

The Path Ahead!

Breaking down reflexes to respond to demographic changes in Zeeland

The Interreg IVB
North Sea Region
Programme



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Foreword

Putting shrinkage on the political and public agendas has unleashed enormous dynamics in the Netherlands. The term has suddenly created a banner under which to place all kinds of new problems that until recently administrators and policymakers were denying or ignoring. Some MPs got the State Secretary for Interior and Kingdom Relations and the Minister of Housing, Communities and Integration to take the matter on board, prompting a huge number of reactions in the country and the upcoming publication of the Nationaal Actieplan Bevolkingsdaling (National Population Decrease Action Plan).

Zeeland has followed its own route. The direct reason for doing so was a request from the Zeeland Provincial Council to analyse the consequences of the demographic changes - including shrinkage - and compare the outcome with provincial policy. The result of this exercise was a document entitled Onverkende Paden (Unexplored Paths) and the Nieuw!Zeeland (New!Zeeland) campaign. This intensive and innovative campaign attracted considerable attention, not only among administrators, civil servants and other parties involved, but also among the public at large and central government. It is clear that the 'demographic transition' will considerably influence all kinds of policy fields, that adjustments need to be made in good time, that this will be possible only if everybody is aware of the demographic transition, that it is no longer about quantity but about quality and that cooperation is the key word. I am convinced that this is the right time to take a new step forward, which is why we have called this document Op Pad! ('The Path Ahead!').

Whereas Unexplored Paths was mainly an analytical and agenda-setting document, The Path Ahead! answers the following question: what will we do differently? When you read our new guiding principles, you will see that there has been a strong turnaround in thinking so as to get away from taboos and reflexes. I expect this to give rise to a lot of discussion, but it will definitely provide a trigger for taking action and tackling the new challenges together with other partners. The most urgent issues can be found in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen (Zeeland Flanders). These will be the first issues that we tackle together with central government, the municipalities of Sluis, Terneuzen and Hulst and various non-governmental organisations. This approach will also be in evidence in the National Action Plan, established through exceptionally good cooperation with various ministries and the Limburg and Groningen provincial governments.

Embarking on 'The Path Ahead' with the outcomes of New!Zeeland now makes it necessary to muster broadly-based support for the analysis and outcomes of the interactive process that was undertaken. It is about translating the new guiding principles into concrete policy goals and achieving them. I hope very much that this phase will be just as dynamic, harmonious and vigorous as the interactive process was. It costs nothing to go down the path together, but it will be energising!

Harry van Waveren
Member of the Provincial Executive responsible for Spatial Planning





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Part A: The journey so far

1. Introduction

Demography, and especially the changes that it brings about, is a subject that has been firmly on the agenda for the past two years. This is not primarily due to forecasts that predict a decreasing population or changing population composition, because the forecasts have been saying that for a long time. What has attracted great interest is the link established to the real-life situation and the widespread dissemination of this reality. What the forecasts predicted became visible and noticeable in South Limburg, Northeast Groningen and Zeeland Flanders: the figures became reality. The report by Wim Derks et al. marked the start of an increasingly wider recognition of the problems. In the meantime the problems have ascended to the policy agenda of central government.

Zeeland played a prominent role in this process, because the issues are visible here in the province, in the figures and in everyday reality. Thinking in terms of growth and its promotion has gradually made way for thinking focused on readiness for the new facts like shrinkage. This was a gradual process in which the Unexplored Paths report played an important role. The report provided a vehicle for engaging in a dialogue with the public under the banner of New!Zeeland. The province of Zeeland wants to be ready for the declining population, the

changing composition of the population and the strong regional differences that are visible in Zeeland in demographic terms. The time has come to show what needs to be done. This document entitled *The Path Ahead!* provides the answer. Two matters need to be mentioned. Firstly, the newly formulated guiding principles concern not only provincial policy fields, but also those of our partners. To make these principles work we must cooperate with the partners in a variety of policy fields. That is why cooperation is the key word in this document. The document itself is merely a beginning. The guiding principles and associated actions will be fleshed out further in the coming years.

2. Unexplored paths

The Zeeland Provincial Council called in 2007 for a population analysis and the consequences of the outcome for provincial policy. In February 2008, a report was published entitled *Onverkende Paden; Uitdagingen van de provincie Zeeland door de veranderende bevolkingsopbouw* (Unexplored Paths: challenges facing Zeeland province due to the changing structure of the population).

The document outlines the expected development of the popu-

¹ Derks, W.M., P. Hovens & L.E.M. Klinkers (2004), *Structurele bevolkingsdaling. Een urgente nieuwe invalshoek voor beleidsmakers*, The Hague, Advisory Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management/Council of the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment.



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lation in terms of size, composition and regional distribution. The most important conclusions are that Zeeland's total population will decrease slightly in the medium term, that the population will age considerably and that the population will shrink in more and more municipalities, although some municipalities will continue to grow.

The analysis was used to identify the consequences for the policy conducted by the provincial government in respect of housing, employment, labour market, welfare, care, amenities, mobility and finance.

Eight challenges facing the province were defined. Number one is the importance of creating awareness as a basis for policy changes. The turnaround from thinking in terms of quantity to thinking in terms of quality is another central consideration. Cooperation and harmonisation are essential.

In the meantime the document has been reprinted and widely circulated throughout the province and among professionals elsewhere in the Netherlands and even beyond the national frontier.

3. New!Zeeland

Every Zeeland resident will ultimately experience the consequences of the demographic changes to a lesser or greater extent. Therefore, the provincial government launched a project called New!Zeeland.

This broadly-based public dialogue gave administrators, civil servants, non-governmental organisations and above all the people of Zeeland an opportunity to have their say about demographic developments and their consequences.

Three goals were central to the dialogue. Firstly, it was necessary to inform as many people in Zeeland as possible about the coming changes. This had to be achieved not only by giving information, but especially by sharing knowledge. To this end the provincial government established a knowledge bank to store all information gathered during the dialogue.

Awareness was the second goal. Through New!Zeeland the provincial government wanted to get people thinking about the subject and conclude for themselves that certain changes were inevitable and necessitated personal changes on their part.

It is a question of conveying the message to the people by talking to them in their own surroundings and looking for examples there. Numerous meetings were held Zeeland-wide for this purpose so as to deliver the message and focus on their local issues.

Thirdly, New!Zeeland provided a vehicle for looking for good and innovative ideas for the future of the province. The rationale for the joint search for initiatives was to ensure that something would actually happen instead of being confined to a talking shop. To get people to change you must first offer them a perspective. People will not accept the closure of the school in their village if they are unsure whether there will be good alternative, for example.





Part A: The journey so far

The projects that are in progress (or will be started) must serve as a source of inspiration for others.

An unintended effect of New!Zeeland came in the form of extensive talks and discussions with people about the mindset of thinking in terms of growth. This also produced a better insight into what thinking in terms of growth actually means for these people and it was possible to zoom in on what they really considered important. The reflexes and new guiding principles contained in this document were formulated with the help of these insights.

New!Zeeland has now been completed and the provincial government has set down all the opinions and ideas in a report (visit the website at www.nieuwzeeland.nu). But the gain achieved through this broadly-based approach is that many people in Zeeland are now personally addressing the changes. Demographic change is now a subject discussed at schools, while municipal councils are debating the issue, the Centre for Visual Arts has adopted it as a year theme and housing corporations are discussing it with each other. These are all examples of how demographic change can be put on the agenda (including strategic agendas).

It is important for Zeeland to stick to this line and to work on what we consider important themes and promising ideas.

This document was drawn up based on the above-mentioned

report to set out the Zeeland Provincial Executive's vision of demographic developments. The Path Ahead! is a vision for breaking through reflexes, launching new guiding principles and putting forward other solutions.

4. Similar issues elsewhere

Zeeland is not the only place where demographic changes are occurring. United Nations forecasts show that the world population will continue to increase until at least 2050 in all of the outlined scenarios. The Netherlands and large parts of Europe are having to contend with the consequences of an ageing population and in various regions the population is decreasing. What makes Zeeland a special case is that the population is decreasing in tandem with an expected increase in the number of households. A salient point is that in parts of Zeeland (Zeeland Flanders) a decrease in the number of households is under way. A similar development can be found (at least for the time being) only in the province of Limburg (Parkstad) and in the eastern part of Groningen province. So there are other places in the country that are giving thought to ways of addressing the consequences of the demographic transition.

Limburg

The shrinking population is the most apparent in the Netherlands in Parkstad Limburg (the eastern mining region) in the south of the country. The most recent forecasts indicate that



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between now and 2040 the number of inhabitants in this part of the country will decline by almost 70,000, or a reduction close to 30%! Housing quality and unemployment pose additional problems. For years now the affected municipalities have been cooperating regionally to scale down the house-building programme and to initiate demolition programmes (build 1 house, demolish 2 houses), to oversee the downsizing of education and similar. The Limburg provincial government has given the subject a prominent place on its agenda and is robustly lobbying central government as regards the shrinkage.

Groningen

The northern city of Groningen is an important regional accelerator in the province of Groningen. On the north eastern tip of the province, however, the population has been shrinking for several years now. Delfzijl is the most prominent example because of the enormous demolition operation that it has already completed.

Neighbouring municipalities are in the same boat, and are now beginning to cooperate. The provincial government is banking heavily on housing policy as a way of coping with shrinkage. This has been translated into a provincial bylaw with a strong focus on preventing surpluses and stimulating harmonisation.

National

The Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment and the Ministry of Housing,

Communities and Integration have given the issue of the declining population a high place on their agendas. They have jointly established the Nationaal Netwerk Bevolkingsdaling (National Population Decrease) network, staffed mainly by people drawn from local governments and authorities. Together, they are sharing knowledge and brainstorming on the central government's National Population Decrease Action Plan, with advice from the TopTeam Krimp (Shrinkage Top Team). Other ministries are also becoming more and more involved in the subject.

International

Together with lead partner Twente, the provinces of Zeeland and Groningen are the Dutch participants in the Interreg IVB project called DC NOISE (Demographic Change New Opportunities in Shrinking Europe). Other partners come from Norway, Scotland, Germany and Belgium. Although the issues in those countries are not entirely comparable, the common denominator is that the demographic transition presents challenges. The partners are trying out innovative solutions and sharing them with each other.





Part B: New Paths

1. Introduction

Unexplored Paths showed us that the population of Zeeland is going to experience a radical demographic development. This will have major consequences in many policy fields. Zeeland is undergoing a transition, i.e. a change from growth to stabilisation and shrinkage, with fewer employed people and more elderly people. The population increase in the past decades has resulted in our taking growth for granted in our thinking and acting. Nobody has experienced times of population shrinkage other than through war and the flood disaster that struck Zeeland in 1953.

This 'growth mindset' and the automatic assumption of growth have become rooted in all kinds of policy and principles. This makes it necessary to break through these 'reflexes' to ensure that in 2030 there will still be a prosperous, happy and healthy Zeeland. The degree of urgency differs from region to region. People in the western part of Zeeland Flanders are already being confronted by the consequences of demographic developments, while on the island of Tholen nothing appears to be out of the ordinary as yet. But in due course the people there will also be confronted by the consequences to a lesser or greater degree (in the labour market, for example).

By formulating new guiding principles, the Zeeland provincial government wants to act in unison with its partners to prepare policy for the future. Chapter 2 deals with the general guiding principles. Chapter 3 sets out the guiding principles for each theme. Chapter 4 states what we believe we need in order to implement the principles. Chapter 5 mentions a number of subjects that we want to tackle now because of their urgency.





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2. General guiding principles

Due to the demographic changes, three new guiding principles are necessary and they apply to all policy themes:

2.1 From more to better

Reflex: Population growth is a goal in its own right to improve the quality of the living environment.

New principle: Quality is the goal, and quality must be pursued in all sectors and themes.

In a situation of permanent growth, growth is the reference against which everything is set. If there is no growth, something must be wrong. Solutions are then sought by attracting homes and companies so as to restore growth. With this mind-set growth must also be stimulated to raise quality. However, Zeeland is transiting from structural population growth to less growth and shrinkage, all across the province.

Investments made to grow the population are very likely to result in disinvestments and this may trigger a downward spiral of unoccupancy and decay. Instead of growth it is necessary to pursue quality, with population growth or shrinkage being taken as a given rather than being adopted as a factor in managing the province. Ultimately, it is not about how many people live in Zeeland, but about the quality of the living environment in the province, or in other words moving from 'more' to 'better'².

A stable population size obviates the need constantly to catch up with events simply to keep pace with the growth of the number of households and workforce. Priorities can be set so as to manage quality instead of quantity. But a sharp decline in the population is not desirable either, because this would make it necessary to keep up with quantities in a negative sense.

As the turnaround from growth to shrinkage differs markedly in Zeeland in terms of time and place, there is a need for an up-to-date overview of several indicators (regarding population, housing market, amenities and labour market) in order to make timely adjustments. The Zeeland provincial government will take the initiative to create such an overview.

2. Illustrative of this turnaround in thinking is the Kwaliteitsatlas Middelburg (Middelburg Quality Atlas). Whereas in 1998 an ambitious population growth was still being pursued (growth as a goal) so as to keep the quality of amenities up to standard, the objective now following a review of the atlas is to achieve quality, and the city's original population target of 56,000 has been set aside.



Part B: New Paths

2.2 Cooperation

Reflex:

Each town or village must be a match for its neighbours so as to get as many residential/work locations and amenities as possible in order to survive.

New principle:

Cooperation and harmonisation are essential to offer sufficient quality on a higher scale.

In Zeeland there are hardly any shortages of homes, work locations and amenities. Rather, the province has a surplus of plans. If the plans are carried out, there is likely to be a surplus of residential and work locations. The demographic changes are also driving a change in the need for all kinds of amenities. In a situation like this it is no longer prudent for each authority and each organisation to make its own plans for the future. Harmonisation and cooperation have always been beneficial and in the new situation they will be an absolute necessity. It will avoid surpluses, enable new needs to be met at the right location and make it possible to offer higher quality.

The Zeeland provincial government believes it has an important role to play in taking the initiative, bringing together parties and promoting all kinds of different types of cooperation and harmonisation. Cooperation has traditionally been sought

between parties that have a geographical relationship with each other, or that operate on different levels of government ('vertical'). 'Horizontal cooperation' between parties operating in different sectors (such as cooperation between a school and a healthcare institution and/or a housing corporation) will become more and more important as a way of gearing the scales of different amenities to the prevailing needs. Its small scale and 'short lines' will allow Zeeland to excel in this setting, provided that the parties share the same vision. Financial incentives will be introduced to reward cooperation. Cooperation will also be made a precondition for granting financial aid or obtaining the cooperation of the provincial government.





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2.3 New perspective

Reflex: Each region, town or village must strengthen itself in themes or aspects for which it gets a low score.

New principle: Ensure that there is a shared vision with a goal aligned to the strengths.

For many years towns, villages and regions have been competing with each other for inhabitants, jobs and supra-local amenities. The mindset was the more the merrier, but there were winners and losers. By definition shrinking areas are losers in this setting and the winners are keen to continue their winning ways all the time.

The demographic changes mean that in due course (see 2.1) it will be a question of 'better' rather than 'more'. Policy will have to be turned around. This cannot be done without a new long-term perspective, i.e. a direction, final picture or 'point on the horizon' to work towards. As cooperation and harmonisation are essential and necessary (see 2.2), it is important for all parties involved to share the final picture adopted for the long term. Zeeland will need numerous 'final pictures' because of the numerous geographical and thematic demarcations, each of which requires its own particular level of detail. A final picture can be regarded as a direction in which to head, rather

than a final plan that must be produced according to a blueprint principle. This will ensure that the policy that is conducted is not static but can respond to the rapid developments in our society.

At local level it is also essential to set a new perspective for a village, community or town in order to step from 'more' to 'better'. It is important to identify the strengths possessed by each area, village, town or community. In doing so it is necessary to bear in mind that in contrast with the past not every region - let alone town or village - is capable of providing a complete range of amenities, homes and jobs. Any attempt to pursue this goal will result in the blurring of existing strengths and this will cause disinvestments. It is precisely the exposure of and tying in with/reinforcing these strengths that will drive the modernisation and vitality that each area needs. Strengths can be sought in the rural setting, cultural legacy of buildings or the landscape, the presence of a unique economic accelerator or perhaps social cohesion.

What: 1. Draw up a regional vision based on general guiding principles.

2. Ensure there is a good tie-in and harmonisation with the Nationaal Actieplan Krimp (National Shrinkage Action Plan).

Who: Central government, provincial government, municipalities and other stakeholders.





Part B: New Paths

3. New guiding principles

3.1 Joint orchestration

Reflex:

There must always be space for new residential/work locations, shrinkage is the result of obstructions originating from rules and spatial policy.

New principle:

The municipality and the provincial government must start to orchestrate firmly the space available in Zeeland.

Spatial policy is sometimes held to be the 'guilty party' for a shrinking community. The thinking behind this is that people move away as a result of shortage of business sites or residential districts. As soon as residential and work locations become available again for putting up buildings, the community will automatically grow again and the problem will be solved. This line of thinking used to be correct in the past, because the housing and labour markets were very much locally oriented, and in many cases a need existed for expansion at that level.

Today's housing and employment market are more regionally oriented. People find out not only about a specific village, but consider various communities and assign particular importance to where the two partners work. The same applies to enterprises when they come to choose a place of business. Demographic changes have additionally resulted in less need

for the expansion of residential and work locations within a region. While it is possible to build homes in this situation, the scale on which this happens is limited and everything hinges on the distribution across the communities.

If municipalities start to compete on residential and work locations there will be a danger of a wastage of resources and space. To prevent this from happening, everybody must be aware of the new context and not revert to the old reflex. The next step will be to establish a strong joint orchestration of the space available in Zeeland. Cooperation, harmonisation, enforcement and monitoring by the provincial government and the municipalities are essential in this respect.

Managing according to the space available in Zeeland will be re-shaped in shrinking areas. Whereas the emphasis was previously on managing growth, it will now be necessary to consider supervising the shrinkage. There will be a far greater focus on the existing urban area. This will present opportunities to rectify past urban planning mistakes that occurred due to haste or the fads of the day. The built-up area can thus become smaller, thinner, greener and better.

What: Joint orchestration, with a clearly defined distribution of responsibilities.

Who: Provincial government (relationships with central government, regional harmonisation, process monitoring), municipalities and housing corporations.





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Stimulating cooperation and harmonisation in the field of spatial policy is not new. The first steps in this direction were taken in the regional plan for 2006-2012, for example through the regional agendas and the instrument of regional business site programmes.

The Shrinkage Top Team stated during its visit to Zeeland that it was important to indicate clearly who the orchestrator is. That is why, ahead of the agenda that will be drawn up, we are putting forward here a number of subjects for which the provincial government in any event wants to be the orchestrator.

3.2 Retention of real estate value

Reflex:

Building homes is necessary to grow, otherwise the growth will go elsewhere!

New principle:

It is necessary to strive to retain property values: demolition, refurbishment and selective extra construction.

It is often thought that building extra homes is the only way to counter population shrinkage. Building extra homes attracts people from 'outside' and by consequence the population will increase again. However, this strategy can have a disastrous effect if the growth of households slows down or perhaps shrinks and the surrounding areas, from where the newcomers must be obtained, face similar demographic processes. Unoccupancy and a spiral of decay will then appear on the horizon. A fixation on enlarging the housing stock makes a blind spot of the quality of the existing housing stock. This will occur even though much of the current housing stock is not future-proof in terms of energy conservation, public space, urban planning aspects and the future composition of households (more elderly people, more single people).

In the future the Zeeland provincial government wants to join forces with its partners to retain the property values of homes. Retention of property values is an important objective for pri-



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vate homeowners in Zeeland but is also important for the investment strength and housing market in Zeeland.

For private owners the retention of the value of their property is essential to keep disposable income up to the required level and avoid becoming shackled to a home and thus being unable to fulfil the individual residential wishes.

To retain property value it is necessary for supply and demand to be in balance qualitatively and quantitatively. With a declining growth of households and a greatly changing composition of households, the emphasis will shift towards demolition, refurbishment (turning two homes into one) and building extra homes selectively and also getting to grips with public space. Particularly by tackling public space it will be possible to make quality gains, with freed up space being used for formal and informal parks, sports fields, playgrounds and games.

Financing is an important matter requiring attention in this setting. Transformation from one function to another will be feasible financially only if the new function yields more than the old one, for example by a change from pastureland to residential district. Doing it the other way round is more difficult because it always requires extra money. Demolition and restructuring cost money, and this prompts the question of who will bear the costs. It could be partners with an interest in ensuring a healthy housing market, like banks, housing corporations and project developers, or perhaps central and local government. The provincial government and municipalities can play an orchestrating role and take the initiative to equali-

se costs and income between regions with growth and shrinkage regions for solidarity reasons. Regional housing construction arrangements will in any event be prepared, with identification of present and future needs in qualitative and quantitative terms. This will provide a basis for making regional choices as to where demolition, refurbishment and extra construction will occur and how much funding (Urban Renewal Investment Budget [ISV], possibly Location-Related Subsidies Decree [BLS]) will be used for this purpose. The same approach will be adopted for the business sites in Zeeland, for which regional business site programmes were recently drawn up.

What: Identify the restructuring challenge and method of financing.

Who: Central government, provincial government, municipalities, housing corporations, project developers, banks,...

For the pursuit of this objective it is important to know the housing market challenge and how the costs can be met.

- A study is currently being carried out by the joint housing corporations (in cooperation with Scoop and the Zeeland provincial government). The study is calculating the costs of demolition or refurbishment based on the current and future household size and composition and the existing housing stock of housing corporations. On completion this study will be widened to include the private housing stock. Once this





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study has been completed it will be clear what the challenge is in terms of scale, costs and revenues in Zeeland in order to prepare the housing stock for the future.

- The Zeeland provincial government will take the initiative, based on the calculated challenge, to carry out a study with relevant partners into innovative ways of meeting the costs. The examination of ways of meeting the costs of transformation of the housing stock is not a simple task. On the one hand this is because of the involvement of several parties that must be brought onto the same wavelength, and on the other because of the need to share the 'financial pain'. The 'prisoner's dilemma' must be dispelled and 'free riders' must be avoided. One way forward towards a solution could be to have a disposal levy deposited in a restructuring fund of and for all of Zeeland for every newly built home in the province. The disposal levy would be payable by banks, project developers and housing corporations, and by the private buyer. The private buyer could reclaim his levy through a discount on the transfer tax that central government could introduce for shrinkage areas.

3.3 Shuttling and part-time homes

Reflex:

Outbound commuting and part-time homes must be prevented.

New principle:

Outbound commuting and part-times homes must be stimulated (in a controlled way).

The number of people who live in Zeeland but work elsewhere in the Netherlands is growing steadily (from 22,000 in 1998 to 27,000 in 2005). This is often regarded as an undesirable development. The same applies to non-permanent occupation of homes. After all, it is not pleasant for local residents if homes are occupied only a few weeks, if there is no garden maintenance, if the home contains only garden chairs and in the high season there are barbecues with large groups of people. Moreover, the second home owners push housing market starters out of the market and contribute little to the social cohesion of a village. For these reasons notably coastal municipalities have drawn up bylaws to regulate the non-permanent use of homes.

But the non-permanent use of homes can also produce benefits for a region. In areas with a surplus of older privately owned homes, the second home owners can save the housing market and help prevent unoccupancy and decay.





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Improved physical and digital accessibility means that second homes will be used more and more often. People will work in the city during the week and live in Zeeland at the weekend (in many cases from Thursday evening): part-time housing. The disadvantages mentioned above do not apply to part-time housing. Therefore, Zeeland should embrace part-time residents instead of trying to keep them out: it is appropriate to the role that Zeeland has and will increasingly get in an interregional context, namely the premier spot in the urbanised Benelux where there is still tranquillity, space and clean air. Zeeland has these qualities in-house and it thus offers a scarce commodity to residents and day trippers. An increase in commuters is appropriate to this setting, because people are keen to move to Zeeland on account of the excellent residential climate and are prepared to commute to work outside the province. It doesn't really matter whether people still have an apartment in the city and are perhaps registered there in the population register.

The action items below are important conditions for putting the new principle into practice.

What: Accessibility for commuters must be retained/improved.

Who: Provincial government, municipalities, Directorate-General of Public Works and Water Management, public transport companies.

More and more Zeeland residents work outside the province. Some are people who relocate from somewhere outside

Zeeland on account of the attractive residential climate. Or they may be inhabitants of Zeeland whose work will be relocated outside the province and prefer to commute rather than move house. Both groups boost the housing market positively, because they stop the housing market from weakening too much. A decision to commute means weighing up housing (and everything related to it, such as social contacts) and daily travel. Thanks to the congestion-free road links in Zeeland, the mobility in the province by car is adequate or will be adequate on completion of the N57 and N62 trunk roads. The provincial government is striving to retain this situation in the years ahead.

Rail links are currently good thanks to the direct intercity connections with the Randstad. If these links are downgraded or disconnected from the main railway network, however, it would result in a deterioration for commuters. This may have negative consequences for Zeeland in the long term, so it is essential to keep the direct links in place. An improvement would certainly be welcome, for example by increasing the speed on sections of the lines. It is no coincidence that the northern provinces are pressing for a Zuider Zee line and that a high-speed rail link with the Randstad and Brabant was mentioned during the New!Zeeland debate. But improvement of public transport by means of fast scheduled services in the north-south direction to Rijnmond and Flanders also need to be part of the picture.

Along with physical mobility the good digital accessibility of Zeeland will make the province more attractive to commuters





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and part-time residents. Therefore, it is desirable for Zeeland to be a frontrunner in digital accessibility (e.g. fibre-optic cabling) so as to stimulate working from home. This will also support opportunities for elderly people to live longer at home (in villages) because it will be easier to use ICT applications. It is not primarily a job for central government to beef up physical mobility and public transport services. The Zeeland provincial government will in any event support initiatives appropriate to this guiding principle (also refer to section 3.8).

What: Promote part-time homes at selected locations.

Who: Municipalities, project developers

To promote part-time homes it is necessary to:

- determine where part-time homes can be stimulated (for example communities with a housing surplus or inner-city transformation projects);
- amend regulations, where necessary;
- develop residential building concepts appropriate to part-time residents;
- welcome part-time residents and give them a fully-fledged position;
- examine possibilities for common office facilities for home workers.

This is primarily a responsibility for the municipalities. Some municipalities have already given thought to stimulating part-

time homes. It is important to examine part-time homes at places in municipalities according to the positive and negative sides. In conjunction with the entire housing stock development, there is scope to consider whether and where part-time homes can be stimulated, so that they can help to retain property values (also see section 3.2).





Part B: New Paths

3.4 Liveability and amenities

Reflex:

The liveability of a village/community hinges on having as many amenities as possible nearby.

New principle:

Social cohesion is essential for the liveability of a village or community.

The Van Dale dictionary defines the liveability of a village or community as being 'suitable for spending life'. The degree to which this does or does not apply depends on the kind of person or household involved and the phase of life of the persons concerned. Not everybody will find in every phase of life that the village where they live is suitable for spending their life. Times when this occurs include when a young person wants to study and explore life in the big city and in later life when a person needs structural care that is unavailable in the village.

The presence of amenities is considered crucial for liveability. When support for amenities becomes too small and they start disappearing from a village there will be concerns that this is putting liveability under pressure. Comments will be heard like 'Without these amenities the village is unliveable'. Research conducted in Borsele and Sluis has shown that liveability consists of two facets:

- assumed liveability: the residential environment, level of activities, associations and amenities in the village, or in other words the social infrastructure;

- experienced liveability: the satisfaction expressed by residents.

The research tells us that the relationship between level of amenities and experienced liveability is not clear. The research conducted in Sluis indicates that, in contrast to what is generally expected, a larger level of amenities will not necessarily increase the average perception of liveability in the community! The absence of an ATM or other financial service and the absence of a primary school or other educational facilities may not necessarily have a negative effect on the experienced liveability of the community. However, it is important for these amenities to be reachable.

The disappearance of such amenities (swimming pool, primary school, ATM, village shop, etc) was found to be experienced as a major problem, however.

The research also shows that the experienced liveability is influenced strongly by the opinion about amenities, home, residential environment and perceived nuisance factors. Indeed, the better the quality of the home and the residential environment, the greater 'local awareness' will be created. This ensures that people become involved locally and undertake community initiatives. Chapter 5 (Develop a master plan for the level of amenities in rural areas of Zeeland Flanders) looks in more depth at the follow-up that can be given to this research.

The focus of the current policy of the Zeeland provincial government is on retaining amenities. We are focusing particularly on bundling amenities by such means as stimulation of multifunctional accommodation and health centres. The 'smart' bundling



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of amenities must remain an integral part of policy, although the focus must shift from local (i.e. having in each community a standard level of amenities) to supra-local (smart bundling that benefits every community). This will form an important element of the regional visions that will be drawn up (also see section 2.3). To increase the experienced liveability, it is essential for there to be social cohesion/community feeling. The Zeeland provincial government wants to stimulate social cohesion with its partners in three ways:

What: 1. Improve residential quality.

2. Retain or create a meeting function.

3. Keep amenities reachable.

Who: Municipalities, village/community councils, housing corporations, provincial government, project developers, public transport companies and welfare organisations.

When taking steps to fulfil these three challenges, it is essential for all stakeholders to adopt a cohesive integral approach to liveability.

Residential quality is a comprehensive concept. It not only refers to the physical condition of homes, but also to the public spaces, identity and image of a community. To improve these matters it is first necessary to analyse in which respects and in which ways it will be possible to make improvements. One idea might be to upgrade the public space of the centre of a village or to make cultural heritage elements visible again. Only then will it be possible to examine where certain investments or activities should

be undertaken. A village plan is a logical way of doing this. The commitment of the local residents is essential.

It is also essential for a village's social cohesion to have a public place where residents can meet each other, either spontaneously or otherwise. Just about anywhere can be used for this purpose, e.g. from a community centre to a bus shelter, from a village green to a village square, from a pub to a sports club canteen. It is often a question of finding a 'supporting' place, one to which other functions can be attached, such as a residential care complex where drawing lessons can be given, for instance. It is also necessary for amenities situated outside the community to be reachable. The objective that should be pursued is not the retention of amenities but their quality and reachability. Mobility can be supported by the mainstream public transport companies, but other modes of transport, such as taxis and special transport provided under the Social Support Act, can also be utilized. In practice, a transport problem will often be solved informally by a neighbour; it might be possible to manage supply and demand even more effectively, via the Internet for example.

The bundling of amenities at a higher level often necessitates painful choices by municipal executives. Scaling up and spreading amenities will have a chance of success only if the local residents are involved and are given responsibility. At this level it is possible to examine the core qualities of the villages in an area and the way in which amenities can be coupled to them. This will avoid a situation where every community has a number of inadequately sized unprofitable amenities and instead of this a quality offering at selected places that enjoys local support.





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3.5 Primary education

Reflex: A primary school is needed to retain the liveability of a village.

New principle: The central consideration must be the quality of primary education.

The quality of primary education in Zeeland is high. But education is being given in a changing environment. Fewer children are being born. Zeeland has more and more elderly people. Besides their work parents want to be able to raise their children in a pleasant way and want schools to provide a good quality offering of education. Tensions occur due to the smaller number of children and the demand for quality. The disappearance of a primary school from a community never takes place quietly. All possible means are used to keep the school because otherwise 'liveability will be under pressure'. The school is considered the most important place in a village for maintaining social contacts. Its closure would strip away social contacts in the village. As mentioned in section 3.4, the social context is the factor that determines liveability, but the school does not necessarily need to be the cornerstone of a village's social cohesion. There are various villages where the residents are satisfied with the liveability of their village even though it has no primary school. Similarly, the fear that young families will avoid villages without a school has been found to be baseless.

At the same time, primary education is expected to deliver more and more in terms of content, depth and new technologies. This requires a considerable effort by the educational system in additional training and investment in materials. Calculations indicate that this produces diseconomies of scale for small schools in that their costs per pupil are sometimes many times greater compared with large primary schools. As it is not possible to finance this structurally, choices must be made. Whole-class teaching with more than two groups in one classroom is not conducive to quality. The upshot is that the quality of primary education at small schools is under pressure.

In short, society's 'reflex' to keep small schools in villages to the fullest possible extent stems from concerns about a deterioration of liveability, precisely at a time when quality at small schools is under pressure. In response the Zeeland provincial government is striving to ensure as a guiding principle that the quality of education is always the central consideration. Under this principle it is more likely that small primary schools will be merged or that several primary schools will be accommodated centrally. However, this will be possible only if transport to and from the school is arranged in a safe and reliable way. This is clearly one of the most urgent subjects in the 'shrinkage dossier' and it will necessitate making painful choices.



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What: Research into primary education in Zeeland

Who: PPOZ, RPCZ, Scoop

PPOZ (Platform Primary Education Zeeland) has asked RPCZ (Regional Pedagogic Centre) and Scoop to develop a research proposal for addressing the dwindling numbers of schoolchildren in Zeeland. PPOZ wants to be ready for these developments because it will create opportunities for primary education in Zeeland. The research (due to be completed mid-2010) must produce foundations for policy decisions and will examine:

- how education is organised in Zeeland with an insight into the present situation regarding numbers of schoolchildren and their distribution across communities, and into developments in the long and short terms;
- the value of municipal forecasts of numbers of schoolchildren (particularly in relation to the planning of the construction of housing) as against forecasts made by school boards;
- the relationship between the size of schools and the quality of education;
- possible policy scenarios for school boards and local and provincial authorities, including the cost aspect and the social role of education.

3.6 Care

Reflex:

Given the increasing ageing of Zeeland's population, it is necessary to use all possible means to create a complete range of care services embedded at the lowest possible level.

New principles:

1. Scale up, cooperate smartly and bring about alliances of care providers, using new technical possibilities.
2. Stimulate health through an 'avoidance policy' and prevention.

Healthcare will remain under pressure in the coming years due to shortages in the labour market, the ageing population (dementia), the increasing medical capabilities and the low (and decreasing) population density.

In parallel with these developments the organisation of the care sector has been undergoing major changes for many years, including a recent high-profile merger of hospitals on the northern side of the Westerschelde river. This is a question of scale: what scale should you choose to keep quality as high as possible while ensuring that accessibility is as good as possible? For a small and thinly populated province like Zeeland, it is important to decide what kinds of care should and should not be available within the province. For care that must be



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available it is necessary to seek smart solutions and forms of cooperation to keep care provisioning in place. Competition between the various care providers in such a setting will lead to a further contraction of the offering of services. The kind of free market thinking championed at national level is no longer tenable in this sector.

Hospitals, nursing/care homes, institutions for the disabled, general practitioners and homecare organisations may be asked to join this scaling-up process. This is possible through cooperation, wherever possible with a locally distributed offering, and by jointly organising the specialist and back-office functions. There should be an examination of whether new technologies are usable (such as GP consultations via Skype). Nursing/care functions and health centres can boost the local infrastructure and because they cover a lot financially an attempt should be made to interconnect them with liveability objectives. This matter will definitely require attention when developing the master plan for the level of amenities in rural parts of Zeeland Flanders (see chapter 5).

The challenge remains to keep/get the amenities in Zeeland as far as possible and to strengthen them through activities undertaken for such purposes as wellness. This reduces dependence solely on the local population.

After all, care services are of direct importance to the residents, but they also represent a sizable economic activity that is clean and sustainable.

Due to the expected strong growth in the number of elderly people, there will be a tendency in the care field to regard the increasing number of elderly people as a quantitative challenge. It will prompt questions like: How do we make sure that all elderly people get sufficient care? How many extra beds are needed in care homes, how many extra home helpers and how many more hospital beds? However, the challenge is more complex, not only because the way care is provided is undergoing major change, but also because prevention or an 'avoidance policy' is becoming increasingly important. The new guiding principle is already part of the Zeeland provincial government's social policy, although not prominently. The Social Care policy programme focuses within the Gezond en Actief (Healthy and Active) programme on:

1. Stimulating healthy behaviour.
2. Creating the right environment for enabling healthy behaviour.

This touches on all sectors of policy, from the labour market (health and safety at work), the physical arrangement of space, environmental policy and how we travel.

What: 1. Develop master plan for level of amenities in Zeeland Flanders.

2. Make health a central consideration in government policy.

Who: Provincial government, municipalities, welfare/care organisations, urban planning agencies, public transport companies.





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Health needs to become a spearhead to which numerous actions and activities can contribute. This may include all kinds of measures to get people to eat more healthily, to exercise more and to work in a healthier way. Environmental policy plays an important role because of the pursuit of a reduction of emissions of harmful substances and nuisance caused by odour and noise.

The focus must be on the circumstances that exist, not merely on influencing healthy behaviour among individual citizens. Research shows that this kind of influencing occurs very sluggishly and that it is more effective to adapt the physical environment.

Health is about more than just a person's physical condition, because mental health is also important. Particularly now that the number of single elderly people is set to grow strongly, the question of loneliness will gain in prominence.

The Zeeland provincial government will adopt health as a policy spearhead. Given the width and reach of this subject, it will be worked out and tackled in association with partners, with a start on a 'small' scale.

3.7 Volunteers

Reflex:

The ageing population means there will be no more volunteers.

New principle:

Active elderly people (between 60 and 80) form an enormous potential for volunteer work but require a specific approach.

The number of volunteers in Zeeland is relatively high. They are largely people from the 'middle age bracket', i.e. people between 30 and 60. However, this group is going to become significantly smaller in the future. Concerns are being expressed that the current level of volunteer work will cease to be tenable in the years ahead. Even now organisations have difficulty in finding sufficient volunteers.

In the years ahead, however, the number of 'active elderly people' will increase very sharply when the baby boomers enter the age bracket of 60 to 80. Consequently, this group will increasingly come into the picture as potential for volunteer work. But it will be difficult to enlist this group as 'traditional volunteers' who give up their time structurally throughout the year. The new volunteers are characterised by voluntary time-dictated deployment, i.e. they are available for specific projects and/or jobs and less for structural volunteer work. Increa-





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singly, the 'new volunteer' will input capabilities acquired through his/her career in society and the expertise gained. Although this kind of volunteer will want to contribute something, he or she will also expect something in return (satisfaction, learning, contacts, etc.).

The provincial social policy provides for subsidies for organisations that are able to find these 'new volunteers' and secure their services. In practice, however, initiatives of this kind occur seldom.

What: Gather knowledge of enlisting older people for volunteer work.

Who: Provincial government, municipalities, voluntary organisations.

Research needs to be conducted into how the growing group of active elderly people spend their free time. Specifically for volunteer work, this group includes active elderly people who are a new kind of volunteer, i.e. people with experience of life. There is a need for research into how voluntary organisations can mobilise this group and how they can be assisted in this regard. To a large extent this is a question of creating awareness among voluntary/community organisations. A turnabout in thinking is necessary at these organisations. Organisations need to fulfil their existing voluntary tasks in a different way, aligned to the wishes of potential volunteers.

3.8 Mobility

Reflex:

Every community in Zeeland must be reachable throughout the day by regular public transport.

New principle:

There must be high-quality public transport between the large Zeeland communities and the urban centres outside the province. The residual demand for transport must be met in a better way (collective and individual transport).

A number of developments in society are important when it comes to developing a vision of mobility in the years ahead. Firstly, this concerns technological developments in the automotive industry. Until the 1960s public transport systems were the only affordable means of long-distance travel. From the 1960s more and more people have been able to buy their own car. As life expectancy has increased, there will be an active group of elderly people (between 65 and 80) that includes more and more people who hold a driving licence and own a car. Given the increasing individualisation and the downsizing of families (smaller households), the number of cars per capita will continue to rise. The number of in-car supporting systems is increasing all the time. Automatic vehicle control is already possible in principle (i.e. with the driver's work taken over entirely by the vehicle), but for the time being there is still public



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opposition ('master of one's own car'). Similarly, all kinds of new supporting systems are being marketed - like collision avoidance radar and intelligent/adaptive cruise control - which will allow elderly people to continue driving - safely - until an older age.

There are also all kinds of developments in the cycling field. The development most relevant to the long-term appears to be the pedal electric cycle. This will increase the distance that people are willing to cycle every day (at present the realistic maximum is approximately 7.5 km) and enable older people to continue using a bicycle for a longer time. For schoolchildren, too, this new technology might make the bicycle an alternative to public transport for larger distances.

The sum of all these developments is that fewer and fewer people are going to be dependent on public transport for their movements. The proportion of captive travellers (i.e. travellers without an alternative) will decrease still further, particularly among older travellers.

As public transport benefits most from bundling, and the possibilities for bundling will decrease further (on account of a smaller target group), the public transport system is likely to become increasingly 'individualised' and thus more expensive. The existing reflex that everybody must be reachable everywhere by public transport is no longer tenable. But it is no longer necessary, either! As the current concessions run until 2014, there will not be scope until the start of 2015 to make sweeping changes to the structure of public transport. The period up to 2015 will be used to conduct experiments aimed

at better meeting the residual demand for transport and incorporating the results in new policy.

What: Meet the residual demand for transport in a better way by using the results of public transport experiments and private initiatives.

Who: Provincial government, public transport companies, special transport providers under the Social Support Act.

The purpose of these experiments is to identify the needs that exist and how to deal as efficiently as possible with thinned-out transport streams.

The greatest structural gain is expected to come from possibilities for integrating special transport provided under the Social Support Act with 'ordinary' public transport, especially as regards the thin streams, because most of the special transport is already entirely individual. This integration has twofold advantages. Firstly, outside the operating hours of regular public transport it is possible for public transport users to use the special transport. Secondly, accessible transport concepts (service buses) will improve the usability of regular public transport by people entitled to special transport under the Social Support Act. But the question remains whether it will be possible on the strength of the results of the experiments to meet the residual demand for transport in its entirety. To avert a negative answer there will be greater scope for private initiatives.



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3.9 Economy and labour market

Reflex:

The growth of employment opportunities and added value is essential for prosperity ('Gross Zeeland Product').

New principle:

The primary objective is to retain/increase prosperity per inhabitant and achieve a good supply-and-demand balance in the labour market.

The success of economic policy is generally measured by the growth of employment opportunities and the added value in each region. These objectives are less relevant when the size of the working population stabilises or decreases.

Taking the growth of added value as a point of departure seems to have been overtaken by demographic developments. Besides increased labour productivity, a large part of the growth in the past was driven by a higher number of working people. So if the working population shrinks it will become increasingly difficult to retain the growth of added value. It is also questionable whether it is a good yardstick for prosperity if an area's added value is very high but its prosperity relatively low (as in the case of Zeeland Flanders, for example).

Growth of added value is a derivative of core economic policy, which is to increase prosperity. The core of policy remains unchanged, but the demographic changes make it necessary to adopt a different starting point that is resistant to demographic changes. This is the retention or increase of prosperity per inhabitant.

From this it follows that the goal must be full employment and that the quality of jobs must be increased. Here again it is not so much about having 'more jobs', but rather 'better jobs' that require a higher level of education and that pay better. That is why the present innovation policy needs to be strengthened. The policy promotes labour productivity and will be intensified to make sure that Zeeland retains a sustainable and healthy economy.

Taking the growth of employment opportunities as an economic objective ceases to be relevant on balance if the unemployment rate has reached friction level and the working population has stopped growing. This is likely to be the case in Zeeland a few years from now, despite the growth of labour participation and the current economic recession. Instead it will become increasingly important to achieve a good supply-and-demand balance in the labour market. This concerns notably the qualitative balance. Shortages of labour are already visible in various sectors because the education and experience of jobseekers are not aligned to employers' needs. Therefore, it seems necessary to continue the current labour





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market policy. Together with its partners, the Zeeland provincial government is stimulating the retraining and further training of workers.

What: Take initiatives to devise and elaborate new possibilities.

Who: Provincial government, municipalities.

One matter that will play a role in this setting is the border between Zeeland Flanders and Belgium. The border controls have disappeared and in daily practice it looks like the border has disappeared as well, but appearances are deceiving. In a variety of ways the border puts up barriers for housing consumers, students and jobseekers. This happens even though the regions on each side of the border could do a lot more for each other than they already do. Vacancies that cannot be filled in Zeeland's care sector could be filled by Flemish jobseekers, for example, while conversely the taking of jobs in the Flemish cities will make Zeeland more attractive as a residential location for people with higher levels of education. Wim van Gelder, the former Queen's Commissioner in Zeeland, was recently appointed to the role of 'border broker'. The Zeeland provincial government wants join this initiative together with its partners so as to remove the cross-border obstructions to the fullest extent possible.

3.10 Balance between work and private life

Reflex:

People must work more and harder to absorb the shrinkage of the working population.

New principle:

Zeeland must strive for a good balance between work and private life (and portray itself as offering this balance).

The growth of the working population was something taken for granted in the past. In the 1970s and 1980s, the members of the population aged between 15 and 65 grew in Zeeland by approximately 3,000 to 4,000 year on year. It is no coincidence that employment opportunities were the greatest cause of concern in that period. In 2008 the population aged between 15 and 65 (the potential working population) shrunk in Zeeland for the first time ever. Labour participation will still grow in the coming years (because of more working women and older people), so for the time being the working population will remain stable and will not shrink until later.

How does this circumstance need to be addressed in the future? The reflex to which recourse is frequently sought is that together we must all work more and harder to get the job done. When these words are uttered it creates an unattractive perspective for those who will then be part of the working population: work harder, pay more contributions for your state



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old-age pension, preferably with both partners working full-time, bringing up children, providing informal care for many older neighbours and for parents...

In short, something needs to change if we are to strike a good balance between work and private life, in the interests of employers, employees and society as a whole. An important consideration for employers is that the work will be done in the future by employees capable of going on working thanks to a good balance between work and private life. For employees a good balance between work and private life is evident.

For society as a whole it produces considerable gains if working people are in a position to help out in their free time with children, parents, neighbours or friends or by doing voluntary work. Another matter is the integration of the increasing number of labour migrants moving to Zeeland.

To remain an attractive working area for employees, employers and residents in general, the balance between work and private life is going to become a factor of increasing importance. The Zeeland provincial government has taken the first steps in association with Scoop in a project called 'From 7 to 7' and these activities will be stepped up.

What: 7 to 7 society.

Who: Provincial government, municipalities, Scoop, employers.

People in the 30-to-60 age bracket traditionally do a lot of vol-

unteer work. Over the coming 30 years this group will become smaller. What's more, an increasing call will be made upon people in this group concerning their labour market participation. In terms of the provincial government's agenda it means devoting greater attention to 7-to-7 society:

- brainstorm on and engage in making working hours, school hours and service provisioning more flexible;
- brainstorm on and make investments in out-of-school care;
- brainstorm on and engage in measures for combining paid employment and volunteer work;
- brainstorm on and engage in measures for combining work and informal care.

What: Integration of labour migrants.

Who: Provincial government, municipalities, employers.

The number of labour migrants from Eastern Europe and Portugal who are working in sectors like construction and commercial market gardening is growing steadily. The population forecast is based in part on a substantial annual growth in the number of foreigners who move to Zeeland to work. The housing of labour migrants has already resulted in complaints from local residents. Due to incompatible lifestyles there is a call to house labour migrants at places outside the residential communities.

The annual growth of labour migrants is an issue that requires a structural response: how will Zeeland take care of these



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people properly and offer them a good future? Housing is not the only important matter in this respect because there are also issues like education and familiarisation with the area. A difficult matter is the highly diverse composition of the group of labour migrants in terms of nationality, language, level of education and background, and there is also the question of their intentions: will they stay temporarily or permanently? Together with the municipalities and central government, the Zeeland provincial government will take stock of what can be done to ensure the successful integration of labour migrants in the years ahead.

3.11 Young people

Reflex:

The outflow of young people must be stopped.

New principle:

It is necessary to promote the return of Zeeland's young people after they have finished studying.

One of the most important demographic shifts each year consists of the group of young people who after finishing secondary school move to a university city outside Zeeland to continue their education. Each year about 1,000 young people embark on this route. The number often gives rise to a negative picture: young people are moving away because they have no option on account of the absence of employment and educational opportunities and they never come back. This picture requires adjustment, however. Zeeland does not need to offer every kind of education that exists in the Netherlands. To get a higher education Zeeland's young people must leave the province. There is no point in keeping them in Zeeland, because the level of education required for jobs is also rising in Zeeland and this process will not stop for the time being. Therefore, it is important to encourage Zeeland's young people to study but also to stimulate their ultimate return to Zeeland. Zeeland is not unique in this regard, because cities like Apeldoorn and other non-university municipalities also have to contend with an outflow of their young people. All of these





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areas face the same challenge: how do we keep contact with our young people and how can we entice them to come back to live and work here after completing their higher professional or university education?

Zeeland is unable to offer recent graduates the kind of inner-city environments that the major cities offer them, but it can offer them an excellent residential environment in terms of landscape, attractive villages/towns, safety, environmental quality, and so on. In terms of employment opportunities, too, Zeeland has a lot to offer them. Recent graduates undeniably have a greater choice in the major cities, but the picture of a dearth of jobs in Zeeland is no longer true for people with a higher education. This represents another important challenge.

What: Zeeland teacher training school.

Who: Institutes of secondary and vocational education.

The objective of this project is for all Zeeland secondary and vocational schools jointly to offer training places for future teachers. This will make a quantitative and qualitative contribution to resolving the great problem of teaching vacancies in secondary and vocational education. One of the objectives is for this to reduce the high percentage of unqualified teachers (in the region). A teacher training school is defined by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science as 'a partnership between one or more schools for primary education, secondary education and/or vocational/adult education and one or

more colleges and/or universities which by means of one or more of their teacher training courses jointly train future teachers a large part of their time at the workplace'

A project group has been set up to examine how cooperation with the teacher training courses and between the secondary and vocational schools can best be organised. Different target groups must be kept in the picture to ensure the creation in Zeeland of attractive training opportunities for all of these students. It is then highly likely that they will wish to continue living and working in Zeeland.

The project group must further examine what might constitute a good structure of education and supervision for the secondary and vocational schools in the region. This study will be conducted from September 2009 until mid-2011.

What: Promote ties with Zeeland among Zeeland's young people who graduate elsewhere to make it easier for them to return (temporarily or otherwise).

Who: Provincial government, municipalities, employers.

At the initiative of the Zeeland provincial government, a project will be started as an umbrella for activities aimed at retaining contacts between young people studying outside Zeeland and the province, and to promote their return to the province, temporarily or otherwise. The following activities are envisaged at the present time:





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- Maintain contact with Zeeland students. This is possible in various ways and some ideas were put forward at the New!Zeeland meetings, like e-newsletters or a 'gift box' for Zeeland youngsters who have completed their secondary education.
- Make it attractive to take in-company traineeships in Zeeland. This can be done by increasing the traineeship allowance or by providing attractive accommodation during the traineeship. There is room for improvement in publicising the possibilities for traineeships, for example by means of a 'Traineeship Front Office'.
- Put on presentations to spotlight employment opportunities in the region, coupled to vacancies, also for partners. Employers in Zeeland could join this initiative through a network of relations.
- The problem of succession occurs particularly among small SMEs; older company owners who wish to retire have no successor. Through matching a small-scale effort is being made to make young people enthusiastic about taking over a going company. This could be tackled structurally.

3.12 Vocational and university education

Reflex:

Vocational and university education must offer the widest possible range of courses in order to retain young people.

New principle:

The central consideration must be the quality of vocational and university education and the needs that exist in the region.

Vocational and university education in Zeeland will face a decrease of students (about 15%) in due course. At present the vocational education system (preparatory secondary vocational education, senior secondary vocational education and higher professional education) are undergoing scaling-up processes as a result of which vocational education in Zeeland is relatively small compared with other regions. The objective of being able to provide the widest possible offering of education will come under a pressure as a result of the situation. There are too few students to provide some courses in a cost-covering way.

Therefore, the new guiding principle makes quality the central consideration, along with the demand that exists in the public sector, education and businesses in Zeeland. To this end the aforementioned parties must become even more involved than at present in vocational and university education.





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What: Taskforce for vocational and higher education in Zeeland.

Who: Taskforce, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Zeeland provincial government, regional training centres and Zeeland University (HZ).

A Taskforce headed by Mr E. d'Hondt is going to study the future prospects of vocational and higher education in Zeeland. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is the Taskforce's client, and there is close consultation with the Zeeland provincial government.

Mr Plasterk, Minister of Education, Culture and Science, established the Zeeland Taskforce on account of the problems that will confront vocational and higher education in Zeeland. Due to the lower numbers of students, the financial continuity of the educational institutions may be in jeopardy.

The Zeeland Taskforce will:

- identify the problems and advise on how to establish a sufficient and sustainable offering of education in Zeeland qualitatively and quantitatively;
- put an emphasis on cooperation between the different educational parties, the business community and local governments, for example through creative alliances within and outside the provincial borders (Southwest Netherlands).





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4. What do we need?

New paths have not usually been trodden. Exploring these paths requires a good pair of shoes. If you don't have good shoes, there is a fairly big probability that you will not reach the end of the path with unharmed feet.

Something similar applies to embarking on the 'new paths' formulated in this document. To put the new guiding principle into practice we need 'good footwear'. The right footwear in any event means the following matters:

- **Cooperation**

Although it has been stated repeatedly in this document, it must be stressed that cooperation between all stakeholders in Zeeland is absolutely essential for successfully putting the guiding principles into practice. This is a challenge that faces not only the provincial government, but a task for which all stakeholders will jointly need to roll up their sleeves.

- **Single Zeeland shrinkage agenda**

To underscore this matter, a joint agenda will be drawn up between October and December 2009, stating clearly who is responsible for specific actions and which other parties will be involved in carrying out the activities.

- **Orchestration**

The need for cooperation between all stakeholders in Zeeland makes it necessary to orchestrate the elaboration of the new guiding principles. As the social effects of the demographic developments are not confined to the local level and will also manifest themselves notably at regional level, the provincial government can and wants to play a central role as an orchestrator. The provincial government sees itself acting as a stakeholder between the parties, but will not shy away from making choices whenever deemed necessary for short-term solutions that help to fulfil the long-term vision.

- **Regional differentiation**

As the demographic developments are not the same province-wide but exhibit differences regionally, a distinction will be made between the different regions in Zeeland. This will make it possible to deliver regional customisation where such is necessary.

- **Suspending obstructive legislation**

Central government will be approached about suspending obstructive laws and regulations. For example, the cooperation necessary from care providers in order to retain the existing level of amenities in the care sector cannot be taken for granted because the prevailing legislation calls for market forces and competition.





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- **Alternative financing streams**

Another matter for which we expect central government support concerns the way certain matters are financed. Educational budgets are set according to numbers of pupils, but if the numbers continue to fall it will be impossible to continue assuring the quality of education. Additionally, the urban renewal investment budget (ISV) should devote greater attention to the restructuring of the housing market in shrinking regions, because whereas it used to be financed mainly by building new homes, this will no longer be possible if on balance there is a decrease in the number of homes.

- **Developing and exchanging knowledge**

As Zeeland and notably Zeeland Flanders ranks among the regions where the consequences of the demographic developments will be felt first, it is possible to gain knowledge and experience in this province in finding new solutions that (at a later stage) might also be usable elsewhere. Conversely, the same applies. We must be receptive to new solutions put forward elsewhere (East Groningen, Parkstad) to avoid repeated reinvention of the wheel. But it will remain important to deliver customisation aligned to the specific regional situation.

- **Press ahead on cultivating awareness**

The New!Zeeland debate brought the demographic developments and their social effects to everybody's attention. This represented a first step towards addressing consciously (or more consciously) the shrinkage of the population. But everybody needs to remain aware of the situation. The attention that the subject has received must not be allowed to wane in order to ensure that new ideas continue to come about how to deal with the demographic developments. This makes it necessary to exchange information regularly about the progress of current projects and the results achieved.

The question now is whether you will take up the challenge and together with us put on your shoes to embark together on The Path Ahead!





The Path Ahead!

5. What action will we take now?

Through this document the Zeeland provincial government has issued a firm invitation to all stakeholders to embark together on The Path Ahead! and has set out the guiding principles on the basis of which the Zeeland Shrinkage Agenda must be formulated with concrete action items between now and December 2009.

But this does not mean that we are going to sit around in the coming months until the agenda is actually produced. The problems regarding several matters are so urgent that we cannot allow ourselves to do nothing. Therefore, we will press ahead in the coming months on the action that we have already initiated for those matters.

This in any event concerns:

- **The restructuring and transformation challenge for the housing stock in Zeeland Flanders.**

The demographic developments will cause the housing market in Zeeland Flanders to continue weakening due to less demand and more supply. The upshot is that the value of properties will decrease, thus impairing the dynamics in the housing market, with economic and social consequences. It will also impact negatively on the modernisation and improvement of the quality of the housing stock, which may exacerbate the shrinkage.

To halt this process it is essential to maintain the dynamics in the housing market. Key questions in this regard are: how do you organise this and where do you get the required funding?

Besides finding an answer to these questions, the following steps will be taken:

- draw up new housing construction programmes for the municipalities in Zeeland Flanders and use them as a basis for allocating ISV budgets;
- conduct research into the feasibility of a restructuring fund for the Zeeland Flanders region.

- **Develop a master plan for the level of amenities in rural areas of Zeeland Flanders: 'from more to better'.**

Based on the liveability surveys already performed for Sluis and Terneuzen, a start will be made in the coming months on developing for the various communities in Zeeland Flanders a master plan for the level of amenities in that region. This will be carried out in cooperation with members of the public and it may serve as an example for other regions.

Questions that will in any event be addressed include: how can the quality of the amenities in the area be reinforced? How can we utilise and reinforce the strengths of the communities? Which amenities are needed, affordable and feasible and how many can the region support? What scale is necessary to deliver the required quality? How should the amenities be distributed? And how can their accessibility guarantee the existence of amenities for all members of the public?







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