

# Integrating 'sustainability' in all departments

Municipality of The Hague / *Den Haag* [Netherlands]

## Context & Rationale

The municipality of The Hague in the Netherlands has chosen to integrate sustainability, climate change, and energy policy into all aspects of the local government's activities and policies, rather than creating a large sustainability department. Sustainability policy is implemented through various units, such as the housing department and the mobility department, while the small sustainability team focuses on cross-department collaboration.

By involving 'sustainability ambassadors' in The Hague's neighbourhoods, the sustainability issue is also put on the agenda among the citizens.

## Description

The municipality of The Hague attempts to integrate sustainability into all aspects of the local government's activities and policies, aiming at the city being energy neutral by 2040. This means there is not only one sustainability team, but the idea of sustainability (including energy efficiency/saving) is embedded in all teams.

The sustainability team as such of the municipality of The Hague is in essence very small. Out of more than 5,000 civil servants, it consists of only two programme managers, a half time communication advisor, and two interns. They keep the overview of all sustainability activities, throughout all departments and teams, aiming at ensuring that sustainability is an issue to be considered throughout all policies and activities.

The decision to move the responsibility for sustainability from a 'sustainability team' to all departments and teams of the organisation was taken in 2009. In 2013 a 'backcasting' report was completed, describing the actions needed for The Hague to be energy neutral by 2040. Based on this, the 'Agenda' for sustainability 2015-2020 was adopted in July 2015.

It has been calculated that, according to be energy neutral by 2040, investments of € 140 million per year will be needed. As the municipality does not have funding for this, it will act as a 'facilitator' instead. The sustainability programme funding is only about € 1-2 million per year, which is used as a catalyser for projects with the private sector and for establishing connections between sectors. In the end, the funding of all



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departments of the municipality will contribute to the sustainability goals, for example the housing programme, the transport programme, and others.

An example of an instrument aimed at leveraging financing for climate, energy, and sustainability is 'Budget for initiatives by The Hague neighbourhoods', offering subsidies for consultancy costs and organisational costs of sustainable projects (energy efficiency, renewable energy, and others).

In order to get more people and businesses involved in the sustainability strategy, the municipality uses 'sustainability ambassadors' in the neighbourhoods, as a contact person for people that are thinking about sustainable initiatives. Furthermore, the "Sustainable The Hague Foundation" (*Stichting Duurzaam Den Haag*) was established, where supply and demand of sustainable initiatives come together.

## Main Objectives

The key objective in the end is to convert the Hague as energy neutral by 2040. For now, The Hague aims to be in line with the national and EU targets.

The Hague currently also aims to serve as expertise center for municipalities in the Haaglanden conurbation region (in essence to help smaller municipalities that often only have one person responsible for sustainability).

## Implementing Structure & Partners - Governance

The implementation of the overall sustainability activities is carried out by the municipality of The Hague. In some cases, regional collaboration is sought, such as the Haaglanden conurbation or the Rotterdam-The Hague Metropolitan Area.

Through the sustainability activities, the municipality aims to reach the three main target groups, i.e. citizens, companies, and visitors. The target group 'companies' in this case also includes the national government, UN institutions, and embassies, as major building owners in the city.

As introduced above, the municipality uses an approach of working with 'sustainability ambassadors' in the neighbourhoods. This approach was unique when it started, and it provides a way to involve citizens much more than through traditional methods such as town hall meetings. Already about 40 groups are involved in this, and these are no longer only the early adopters. It now comes to the stage of the 'early majority'.

For this 'early majority', the municipality organisation no longer has the capacity to facilitate this, so now the early adopters can help others (groups can hire knowledge from earlier groups). The municipality is then just facilitating this interaction and the entire process is running on its own.



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## Financing and Costs / Time Frame

The Hague's approach can be used as an approach to integrate sustainability, energy, and climate issues in all other policy fields. In this way, no costly 'sustainability budget' needs to be approved.

## Contacts & Links

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[denhaag.nl/home/bewoners/natuur-en-milieu/duurzaamheid.htm](https://denhaag.nl/home/bewoners/natuur-en-milieu/duurzaamheid.htm)

[denhaag.raadsinformatie.nl/document/3323147/1](https://denhaag.raadsinformatie.nl/document/3323147/1)

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