

**Speech of Anne-Marie Spierings, Minister for Agriculture, Energy and Public Administration of the Province of Noord-Brabant (NL)**

Brussels, 20.10.2016

- Check against delivery –

Ladies & Gentlemen,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Baden-Württemberg for inviting me to attend this meeting. It is an honour to join this exclusive group of progressive regions. Simultaneously, it is great to be here in Brussels, Europe's centre. A Europe that is increasingly heading for an energy-neutral society. And it is with that future in mind, ladies & gentlemen, that I would like to commence my speech. Because that is what links us as regions: the dream of an energy-neutral, future Europe. A future that is coming increasingly close to being a reality now that the European Union also ratified the Paris climate agreement this Autumn, alongside the United States and China. This means Europe has taken an important step towards truly achieving energy transition. However, this does not mean it won't be an immense challenge to create an energy-neutral society. It is though, a challenge I have faith in ladies and gentlemen. This belief has to do with the world we live in today. A world that, thanks to rapid technological advancement offers so many options for achieving an energy-neutral society. Particularly when it comes to mobility. For instance, an increasing number of things can now be arranged remotely obviating the necessity for travel as well as the need to own a mode of transport. Simultaneously, technology enables us to manufacture 100% clean

vehicles. The latter are also increasingly piloted automatically due to their connections to other vehicles, all enabled by new technology. Things we could only dream of a decade ago, now seem just around the corner.

Dear all,

These examples demonstrate that current technology offers us plenty of opportunities to make mobility more sustainable. The latter is not only good for the planet, but also for our regional economies. Because just making our mobility energy-neutral will lead to enormous increases in jobs in the automotive and high-tech sectors.

Ladies & gentlemen, all these opportunities and developments have also been observed in Brabant and this is why the provincial government has expressed its ambition to be energy neutral in 2050.

Before I deal with that in more detail, perhaps I should first tell you more about the province of Noord-Brabant. It has some 2.5 million inhabitants which makes it one of the largest in the Netherlands. It is not only a province with a relatively large number of inhabitants, but also one with a major industrial sector. And both these inhabitants and Brabant's industry use a lot of energy, a huge amount of energy. This is what makes it such a challenge to make Brabant energy neutral by 2050. A challenge made additionally ambitious by the fact that our province has no coastline. This means we can't install coastal or offshore windmills.

Now you may say: Brabant's society energy neutral by 2050? You don't stand a chance. But, ladies & gentlemen, I am an optimist. I am the sort of person who thinks in terms of challenges not obstacles. This is why I believe in this dream of the future. A dream that not only paves the way for a sustainable Brabant, but also for a strong regional economy. It's a dream we share with many parties in

the province. This is why we collaborate a lot with knowledge institutions and the business community in the triple helix. Cooperations that, in my opinion, are crucial to achieving our ambitions, in Brabant and in Europe. Because we can't do it alone as a province.

Ladies & gentlemen, 2050 sounds a long way away, but it's descending upon us more rapidly than you might think. Now is the time to take steps in the right direction. The latter are currently more essential than ever. For our region, this means that we should – among other things – focus on the transport sector. Because transport is responsible for some 29% of total energy consumption in Brabant. This means that if we succeed in making Brabant's mobility sector energy neutral, we will already have taken a huge step towards our ultimate objective.

Let's look ahead at that objective. What would such a more energy-neutral world look like when it comes to transport in 2050? And what will this entail for Brabant's average inhabitant? When I think ahead, I envisage a society in which every inhabitant transports themselves using a 100% clean, electric vehicle. A society in which every inhabitant of the province no longer owns such a vehicle, but shares it with others so much fewer vehicles are required. A society in which every *Brabander* can charge an electric vehicle from the Netherlands at any point in time, everywhere around the globe with sustainably-generated energy.

Brabant is working hard to make this dream a reality. Last year for example, the province went in search of a transport company for the south east of the province. One of the requirements the former had to meet was zero emissions. The Hermes bus company won this tender and will use 50 electric buses for public transport in Brabant as of the end of the year. The electric buses to be

utilised are currently being developed and tested at the Automotive Campus in Helmond (NL). A knowledge centre and meeting place within the Netherlands' automotive and mobility ecosystem. There, companies, knowledge & educational institutions as well as government bodies work on smart and green mobility innovations. Think, for example, of industrial parties such as VDL, NXP, Ericsson, ASML, Philips, BMW and Tesla as well as energy company Eneco and network company Enexis. Let's not forget the strength of the students at Eindhoven University of Technology. They prove new mobility is possible. Take, for instance, Stella, the solar-powered family car the students became world champions with twice, consecutively, during the World Solar Challenge in Australia. Or the students who are currently travelling the world in 80 days on an electric motorbike. They are riding across America as we speak. Before the US, they travelled through Europe, the Middle East and Asia to show the world electric mobility *is* an option.

Ladies & gentlemen,

Alongside cars, motorbikes and buses, we will also examine trucks. There are still a lot of trucks driving around Europe. So far, they generally tend to be powered by traditional diesel engines. The latter are a lot cleaner than a few decades ago, but wouldn't it be great to replace them by zero emissions vehicles? In Brabant we are studying that option and stand on the brink of the further roll out of zero emission trucks. Hybrid, hydrogen and electric trucks play an important role in this. A great deal of urban and national logistics can be carried out entirely electrically resulting in clean, quiet streets. But the development of revolutionary, clean fuel engines is also important. For long distances, new combustion engines and green fuels provide a good addition that is currently being worked on. The zero emissions truck pilot in Brabant will

start with shorter distances in cities so polluting diesels no longer have to access city centres. This will also help the latter's inhabitants as it directly contributes to public health.

Dear all,

These examples are indicative of the manner in which we in Brabant work. With a provincial government that takes the initiative. And parties from Brabant that immediately start developing, testing and ultimately implementing in the area. As the provincial government we play the role of catalyst. We know that we cannot shape the transition on our own. That is why we have a great deal of contact with all the parties that play a role in this in Brabant. Simultaneously we can see the opportunities for enabling the transition from fossil to sustainable energy sources and act on them. For example, we have sold the coal-fired Amer power station. This demonstrates that we are no longer focusing on old, fossil fuels. We are now future oriented and have become shareholders in the network company Enexis. Because the energy network will continue to play an important role in the energy transition as the major challenges lie in energy storage and transport. Electric cars offer the solution as by intelligently charging the car you can use it to transport energy and discharge it elsewhere. This means that if, here in the Netherlands, we manage to have 1 million electric vehicles on the roads in 2025 the latter will, combined, have a storage capacity of approx. 5gW. This would meet more than half the entire country's energy needs of around 8 to 9gW in one fell swoop. This makes electric cars an energy transition catalyst. A smart network with sufficient smart charging options everyone can charge their car at is absolutely essential to this end.

Ladies & gentlemen,

The transition to an energy-neutral society also entails considerable changes in the field of mobility both for society and the people living in our area. Firstly, there is the transition from fossil-fuelled to zero emission driving. Then, to save as much energy as possible, we will start to increasingly share these vehicles instead of owning them. To include citizens in these changes we will have to make it as easy as possible for them. Because people won't buy electric vehicles if they don't know whether they can charge them at any time and all over the place. People also won't share vehicles if they can't be certain they will make it back home with that car or another shared vehicle.

What we can however do as a government body is ensure a good public infrastructure. Brabant excels in this. For example, we are collaborating with municipalities, our network company Enexis and all manner of parties in the pilot *smart charging, the Brabant approach* that focuses on the development of smart, affordable public charging stations. Our goal is to have some 12,000 public charging stations in 2020 and to have 100,000 electric cars on Brabant's roads. We have started the pilot by running 600 charging stations and an innovation programme aimed at making the latter smarter and cheaper. And it's working! Inside two years we have reduced costs by half and the charging stations can now also provide additional services. At the moment, the provincial government has a tender out for the next 2,000 smart charging stations to be built starting in early 2017. This will increase the number of (semi-)public charging stations in Noord-Brabant to over 4,500. Simultaneously, this tender has revealed that market parties are adopting larger roles. A sign that a fully-fledged market is developing.

However, dear audience,

In Brabant we are not only busy expanding our public infrastructure. Within the latter we are working with open standards developed in collaboration with, among others, the Elaad foundation. These open standards mean every electric car can be charged at every charging station using every charging card. This contributes to a public infrastructure everyone can charge from at a reasonable rate. The next step is to link solar and wind energy to electric vehicles using the charging infrastructure. In this way we can enable charging stations to charge electric cars in a smart way. For example, if there is a plentiful supply of sustainable energy at a particular point in time. This will enable Brabant's inhabitants to opt to use their own sustainable energy. And this, ladies & gentlemen, will allow them to drive cleanly contributing to a clean future.

All these examples are situated 100 kilometres from here. In Brabant, the heart of the Netherlands' automotive industry. Because at least 50% of that industry is in Brabant. An auto industry that – to our great satisfaction – is increasingly focusing on electric transport and vehicles. Car manufacturer Tesla, that has its European head office and distribution centre for Europe in Brabant, also has our heartfelt endorsement. It has truly put electric mobility on the map.

However, just as we want consumers to be able to charge at every charging station this also applies to car manufacturers. The world in which there is a single electric car manufacturer providing vehicles that allow you to drive considerable distances will soon be behind us. The market for electric cars will then truly be out of its infancy. And on that market we can also perceive companies taking initiatives that we can only applaud. At the moment we are, for example, collaborating with BMW on an electric car sharing concept in Brabant. And, on the basis of experiences, including that with BMW, we are working on a programme for some 1,000 shared electric cars. Cars that

Brabant's inhabitants will share the coming years. A perfect way to combine the sharing economy and electric mobility.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

The gauntlet has been thrown and there is a way forwards towards an energy-neutral society. As a region, Brabant is on the right track developing and manufacturing electric cars and an increasingly good charging infrastructure. It pleases me greatly to see things actually happening in Brabant and to be ahead of the crowd alongside you.

However, there is more to be done. Naturally, the majority of trips driven by Brabant's inhabitants are within the province's borders. But just as I did today, the province's inhabitants also travel outside its confines. They holiday in Catalonia, Lombardy, the Alps or one of the countless other beautiful spots in Europe. Places where things have probably already been organised properly because they are part of your progressive regions. However, if we truly wish to make life easy for car drivers then they should be able to charge easily all over Europe. This means we have to tackle this challenge at a super-regional level. Because someone from Brabant will only buy an electric car if he or she can be sure that they can charge it the same way everywhere. This is why we should ensure that charging takes place using the same standard, everywhere. This starts by applying open standards to the charging infrastructure on a European scale. So that every European can charge his or her car with their own sustainable energy in any European country. To this end, government bodies will have to cooperate with companies, knowledge institutions and, last, but not least, car drivers. Let's join forces as 4Motors to achieve this and turn our regions across Europe into one, great big living lab. A lab in which we can learn a great deal from one another and can mutually inspire with our experiences in



our regions. A living lab which will allow Europe to acquire a strong competitive edge with regard to electric mobility and charging infrastructure.

Ladies & gentlemen,

The energy-neutral world we all so much want to create is feasible. The biggest challenge facing us is to include consumers in this process. As leading regions we can make the difference. We can do so by making it easier for consumers to charge everywhere. This will represent a great step forward with electric mobility towards an energy-neutral society. A society we all desire, that is so needed and that offers so many economic opportunities.