positive and in a negative sense. With this document the Council first and foremost aims to put the subject on the Dutch political agendas.

2 Demarcation of the research area: a working hypothesis

In accordance with the 2005 programme of activities of the Advisory Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management, the Council has conducted an exploratory study of the possibilities of strengthening the Dutch position in the economic core area of continental Northwest Europe.

By way of a working hypothesis the Council has set the boundaries around an area that is likely to have a large degree of coherence and interrelationship in such fields as economy, spatial planning, traffic, transport and logistics. This hypothetical area roughly covers the Randstad conurbation and the so-called "corridor provinces" in the east and south of the Netherlands, Flanders including Brussels and Liège in Belgium, and the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany.

Just to be perfectly clear: the area defined is a *preliminary research area*. The Council does not recommend marking the area in an *administrative* sense.



Figure 1 NUTS-2 regions included in the Council's hypothetical research area

Source: NEA report to the Advisory Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management, 2005

The NUTS classification is the European standard for regional territorial units used in Eurostat statistics. In the Netherlands and in Belgium the NUTS-2 classification coincides with the division into provinces. The research area in the Netherlands consists of 8 provinces, in Belgium of 7 provinces, and in Germany of the 5 regions of the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia.

Looking at this geographically united area in continental Northwest Europe on a world scale, it appears that we are dealing with the number three in the world of areas with

metropolitan characteristics in terms of urbanisation, density of population and economic productivity. Number one on this list is the area from Tokyo to Kyoto in Japan, while the area from Boston to Washington in the USA ranks as number two.

The Council wondered if, from the viewpoint of economic coherence, there would be reasons for extending the hypothetical research area of the Council. For instance, in Belgium the entire area of the Walloon provinces could be included (in addition to Liège), in the north of France the area around Lille and/or in Germany the area extending to Frankfurt (in the federal state of Hessen). From the preliminary study results it appears that the Walloon provinces and the area around Lille are oriented more toward the south (i.e. the rest of France) than towards the north (Flanders and the Netherlands). The area around Frankfurt is also an important economic and logistical centre, but it maintains far fewer intensive economic relationships with the Netherlands and Flemish Belgium than North Rhine–Westphalia does. Besides, it is located in one of Germany's other federal states.

From an administrative viewpoint it would perhaps make more sense to draw 'comfortable' border lines in order to promote mutual collaboration, e.g. between the whole of the Netherlands and Belgium on the one hand and North Rhine–Westphalia on the other hand, or possibly even between the Benelux countries on the one hand and North Rhine–Westphalia, and possibly Hessen, in Germany on the other hand.

In its exploratory study the Council has primarily chosen to focus on economic coherence and has therefore restricted its research to the hypothetical area outlined in Figure 1. This area is an important driving force for the European economy, much like the economic core areas around London and Paris and northern Italy.

The fact that the research area of the Council is also in practical terms one of the most important economic core areas in continental Northwest Europe is (unfortunately) strikingly shown in the satellite image below, which depicts the emission of fine dust in Europe in 2003 and 2004.

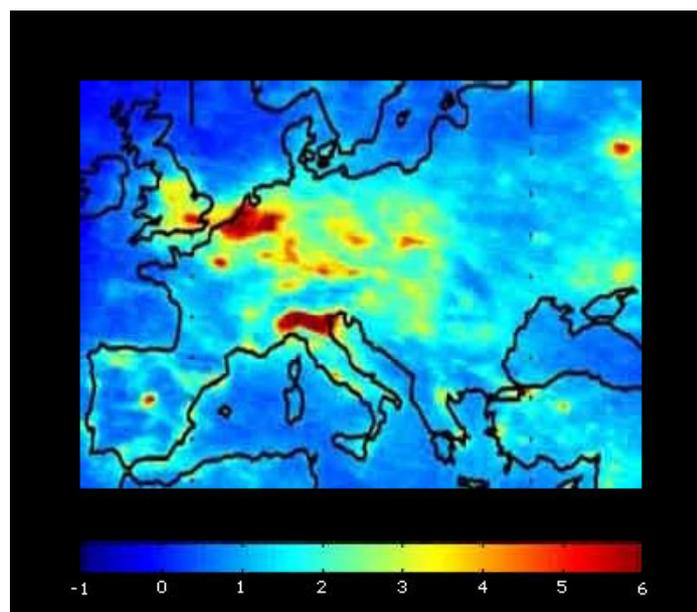


Figure 2 NO_x emissions in Europe from 2003 to 2004

Source: Envisat (Environmental Satellite) of the European Space Agency (ESA)

In the Policy Documents on Space and Mobility, both published in 2004, the economy and economic coherence are mentioned as the major driving forces behind Dutch policy in the field of spatial planning, traffic and transport, and logistics. The Council wholeheartedly supports this clear stance in this observation advice, as it has done in earlier recommendations.

However, economies and economic relationships do not stop at national borders. The Council believes that this also applies to policies on spatial planning, traffic, transport and logistics. However, the aforementioned policy documents seem to focus mainly on a national policy that not only de jure but also de facto stops at the administrative borders of the Netherlands.

Although the "Peaks in the Delta" policy document (2004) has a decidedly more international focus than the policy documents on space and mobility, it still puts the emphasis on "national area-targeted economic priorities".

In practice, policies with regard to economic development, spatial planning, construction or improvement of infrastructure facilities, traffic and transport are still mainly national policies at this point in time.

The Implementation Agenda of the Policy Document on Mobility now includes specific international perspectives and action plans. In line with the Policy Document on Space, relationships with neighbouring countries have explicitly become the subject of a position paper. A declaration of intent was recently signed by the Netherlands and North Rhine-Westphalia (on 23 November 2005) with the aim of further strengthening mutual economic ties.

The Council wholeheartedly supports these recent developments. As well as the appropriate and permanent consideration required for national policy, it is also important to pay attention to the policy coherences in the relationships with the immediate border areas of Flanders (including Brussels and Liège) and North Rhine-Westphalia. Broadening the policy focus could lead to other policy options, certainly when this is done in close collaboration between the Dutch, Belgian and German parts of the Eurodelta area.

First and foremost, when profiling itself in the international market for goods supply and transport, the establishment of industries, etc., the Eurodelta area should present itself as a coherent unit in comparison with its competitors within Europe, such as the areas around the seaports in northern Germany and western France. Mutual competition within the Eurodelta will always remain relevant, of course, but a concerted promotion should precede individual acquisition. In the larger Eurodelta area it is relevant from a policy perspective to look beyond national administrative borders. For instance, from a national Dutch viewpoint, parts of the provinces of Gelderland, Noord-Brabant and Zuid-Limburg are located in the periphery of our country. However, from a wider European regional viewpoint, these areas are in the centre of the economic core area of Northwest Europe, even though they act as a 'bridge' between the larger conurbations and the productivity of these border regions is still weak at this point in time. What policy could be devised in light of this observation?

In a general sense, the Eurodelta area has four large urban clusters, each with its own international 'ambitions of a metropolis': the Randstad/Delta metropolis, Brabantstad, the Flemish Diamond and the Ruhr Area. Would it be wise for each submetropolis individually (or even cities or wings individually) to compete on the world market for business locations, investments and the like, or would it be better to look as a group for an effective mixture of complementing one another and mutual competition? Such

questions emerge when the focus is on the greater economic coherence within the entire area.

In addition it would also be useful to address the questions to what is actually going on in the border regions. After all, this wider European regional area also includes less densely populated and built-up areas profiling themselves (formally or factually) as a so-called 'Euregion': Euregion Twente, the Arnhem-Nijmegen region, Euregion Zuid-Limburg, the Rhine/Schelde Delta and others. Some of the relevant questions in this respect include: Can we observe any changing patterns within the border regions, and if so, which ones? What initiatives are taken in the border regions, are there any specific border region problems, and to what extent would they need support from the national governments in order to break down barriers?

These questions are relevant for policy, but are not explicitly posed in the Policy Documents on Space and Mobility. As a consequence, these questions are also not answered. Although both documents include a visual representation of the wider European regional area covering the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany, there is no word about coherence in this area or any concrete policy measures based upon such coherence.

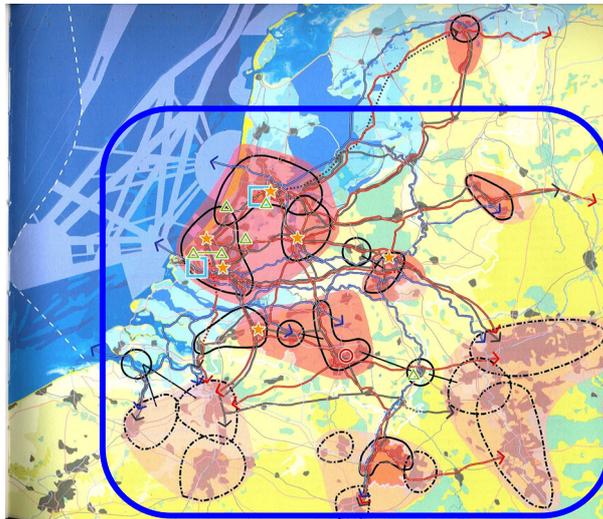


Figure 3 Map from the Policy Documents on Space and Mobility (2004)
The blue lines mark the Council's hypothetical research area

As the map clearly shows, the marked area consists of an interconnected network of metropolitan (sub)regions in a large part of the Netherlands, in the greater Flanders area and in North Rhine-Westphalia. Since the area covers three different countries, it is seldom regarded as one coherent area and in practical terms there is (as yet) little administrative and policy collaboration between the three national governments involved.

The Council wondered to what extent we should wish to try and change this concept in coming years, aiming to strengthen the international position of the Netherlands and of this economic core area as the "Western Gateway" from and to Europe in a global context. The Council believes that change should proceed. Between the European and the national policy levels, there are still many insufficiently explored options for a mutually coordinated broad-based European regional policy in the Eurodelta area, i.e. between those parts of the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany that show a large degree of economic coherence.

3 Coherence and interrelationship: but how exactly?

In this chapter we discuss the availability of reliable figures on the extent of economic coherence and interrelationship in the wider European regional area comprising the Netherlands, Flanders and North Rhine–Westphalia.

The availability of such reliable figures is limited. On the one hand there are mutually differing and/or incomparable figures in circulation, on the other hand some figures are actually unavailable. The general tenor of the figures that are available points to a large degree of economic interrelationship between the Dutch, Belgian and German sections of the economic core area in Northwest Europe. However, we do not have (sufficient) knowledge regarding the precise nature of this interrelationship. More insight is therefore required in order to formulate effective policy measures through benchmarking and/or monitoring of developments.

We start this chapter off with a brief outline of the area's recent history. We continue with a look at a recent international study on spatial economy, and finally we reflect on various figures, their availability and their reliability.

3.1 Developments over the past 50 years

Global economic developments and the unification and expansion of the European Community in the past 50 years have had an enormous impact on the region of Northwest Europe the Council is looking at in this advice. The mining industry has basically vanished. The steel industry was forced to undergo a radical overhaul with many job losses as a result. The shipbuilding industry in the Netherlands and Flanders has virtually disappeared. Labour-intensive industries such as textile manufacturing, electrotechnical manufacturing and electronics have largely moved overseas to Southeast Asia. The eastern European countries, with a well-trained workforce and low wage costs, are offering an attractive climate for the establishment of manufacturing companies. Within the international service industry, the utility sector, the communications industry and the entertainment sector, we are also observing increased internationalisation and expansion. Continued automation and expansion are also rife in the world of transport and distribution. The locations of new production and distribution centres, the mode of transport and the routing are continually being reconsidered. Or as the insiders are putting it: more and more businesses are becoming "footloose".

The above developments have some far-reaching consequences for the socio-economic situation in the areas involved. North Rhine–Westphalia is currently undergoing economic restructuring. German reunification and the expansion of the European Community have had a major impact on this process. In Rotterdam and Antwerp also, changes in transport and logistics have led to shifts on the labour market. On the axes between the three sub-areas, however, we can observe a relatively favourable development in employment thanks to business relocations, (foreign) establishments of new businesses, and economic restructuring. For instance, in Brabant and in the Kempen area in Belgium, the disappearance of the textile and mining industry and the reduction of the electrotechnical and electronics industry have been reasonably offset by the establishment of new industrial and logistics businesses. And on the connecting axes between the urban networks (e.g. the Randstad conurbation, Brabantstad, Maastricht–Aachen–Hasselt–Liège and the Flemish Diamond), new industries are popping up: newly established manufacturing companies and distribution centres

promote the growth of smaller cities, ensuring that steady modernisation and expansion of facilities is also reaching these areas.

3.2 Regional approach and spatial economy

The historical perspective is not the only way of describing the Eurodelta area. The main policy challenge lies in predicting the future development of this economic core area in Northwest Europe, the extent to which the underlying economic coherence in the area will grow and where such growth will take place, and in formulating the policies that would most effectively support this development. In other words, if the degree of economic coherence is large and increasing, how does this affect the policy choices made with regard to spatial planning, construction and improvement of infrastructure facilities, and traffic, transport and logistics as important pillars of economic activity? And how can we effectively strengthen the mutual relationships between these policy areas in the Eurodelta area?

Such questions have become all the more intriguing following the results of a recent study by the OECD (September 2005) into the economic growth of various regions in Europe and the development and effects of incentives.

The OECD has found that regional factors are far more important for economic growth (of a country) than national factors. More than 40% of GDP is generated in only 10% of the regions – and if the size of these regions is taken into account, the percentage is even higher (42%).

According to the OECD, this is a self-reinforcing process: regional components are becoming increasingly dominant, allowing urbanised regions to become stronger and stronger. This provides them with ever more opportunities to fulfil highly specialised functions and to recruit the necessary staff. With regard to the latter aspect, the OECD has observed that 45% of patents come from only 10% of the regions. According to the OECD, these results are at odds with current EU policy, which is aimed at supporting the weaker regions. This will not produce any results, says the OECD. The study results may help policymakers to search for ways to further increase the level of prosperity in their respective countries.

The overall conclusion of the OECD study is clear, i.e. that the regional component plays an ever-increasing role in economic development. The OECD concludes: "The continuing concentration of regional developments is the most striking phenomenon in geographic economic development."

The relationships between geographic decentralisation, spatial planning and organisation, and economic growth are the subject of the field of spatial economy. Several studies in this field are currently being conducted in our country, for instance by the Netherlands Institute for Spatial Research. Topics include the relationship between company locations and economic growth, the geographic sphere of influence of company locations in terms of their immediate markets for sales and purchasing, and knowledge exchange relationships. The Netherlands Institute for Spatial Research aims to paint a picture of where economic growth is taking place: in the core conurbations, in the intermediate areas, or in both. The latter option is most likely, so that the urban networks in the Netherlands, Belgium and North Rhine-Westphalia are expected to gradually link up. If that is the case, it may have important consequences with regard to the need for cross-border policies and administrative collaboration in the Eurodelta area.

3.3 Figures

The Council has first searched for figures from generally available sources. The main problem is the fact that there are statistics available for specific countries, for the European Union as a whole and for the NUTS regions within the EU, but far less on wider cross-border areas in the larger regions in Europe. Solving this problem at EU level has now also been put on the agenda of the spatial research programme ESPON (European Spatial Planning Observation Network), in an effort to allow an adequate comparison and positioning of areas and regions in Europe.

3.4 General sources

A first, rough look at the total area comprising the Netherlands, Belgium and North Rhine-Westphalia shows that the Gross Domestic Product (2003) of this area amounts to at least EUR 1,200 billion, divided among the Netherlands with EUR 434 billion, Belgium EUR 298 billion and North Rhine-Westphalia EUR 470 billion, against a total of approx. EUR 10,000 billion for the entire European Union of 25 countries. In other words, the area contributes for approximately 12% to the European economy.

In terms of population, the Netherlands, Belgium and North Rhine-Westphalia combined have at least 32 million residents on a total of 450 million residents in the entire European Union, i.e. a little over 7%. Of that number, more than 36% live in the Netherlands, 24% in Belgium, and more than 40% in North Rhine-Westphalia. If we compare this to the numbers 1 and 2 in world rankings of 'metropolitan areas', the results are as follows: number 1 (the area from Tokyo to Kyoto) has 60 million residents and number 2 (the area from Boston to Washington) has 39 million residents.

In terms of surface area, the Eurodelta covers some 2.8% of the total EU area.

In conclusion we can say that the area of the Netherlands, Belgium and North Rhine-Westphalia covers 2.8% of the EU surface area, is the home of 7% of the EU population, and contributes 12% to the European economy.

In all arguments on the Netherlands as a trading nation, Germany is mentioned as our main trading partner. True, but on closer consideration that is only half the story. The economic relationship of the Netherlands with North Rhine-Westphalia is many times more intensive than with the rest of Germany.

Recent figures (R&D in Europe, April 2005) show that almost half (43.5%) of the value of German imports from the Netherlands goes to North Rhine-Westphalia, while 27.3% of the total German exports to the Netherlands comes from North Rhine-Westphalia. In addition, the Netherlands is the main transport route for North Rhine-Westphalia as regards imports and exports from and to the rest of the world (the North Rhine-Westphalia share of the total German worldwide exports amounts to 18.2%).

North Rhine-Westphalia is therefore very valuable to the Dutch economy, and that also applies to the value of the Netherlands to the regional economy of this German federal state. A comparable interrelationship, although in absolute figures less extensive, exists between the Dutch and the Flemish economies. For instance, the Netherlands accounts for 12.2% of Flemish exports (equal to one-fifth of the total exports of Flanders to the large neighbouring countries).

3.5 Specific study commissioned by the Council

In view of this information from general sources, the Council has continued to search for reliable figures to either confirm or deny the hypothesis of a very strong economic coherence. For that purpose the Council requested NEA Transport Research and Training to collect relevant figures, specifically aimed at the research area as described in chapter 1 of this advice. Below is an account of the most important figures the Council managed to obtain in this manner.

Imports (NEA figures for 1995, 2002, 2020)

Research area as a whole

The total value of imported goods in the Dutch, Belgian and German sections of the research area amounted to EUR 1,076 billion in 1995, EUR 1,512 billion in 2002 and a projected figure of EUR 2,524 billion in 2020. On average **half (50%)** of the value of goods imported to these parts of the research area comes from other parts of the research area (approx. 30% comes from the rest of the EU, approx. 20% comes from countries outside the EU).

Dutch part of the research area

As for the Dutch part of the area, this percentage is well above the area average: almost **60%** of imports in the Dutch part of the research area comes from other parts of the research area.

Belgian and German part of the research area

The percentages for the Belgian and German parts of the research area are around **42%**.

Value of goods imports to the Eurodelta area	X 1 billion euro	% of imports coming from		
		Parts of the Eurodelta	Other EU countries	Countries outside the EU
Figures 2002	1,512 = 100%	50%	30%	20%

Table 1 Share value of goods imports in the Eurodelta area by origin inside/outside the Eurodelta area itself

Value of goods imports to the Eurodelta area	Average import percentage from other parts of the Eurodelta area	Specific import percentage from other parts of the Eurodelta		
		Dutch part of the Eurodelta	Belgian part of the Eurodelta	German part of the Eurodelta
On the basis of average figures for 1995, 2002, 2020	50%	60%	42%	42%

Table 2 Share value of goods imports in the Eurodelta area by origin from other parts of the Eurodelta area

Exports (NEA figures 1995, 2002, 2020)

Research area as a whole

The total value of goods exports from the Dutch, Belgian and German parts of the research area amounted to EUR 1,045 billion in (1995), EUR 1,615 billion in 2002 and a projected figure of EUR 2,052 billion in 2020. On average **half (50%)** of the value of

goods exported from parts of the research area goes to other parts of the research area. (approx. 40% goes to the rest of the EU, approx. 10% goes to countries outside the EU).

Dutch part of the Eurodelta area

As for the Dutch part of the area, this percentage is well above the area average: almost 60% of the export from the Dutch part of the research area goes to other parts of the Eurodelta area.

Belgian and German part of the Eurodelta area

As for the Belgian and German parts of the research area these percentages are approx. 43% and. 37% respectively.

Value of goods exports from the Eurodelta area	X 1 billion euro	Percentage of exports going to		
		Parts of the Eurodelta	Other EU countries	Countries outside the EU
Figures 2002	1,615 = 100%	50%	40%	10%

Table 3 Share value of goods exports from the Eurodelta area by destination inside/outside the Eurodelta area itself

Value of goods exports from the Eurodelta area	Average export percentage for other parts Eurodelta	Specific export % to other parts of the Eurodelta		
		Dutch part of the Eurodelta	Belgian part of the Eurodelta	German part of the Eurodelta
On the basis of average figures for 1995, 2002, 2020	50%	60%	43%	37%

Table 4 Share value of goods exports from the Eurodelta area by destination to other parts of the Eurodelta area

General conclusion with regard to import and export figures for 1995, 2002 and 2020

The Dutch, Belgian and German parts of the research area had, have and will have a very strong economic interrelationship with the area as a whole. The Netherlands is unmistakably the leader in this field. From an economic viewpoint, the research area appears to be even more important to the Netherlands than to Belgium and Germany.

The NEA study commissioned by the Council has produced more information to illustrate the strong mutual interrelationship.

Mutual import/export relationships (NEA figures 2002)

Dutch exports

Of the total Dutch exports to Belgium (EUR 33 billion) 94% (!) remains in the Belgian part of the research area, consisting of Flanders, including Brussels and Liège. Of the total Dutch export to Germany (EUR 58.5 billion) 45% (!) remains in North Rhine-Westphalia.

German exports

Of the total German exports to the Netherlands (EUR 39.3 billion) almost 89% remains in the Dutch part of the research area, consisting of the Randstad conurbation and the provinces of Overijssel, Gelderland, Zuid-Limburg, Noord-Brabant and Zeeland. Of the

total German exports to Belgium (EUR 33.2 billion) almost 85% remains in the Flanders area, including Brussels and Liège.

Belgian exports

Of the total Belgian exports to the Netherlands (EUR 19.4 billion) 95% remains in the Dutch part of the research area, consisting of the Randstad conurbation and the provinces of Overijssel, Gelderland, Zuid-Limburg, Noord-Brabant and Zeeland. Of the total Belgian export to Germany (EUR 37.5 billion) 45% remains in North Rhine-Westphalia.

Value of goods exports Figures 2002	Value of goods exports destined for the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany as a whole and as export percentage destined for the Dutch, Belgian and German parts of the Eurodelta					
	To the Netherlands as a whole	To the Dutch part of the Eurodelta	To Belgium as a whole	To the Belgian part of the Eurodelta	To Germany as a whole	To the German part of the Eurodelta
Exports from the Netherlands	N/A	N/A	EUR 33 billion	94%	EUR 58.5 billion	45%
Exports from Belgium	EUR 19.4 billion	95%	N/A	N/A	EUR 37.5 billion	45%
Exports from Germany	EUR 39.3 billion	89%	EUR 33.2 billion	85%	N/A	N/A

Table 5 Share value of goods exports from parts of the Eurodelta area to destinations within the Eurodelta area

Almost all of these figures are up compared with 1995, and going by the prognosis for 2020, the figures are likely to keep rising in the next 15 years.

General conclusion with regard to mutual import and export relationships

Of the total mutual import and export relationships between the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany, a significant part (71%!) takes place within the research area the Council has chosen as the working hypothesis to mark the economic core area in Northwest Europe. The Dutch, Belgian and German parts of this area have a very large degree of economic coherence.

In a similar manner, the Council has also requested NEA Transport Research and Training to map out the traffic and transport flows. These figures are for the most part in line with the import and export figures, but there are also differences of course. For instance, goods may be transported from the Netherlands, although they are imported from the UK. At the request of the Council, the flows of goods have been put in different categories, both by the type of goods and by modality.

For example, by far the largest "internal" flow of goods in the research area by volume consists of the transport of ore and metal scrap by inland shipping between Rotterdam and the Ruhr Area (32 million tons in 2002). Inland shipping of vehicles, machines and miscellaneous goods between Rotterdam and Antwerp (7 million tons in 2002) ranks third.

With regard to passenger traffic, measured by the number of one-way trips made in 2002, the top-5 in terms of "internal" origin and destination within the research area, is dominated by Belgium. The rankings 1 to 5 are as follows: 1. road trips from Brussels to Flemish Brabant (76 million one-way trips), 2. road trips from Noord-Holland to

Zuid-Holland (69 million trips), 3. road trips from Utrecht to Zuid-Holland (46 million trips), 4. road trips from Düsseldorf to Cologne (38 million trips) and 5. road trips from Brussels to East Flanders (33 million trips).

All these figures are included in the information file put together by the Council after its exploratory survey. This file is also available for viewing on the website of the Advisory Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management (see explanation in appendix 1). As a rule of thumb, the mutual coherences and dependencies are more visible in mutual trade relationships and cross-border transport of goods than in cross-border passenger traffic.

3.6 Availability and reliability of the figures

How reliable are these figures? As we mentioned in the introduction to this observation advice, the Council had limited opportunities for consistently checking these import/export figures with other sources.

In cases where the information could be checked, we noted similarities between the sources of the figures but also varying figures from different sources. Besides, some sources mention that certain statistics are not available, while other sources claim to have access to those figures.

A few examples

The figures for the total Dutch exports to Germany that remain in North Rhine-Westphalia are derived from two different sources. The EU R&D magazine puts the figure at 43.5% (2003), while NEA statistics (2002) put it at 45%. The figures from both sources are therefore in the same order of magnitude.

This is not the case with the figure from a third source, i.e. the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, stating that approximately 31.4% of the total Dutch exports to Germany remained in North Rhine-Westphalia in 2004. The absolute numbers provided by the Ministry of Economic Affairs also differ from the NEA figures. The discrepancy could have many different causes, from using statistics from different sources to a considerable reduction of the actual share of North Rhine-Westphalia as a destination for Dutch exports from 2002 to 2004.

Various figures are also available with regard to the relationship between the Netherlands and the greater Flanders area. According to sources referred to by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, 85% of Belgian exports to the Netherlands comes from Flanders, and 80% of Dutch exports to Belgium remains in Flanders. However, the NEA study yields higher figures (94% and 95% respectively!). Also, the Ministry of Economic Affairs alleges that a breakdown of these figures into the Flanders area, the Brussels region and the Liège region is not possible because the export and import statistics do not provide such a breakdown.

At this point in time the Council is not in a position to further scrutinise these and other differences. However, the Council believes there is an urgent need for more specific figures on the internal coherence within the economic core area of Northwest Europe. The major national and international players should agree on these figures.

After all, the "lower figures" also still point to very strong mutual economic interrelationships. Ideally, this would lead to closer administrative relationships, more effective coordination of traffic and transport systems, joint efforts for spatial planning in border areas and corridors, etc. in the next few years.

4 The border areas: pattern changes, opportunities and bottlenecks

With regard to the border areas, the Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management has formulated the following working hypothesis: in the years to come, the abolition of European internal borders and the consequential harmonisation will lead, particularly in the border regions, to accelerated economic, social and demographic pattern changes, in areas such as business locations, living, shopping, going out, studying and working.

The Council has therefore been searching for data to either confirm or deny the hypothesis. As was the case in establishing the mutual economic coherence and interrelationship in the Eurodelta area (comprising the Netherlands, the greater Flanders area and North Rhine–Westphalia), the border areas between the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany show strong signs of pattern changes in the form of indicative information. However, hard, reliable figures are not yet available.

4.1 Pattern changes

Two types of pattern changes are observed in and around the border regions:

- In recent years there have been an increasing number of collaborative organisations trying to formulate and monitor cross-border initiatives and projects at a regional/local level.
- There is an active shift in cross-border traffic through actual changes in areas such as business location, doing business, working, living, shopping, going out, studying, etc.

For both observed types of pattern change, targeted research is needed to establish the extent of cross-border collaboration initiatives and the pattern changes in the behaviour of people and businesses that actually occur in the border regions.

4.2 Collaboration initiatives: opportunities and bottlenecks

There are countless collaborative organisations and initiatives in the border regions. Examples include the Euregion Twente, the Arnhem–Nijmegen Region, the Euregion Maas–Rhine around Zuid–Limburg, the Rhine/Schelde Delta organisation, the consultative body of the Rhine Chambers of the Chambers of Commerce, the Acceleration Agenda Task Force in Zuid–Limburg, the consultations taking place between the cities of Maastricht, Aachen, Hasselt and Liège, and many other permanent or temporary project-based collaborative organisations.

In this respect we can observe just as many cross-border successes as frustrations near the country borders between the Netherlands and North Rhine–Westphalia and between the Netherlands and the greater Flanders area. All the collaboration initiatives intend to formulate new projects aiming to relax or abolish the legal-administrative and political obstructions imposed by the national borders.

It should be clear that many people and organisations in the border areas share certain interests. They look one another up and collaborate directly across national borders. At a national level, however, more attention is devoted to the national policy context and to collaboration (or policy competition) with other national governments around the major cross-border issues.

Collaboration at the regional and local level is conducted at a smaller scale, but is nonetheless relevant for the development of the economic and infrastructural coherence of the Eurodelta area as a whole. A good example of such collaboration is the Acceleration Agenda Task Force in Zuid-Limburg, which includes projects aimed at the city of Maastricht. For instance, a Dutch-German solar panel manufacturer is located right on the border and is used to test and compare the applicable laws and regulations. There are currently three industrial estates (on a total of 3600 industrial estates in the Netherlands) established right on the border. On the Dutch-German border there is Avantis near Heerlen and Europark near Coevorden (located just outside the Eurodelta area) and on the Dutch-Flemish border Hazeldonk-Meer near Breda. In these estates, companies are trying to do business in accordance with the laws and regulations of both countries involved, with all the complications such an operation brings about. Some more examples: various parties involved in regional logistics share an interest in solving the problems around the Iron Rhine as soon as possible, and for the area of the Euregion Maas-Rhine a common strategy has been developed aimed at stimulating cross-border public transport. Even a typically "Dutch" organisation like the Holland International Distribution Council (NDL) recently held a seminar in Antwerp together with its Flemish sister organisation, the Flemish Institute for Logistics (VIL). The seminar was intended for members of both organisations and discussed possibilities for closer collaboration in the area of the Rhine/Schelde Delta. The conclusion of this Dutch-Flemish logistics seminar: closer collaboration is in the interest of all parties involved.

Besides enthusiasm, virtually all these initiatives have something else in common: regional administrators, company representatives, Chambers of Commerce, and new collaborative organisations are complaining about the lack of interest and inflexible attitude of the national governments in The Hague, Brussels and Berlin with regard to any bottlenecks that occur, opportunities to speed up procedures, support for investments or permission for any experiments. They say that sometimes there are obstacles to direct cross-border collaboration that cannot be resolved without the help of national governments.

Fortunately the Dutch government seems to be showing more interest in this matter. The Implementation Agenda of the Policy Document on Mobility mentions the start of a study into bottlenecks in the major international transport routes from and to the Netherlands. Using this survey, the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management will draft an agenda for consultation with the neighbouring countries. The Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management has also been conducting cross-border coordination of traffic information and traffic management for some time. In addition, as a continuation of the Policy Document on Space, the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment has recently taken the initiative to develop strategic plans for the collaboration between the Netherlands and North Rhine-Westphalia in the area of spatial planning. The Ministry of Economic Affairs has also recently concluded innovation collaboration agreements with Flanders and North Rhine-Westphalia in the light of the Lisbon objectives. In the same vein, the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, as part of the so-called Rotterdam agenda, is working on an analysis of the spatial impact of EU policies and on stimulating transnational collaboration initiatives to strengthen European spatial structures.

The Council advocates devoting special attention to the coherence in the Eurodelta area and to the opportunities for strengthening this area through broad European regional collaboration between the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany, as part of these recent international policy orientations.

In addition to these small-scale actions and initiatives, limited though they may be from a national viewpoint, several manifestations and trade fairs are also planned for the years to come. These are likely to have a much greater effect than just regional or local impact in the border regions. An example is the Floriade flower show, which will be held in Venlo in 2012. Such projects, with a wide European regional and possibly even a European impact, should receive attention and support from national governments at an early stage. After all, they could become important role models for other cross-border collaboration projects.

The Council deems it desirable to develop a more comprehensive insight into the range of cross-border initiatives at a national level and into the possibilities of accelerating processes and eliminating bottlenecks via national interventions.

4.3 Observable pattern changes in the border regions

In virtually all the discussions held during the exploratory study between the Council and those directly involved from the border regions, the same arguments were heard: an active shift is taking place in cross-border traffic through actual changes in areas such as business location, doing business, working, living, shopping, going out, studying, etc.

However, from all those discussions it also seems that although almost everyone is able to give some anecdotal evidence, no one has an understanding of all of these pattern changes in their totality. The examples that were given vary widely and are in some cases not known nationwide. The following observations are given as an example.

- At least one-third and up to 50% of passengers boarding planes at Düsseldorf International Airport are from the Netherlands. The numbers for Niederrhein Regional Airport are even higher.
- Increasing numbers of Germans and Belgians shop for more expensive luxury goods in the central and southern cities of the province of Limburg (annual spending “outside the residential region” is said to have reached EUR 1.25 billion).
- The number of German students enrolled at Dutch Institutes for higher education in Venlo has exceeded the number of Dutch students. The ratio is said to be 60% German against 40% Dutch students.
- More German students studying Dutch are enrolled at Münster University than there are Dutch students studying German at all the Dutch universities together.
- A cost-benefit analysis carried out for a recently introduced express bus service from Kleef in Germany to Nijmegen in the Netherlands budgeted a 20% increase in passenger numbers compared to the previous, slower service. However, the number of passengers increased by 50% within a few months.
- In recent years more and more Dutch people are choosing to live immediately across the border in Germany (in addition to the large number of Dutch citizens who have been living immediately across the border in Belgium for many years). The most recent statistics show that the number of Dutch people taking up residence across the border exceeds the number of Flemish and German citizens taking up residence in the Netherlands.
- In years to come, a significant shift is expected in air freight traffic from Amsterdam Airport Schiphol to airports further afield, such as Maastricht and particularly Liège. Although the implications of this shift are more far-reaching than the previous examples, this development will certainly also impact the border regions.

The Council repeats its previous recommendation that it would be desirable to develop a more comprehensive insight at a national level into these and other possible pattern changes, for the following reasons:

- In the short term: any such pattern changes, even when they are restricted to the border regions, will have their impact on spatial planning, as well as on systems for traffic, transport and logistics required in the area to maintain cross-border mobility and accessibility.
- In the long term: these pattern changes, even though they may be on a small scale at this point in time, may prefigure larger movements and changes in the economic core area of Northwest Europe, part of which is covered by the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany.

Specific issues related to mutual dependency in the area of water and river systems (water quality, flood risk, etc.) and air quality (fine dust content, NO₂ content, etc.) are also affected by any pattern changes that may occur. These cases in particular provide clear indications that direct collaboration with our neighbours is not only useful, but eventually also unavoidable.

The Council therefore believes that sufficient insight must be developed at a national level into relevant pattern changes, so that we can determine to what extent regional developments and regional policies in the fields of economy, spatial planning, traffic, transport and logistics should be tested against possible (positive or negative) effects in the wider Eurodelta area, as the economic core area in continental Northwest Europe.

Obtaining some of the necessary data may require extra effort. For instance, it will not be easy to obtain hard facts on the development of air traffic in the border regions. Airports tend to keep their information to themselves and treat such data as confidential. Annual negotiations are held with charter companies, and any disclosure of sensitive data can result in substantial fluctuations in air traffic.

5 Administrative incongruence and major cross-border issues

There are at least two obstacles for wider European regional collaboration between the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany, as envisaged by the Council in this advice: administrative incongruence and the major cross-border issues.

5.1 Administrative incongruence

The term “administrative incongruence” refers to the political-administrative problem whereby parts of the economic core area, as defined by the Council in this advice, are located at different levels in a political-administrative sense. For instance, the prime ministers of the German federal states are primarily supposed to consult with their Dutch administrative counterparts – the royal commissioners – and the Dutch prime minister mainly does business with the German Federal Chancellor. In the relationship with Flanders it is not always clear whether the Flemish or the federal Belgian prime minister is the one to go. Experience shows that this leads to complications in the political and administrative arena. Questions are regularly raised as to who should be the (equal-level) administrative discussion partners and under what circumstances they should consult with one another. It may also happen – with no prior consultation about the level of representation – that the countries involved in official consultation are suddenly faced with very unequal discussion partners. The country that has underestimated its own representation is at a disadvantage right from the start, say insiders consulted by the Council.

In the Netherlands most of the country falls within the economic core area as defined in this document, so it seems natural for the national government to hold ultimate responsibility for any bilateral or trilateral arrangements to strengthen the mutual collaboration.

In North Rhine-Westphalia the situation is different. This federal state within the German Federal Republic has its own government with its own prime minister. And although the economy of North Rhine-Westphalia is larger than the Dutch economy, the Dutch government simply considers North Rhine-Westphalia one of the German federal states and therefore mainly consults and negotiates with the German federal government.

The relationships in Belgium are even more complex. The economic core area, as selected on the basis of economic coherence, consists of three areas, each with a different type of administration: the Flemish regional government, the Liège Provincial Council and the Brussels City Council, which has a special position in Belgium. Together they are also accountable to the Belgian national government, which has delegated far-reaching authorities to the regional governments of the Flemish and Walloon parts of the country.

Effective collaboration and coordination will therefore only be achieved when the parties involved are prepared to resolve the existing administrative incongruence, by showing their willingness to sit around the table with the prime ministers of the Netherlands and North Rhine-Westphalia and/or the prime minister of the Flemish government, or by pushing for regional (prior) consultation between a number of Dutch provincial authorities and their immediate colleagues from North Rhine-Westphalia and Flanders, or by insisting on discussions among the three national governments, in each

case as the situation demands. This may seem like a trivial matter, but in reality it demands a great deal of flexibility from each of the administrative levels involved.

Fortunately there are indications of increased flexibility, for instance the direct visit in the summer of 2005 of the newly elected prime minister of North Rhine-Westphalia to the national prime minister of the Netherlands, when collaboration arrangements dealing with spatial planning and development were concluded as part of the so-called Rotterdam Agenda. These positive developments also include the declaration of intent recently signed by the Dutch Secretary of State for Economic Affairs and the Minister of Economic Affairs of North Rhine-Westphalia in order to "strengthen mutual ties and improve the strategic position of both regions".

5.2 The major cross-border issues

The so-called 'large projects', often politically sensitive issues, play an important and recurring role in the relationship with our neighbouring countries Belgium and Germany. In addition there are some central policy themes demanding a cross-border approach by definition. Generally speaking, these complex and politically awkward issues, each with their own history.

In the relationship with Belgium, the main issues at stake are the Westerschelde and the southern section of the HSL high-speed railway link. In the relationship with Germany, it concerns the Betuwe railway line and the eastern section of the HSL. In the relationship with both neighbouring countries, we are dealing with the so-called Iron Rhine, as well as with fresh water, water quality, and air quality (fine dust, NO₂ content, CO₂ content). Most of these dossiers have a lead time of many years. In some circles as well as in the media, these projects are regularly referred to as "a pain in the neck".

From the discussions the Council held with regional and local authorities and representatives from the business world, it even appears that people in those circles feel that the complexity and/or the political sensitivity of some of these dossiers are an obstacle to other collaborative relationships that could be effective among the three countries.

The Council does not wish to enter into an evaluation of these signals, save to say there are positive developments in various areas as well.

Firstly, that goes for the water dossier, where there is – so to say – a "natural need" for consultation between countries sharing one or more rivers, or who depend on one another in other ways with regard to water management and water quality. Within the Eurodelta area we are talking in particular about the Maas and Rhine river basins. For instance, the city of The Hague, the Province of Gelderland and North Rhine-Westphalia have jointly mapped out which problems need to be solved given the dependency relationships between the upstream and downstream areas of the river Rhine. Similarly, together with Flanders a viewpoint and a strategy on water management have been developed within the joint Westerschelde Technical Commission. Comparable initiatives are now also being undertaken with regard to the river Maas.

Positive developments have also recently been observed in other major cross-border projects, such as the recent decision by North Rhine-Westphalia on further research into the connection between the German and Dutch sections of the Betuwe railway line, or the breakthrough in the use of the Westerschelde as a shipping route earlier this year. It is interesting to note that according to the directly involved parties, the success of the Westerschelde dossier is partly thanks to a seemingly insignificant detail like the Dutch and Flemish officials physically working together in the same building. This is an

excellent example of an effective link between border–regional collaboration and the strengthening of economic coherence in the area as a whole.

It is essential that these important cross–border issues are carefully studied in the next few years, bearing in mind the strong economic coherence and interrelationship that exist among large parts of the Netherlands, the greater Flanders area, and North Rhine–Westphalia. Maintaining coherence and strengthening the international position of the Eurodelta area demand a strong, joint, international positioning, so that potential investors and decision–makers on new business locations can be shown effective infrastructure facilities in good working order. Nevertheless, each country must also be aware of its own strengths and weaknesses.

The following example illustrates the importance of properly coordinated promotion efforts. International companies visiting the EU in Brussels to talk about a suitable place of business in the Eurodelta area as the “Western Gateway to Europe” are given a documentation folder including the following map.



Figure 4 High–speed connections in Northwest Europe (>200 km/h)

Many Asian companies set great store on their staff being able to travel to the rest of Europe by means of a high–speed railway network. The usual criterion is that staff must be able to travel at speeds in excess of 200 km/h. On the basis of this promotion material handed out in Brussels, companies working by such an important criterion may be shy to choose the Netherlands as their place of business and move to Belgium instead, since Belgium has an east–west as well as a north–south connection.

Fortunately for the Netherlands there are also other criteria for companies when selecting a new business location, but the question the Council would like to raise with this example is: How many governments and companies competing for Asian clients are actually aware of the fact that this map is part of the EU promotion material handed out in Brussels, and how many governments and companies have effectively prepared themselves with an answer from the Netherlands, by emphasising their own Unique Selling Points?

6 Recommendations: toward a common vision of the future

In the preceding chapters of this observation advice, the Advisory Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management listed a number of exploratory results and impressions that have prompted the Council to recommend the Cabinet to seriously search for opportunities for strengthening the position of the Netherlands in years to come through active and broad-based European regional collaboration between those parts of the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany that show strong mutual economic coherence. In this document the area in question has been given the preliminary name of "Eurodelta". The strengthening of the position of the Netherlands in the Eurodelta area, and of the Eurodelta area as a whole, will be stimulated through targeted coordination and collaboration in policy fields such as economic development, spatial planning, infrastructure, traffic, transport and logistics. Broader European regional collaboration may benefit all three countries involved. In a practical sense it would mean a mixture of collaboration actions at two levels: collaboration in the border regions and collaboration at a national level between the three countries involved.

Many issues need to be further investigated in order to be able to develop a policy that does justice to the potential of the area under discussion. Most of the recommendations made in the following paragraphs are aimed at those issues.

Recommendations

In the opinion of the Council, the ultimate aim of the recommendations provided below is:

To develop a *joint Dutch–Belgian–German strategic vision* of the future of the economic core area in continental Western Europe, which for each of the three countries involved is a crucial pillar to support their own national economy. This vision of the future can then be translated into specific policy action (coordinated if necessary) in the fields of economic development, spatial planning, improvement/construction of infrastructure facilities, mobility, traffic, transport and logistics, and improvement of water and air quality.

For some people this may sound as many bridges too far, as well as absolutely unachievable for now, or even undesirable. For others it may sound as a logical and in the long term unavoidable development in a rapidly globalising world. It will be clear that the Council shares the latter opinion.

The regional economies in the three sub-areas are partly complementary and partly competitive. Collaboration and mutual coordination of policies, activities, knowledge infrastructure, etc. could provide benefits of scale and possibilities for mutual specialisation. The opportunities and threats for the region on a worldwide scale demand a clear vision of the future in which the authorities, the business world, the knowledge institutions and the population believe and know their own place. A joint scheme for spatial planning and infrastructure is not only necessary but can also be inspiring to all parties involved, and lead to a new fervour and feelings of pride, e.g. to live and to work in the third most successful economic area in the world.

The international business world is already used to collaborating with competitors in one area while remaining rivals in other areas. Similar alternating strategic

relationships may also be effective among governments and intermediary organisations, although these are not that common as yet.

The Council would argue in favour of targeted experiments involving joint international promotion of the Eurodelta area, with the subsequent actual acquisition taking place in the usual manner at an individual level (of a country, a sub-region, a municipality or a company).

One could think of several lines of approach to achieving a (joint) vision of the future of the Eurodelta area. The Council would prefer to see an approach where the main initiatives emerge from society itself, with the active support of national and regional governments.

The following recommendations are directed at the three most important central government departments involved: the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, and the Ministry of Economic Affairs. However, the process that the Council would like to see started would benefit if mainly others would set the ball rolling. The ministers involved are therefore asked to play a stimulating and actively supportive role and/or to commission research reports in certain areas. The Council recommendations are therefore particularly meant for "those who feel themselves addressed" in order to utilise any opportunities that may be created as a result of wider European regional collaboration among the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany.

1. Encourage *enthusiastic organisations and individuals* from the Netherlands, Flanders and North Rhine-Westphalia to join forces in a public/private initiative in order to formulate an agenda for the path along which closer collaboration in the Eurodelta area can best take shape, and to define the priority actions which should be implemented first.

The potential initiators could include representatives from the four so-called sub-metropolises (Delta metropolis/Randstad, Brabantstad, Flemish Diamond and the 'Ruhr metropolis'), but also organisations in the border areas, such as European regional collaborative arrangements or the Arnhem-Nijmegen Region (KAN). Other initiators and/or active pioneers of a Eurodelta initiative could include nationwide intermediary organisations (e.g. the Holland International Distribution Council), groups of companies for whom the Eurodelta area is an important market, directly involved individuals from Provincial and City Councils who deal with cross-border activities, Chambers of Commerce, etc.

The Council is pleased to see that the Board of Governors of the Arnhem-Nijmegen Region (which will acquire the formal status of city region as of 1 January 2006) is prepared to take the initiative for a "Eurodelta conference" to be held in the spring of 2006. At this conference, participants will work out together with other interested parties the best way to formulate an agenda for wider European regional collaboration between relevant organisations in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany.

2. Encourage *planning agencies and research institutes* in the Netherlands, North Rhine-Westphalia and Flanders to make more use of each other's data and to formulate more "borderless" research projects in which the research area is not restricted by national administrative borders.

Encourage policy-preparing authorities to make available clear and authorised figures on economic interdependence in the entire Eurodelta area, and on relevant

pattern changes in the border regions as soon as possible.

Special consideration should be given to specific research and development projects jointly presented to the European Union by the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. These projects would have a much greater chance of success in the allocation procedure when supported by two or even three member states right from the start.

3. Carry out a *comparative study of other existing large urban networks* in the world, where economic interrelationships also play an important role; find out which unique propositions are available in the economic core area of Northwest Europe; and also investigate whether the Eurodelta area, as defined by the Council, is the most workable demarcation in practical terms. One could, for instance, elaborate on experiences gained during the so-called Eurbanet studies in 2000, which involved a comparison of four Northwest European Metropolitan Areas, i.e. the Randstad conurbation, the 'Flemish Diamond', the Ruhr Area and the area around Edinburgh–Glasgow.
4. Investigate, partly on the basis of the study results from (3), the most effective manner of *promoting the Eurodelta area in other countries as one single area*. To American, Chinese or Indian companies, or companies from other emerging economies, it does not really matter whether a company location is situated in the Netherlands, in Belgium or in western Germany. They are far more concerned with the required level of facilities and with accessibility, rather than the administrative borders within Europe. From outside Europe, the European northwest coast is regarded as simply a single "Western Gateway to Europe". For that reason it is important to promote the area in other countries as a single, interconnected network of facilities.
5. Encourage governments to place the issue of *broad-based European regional collaboration* between the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany on the various *political agendas* and explicitly consider the available options for effectively resolving the problems of administrative incongruence. Stimulate bilateral consultation at various levels. Conduct tripartite discussions as necessary, where the immediately responsible administrators can sit around the table without this being regarded as "administratively inappropriate". A good example is the summit currently being prepared for the spring of 2006 for senior officials and politicians from the Netherlands and North Rhine–Westphalia. Organise similar meetings with Flanders and jointly take the initiative to bring these three parties together.

Appendix: working methods and information file

1. Account of working methods

In the spring of 2005 the Council secretariat compiled a first “quick scan” inventory of bottlenecks and opportunities, and the possible existence of a feeling of urgency at a national and regional level, in relation to the topic of collaboration in the Eurodelta.

Based on the results of this quick scan, the Council decided in April 2005 to produce an exploratory report on the subject. In September 2005 the Council decided to use the initial results to produce an observation advice, mainly aimed at putting the opportunities of this cross-border area on the agenda. This document was prepared by a commission consisting of:

Prof. Dr. W.A. Hafkamp
A. Rijckenberg
F.E. Schaake, chair of the commission

In the period from April to December 2005 the commission organised two meetings with external experts, i.e. in April and in September. In addition, many bilateral talks have been held.

A number of specific research topics were outsourced to NEA Transport Research & Training (aggregation and combining the available figures on the area) and to the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research TNO (description of the state of affairs with regard to large infrastructural projects and cross-border policy themes).

Because of the exploratory character of the Council study, the Council deliberately chose in preparation of this observation advice to contact only those involved in the Netherlands and not to approach the relevant German and Flemish/Belgian individuals and organisations directly. With this document, the Council first and foremost aims to put the subject of “broad-based European regional collaboration between the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany” on the Dutch political agenda.

In order to stimulate cross-border discussions, the advice is not only available in Dutch, but also in French, German and English. The translated versions are available on the Council's website (www.raadvenw.nl).

2. Consulted persons

Meeting of experts, 13 April 2005

Prof. Dr. F.W.M. Boekema, Tilburg University and Radboud University Nijmegen
H. Caspers, Province of Drenthe, Interregional Affairs
J.A.M. Giesen, Consulate general of the Netherlands in Düsseldorf
H.E. Gordijn, Netherlands Institute for Spatial Research
J.J. Modder, City Region Arnhem-Nijmegen (KAN)
J.W. Tierolf, Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, Transport Research Centre
G.B. Urhahn, Urhahn Urban Design
R.J.A.M. Verhoeven, Zuid-Limburg Chamber of Commerce (absent, written contribution)

Meeting of experts, 25 August 2005

Prof. Dr. F.W.M. Boekema, Tilburg University and Radboud University Nijmegen

Dr. H.J. van Houtum, Radboud University Nijmegen

Prof. Dr. H.M. de Jong, University of Twente

Prof. Dr. J.G. Lambooy, Utrecht University

G.N. de Ru

Individual discussions

A.H. Blommers, Transport Safety Institute bv

C.A.A. Broeyer, Directorate-General for Passenger Transport, coordinator for Policy Document on Mobility, Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management

A. ten Cate, Veluwe and Twente Chamber of Commerce (Rhine Chambers)

Dr. O.J.C. Cornielje, Head of Strategy, Directorate-General for Civil Aviation and Freight Transport, Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management

M.E.P. Dierikx, Directorate-General for Water Affairs, Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management

E. Dieterman, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

J.B. Dik, Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management

Dr. G.H. Dinkelmann, Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management

M.M. den Dulk, Holland International Distribution Council

Dr. R. Fennes, Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management

M. Fruianu, Directorate-General for Passenger Transport, international agenda, Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management

R. Gans, Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management

A. Hellemons, TISPOL European Traffic Police Network

P.B.D. Hilferink, NEA Transport Research and Training

H.A. Huisjes, Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management

J.P. van der Jagt, Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment

A. Jansen, Chamber of Commerce, chairman Mainport Working Group

E.M. de Jong, Amsterdam City Council – Economic Affairs

E.G.M.J. Kasteel, Holland International Distribution Council

H. van der Kolk, Directorate-General for Passenger Transport, coordinator MIT, Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management

M.J.G. Krijn, Ministry of Economic Affairs

P.J. Langenberg, Consulate general of the Netherlands in Antwerp

F. Lieben, Port Council

M. Luijendijk, Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce

R.J.J. Martens, Ministry of Economic Affairs

J.C. van Meijeren, NEA Transport Research and Training

Prof. Dr. F. van Oort, Netherlands Institute for Spatial Research

J.H.M. Pollman-Zaal, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

D. Postma, Europark Coevorden Emlichheim GmbH

G. Roeleveld, Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment

Max Roksnoer, Rhine-Schelde Delta

M. van Rossum, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Prof. F.M. Sanders, TNO Built Environment and Geosciences

W.M. Savenije, TNO Built Environment and Geosciences

P.M.T.G. Schmeitz, Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment

T.S. Staal, Ministry of Economic Affairs

J.A. Tammonoms Bakker, Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management

Dr. J.G.S.N. Visser, Ministry of Economic Affairs

E.J. de Vries, Ministry of Economic Affairs

Prof. Wever, Utrecht University

H.H.P. van Zwam, Schelde Estuary Development Project (ProSes)

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4. The name 'Eurodelta'

In recent years, several names have been used to describe the area the Council has selected as the research area for this advice. The three most commonly used names are Eurodelta, Eurocore and Northwest European Megalopolis (in that order).

The name "Eurodelta" originates from a 1994 exploratory study commissioned by the former Directorate-General for Transport, the Department of Waterways and Public Works and the Port of Rotterdam. The study was particularly aimed at the possibilities for collaboration on telematics and ICT in the field of goods transport, passenger traffic and traffic management.

The name "Eurocore" derives from the AMO publication Content (2004). This document describes the position of the Eurocore metropolis and compares it with a list of top-10 metropolitan areas in the world, in which the Eurocore area ranks third according to the study.

The name "Northwest European Megalopolis" is from a 2004 essay by Prof. Lambooy, commissioned by the Netherlands Council of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment by the title of "Linked metropolises and transitional areas". This document mainly describes economic and spatial planning relationships between the core and peripheral areas.

The Advisory Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management has decided to use the name "Eurodelta" as the working title for the area covering the Netherlands, the greater Flanders area and North Rhine-Westphalia, since the name refers to both the European character of the area and its position as a river delta. The economic and logistical value of the Eurodelta area is to a large extent determined by the common location on the rivers Rhine, Maas and Schelde, and other related waterways.

5. Information file

After a decision had been made in September 2005 to produce a so-called "observation advice", it was also decided to add the data collected in an information file over the years to the main document. The relevant information is distributed in a limited number of copies as a separate document together with the advice. The information will be available on the Council's website from 1 January 2006 to any interested party. The information file contains the following information:

- descriptions of the large infrastructural projects
- detailed information on transport and trade flows, as provided by NEA Transport Research and Training
- data on (pattern) changes in the border regions
- inventory of persons consulted and minutes of the expert meetings
- an overview of issues in common with other policy documents (national, regional)
- list of references
- list of works consulted and website information
- French, German and English versions of the advice

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