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Are the Dutch going green? Climate politics in the low lands heading towards crunch time

Since autumn 2017, a new wind has been blowing in the Netherlands on the topic of climate and energy policy. The new government pledged to become a European climate frontrunner with an emission reduction target of 49% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. This decision was made in the context of angry citizens protesting against domestic natural gas production leading to earthquakes, and a court ruling urging the government to step up short-term climate action in line with climate science. Now, at the start of 2019, we are witnessing the end game of a typical Dutch bottom-up negotiating process – known as ‘*polderen*’ – leading to a national Climate and Energy Agreement, involving government, industry and civil society. It is increasingly questioned if this process is suitable to deliver broad-based societal consensus on how to tackle climate change towards 2030 and beyond. This policy brief discusses the political context and policy proposals made. It points to some dark clouds hanging over the realisation of the ambitious objectives.

Introduction

The centre-right Cabinet Rutte III, which came to power in October 2017, is profiling itself as the greenest Dutch Cabinet ever. Integrated climate and energy policy is one of the four key issues in the 2017-2021 Policy Agenda (*‘Regeerakkoord’*). Guided by the slogan ‘Confidence in the future’, the government’s strives to engage all stakeholders in tackling major societal challenges.

Dutch climate and energy policy is rooted in the national commitment to implement the UN Paris Climate Agreements of 2015. And as an EU Member State, the country must also adhere to its EU commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by

at least 42% by 2030, as compared to 1990 levels. When the new government took office in 2017, this EU target was -40%. At that time, the Dutch government acknowledged that -40% would be insufficient to contribute to limiting the global temperature rise to 2 degrees Celsius. Therefore the *Regeerakkoord* set an ambition for the Netherlands to achieve a reduction of 49% by 2030. The new government also indicated it wanted to be a European frontrunner, by seeking support among European partners to enhance the overall EU ambition to -55% in 2030. Should that ambition not be realised, the Netherlands would still try to find agreement on an additional effort with like-minded countries.

A broad consensus-based policy agreement and a Climate Law

For centuries, societal actors in the Netherlands have cooperated closely to fight against flooding and reclaiming land from the sea (so-called *polders*). Since the 20th century, consensus-oriented stakeholder engagement in policy making (*'polderen'*) has become a hallmark of Dutch government policy development. In order to reach a national Climate and Energy Agreement in 2019, it was therefore logical to engage stakeholders from five key economic sectors: electricity production, industry, built environment (houses, office buildings, etc), mobility and transportation, agriculture and land use. The negotiation process towards broadly supported climate and energy policies would provide transparency and reliability among key economic sectors, different levels of government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Additionally, the process would cement a permanent platform for further policy development and monitoring. As icing on the cake, the policy process would be completed with a Climate Law, a novelty in Dutch legislation. This law would establish the regulatory framework to guide and monitor the main climate and energy policy targets for the medium and longer term.

Earthquakes bringing an end to international gas hub aspirations and an unexpected court ruling

To gain a better understanding of how the debate is unfolding at present, it is helpful to identify some of the topics of the past decade, most notably the political unrest created by earthquakes in the north of the country (Groningen) and the Urgenda Court ruling. These developments have changed the focus of Dutch energy policy, which previously was centred around an ambition to become a natural gas hub in north-western Europe, since it undermined a narrative on natural gas being a more reliable and less polluting energy source than oil or coal.

In the first decade of this century, the Netherlands still wanted to profile itself as a regional gas hub, potentially with gas from Russia being imported and temporarily stored in (already earlier emptied) gas fields in the north of the country. However, tensions with Russia over the capturing of a Greenpeace ship in the Arctic, the downing of flight MH17 on Ukrainian soil, and the annexation of Crimea complicated fulfilment of this ambition. Moreover, increasing occurrences of earthquakes in the northern region of the country added to the idea that the gas exploration was perhaps less of a blessing than previously thought.

An effect was a higher policy priority for energy saving and renewables, resulting in 2013 in the *Energy Agreement for Sustainable Growth*. This agreement was a consensus-based 'contract' with stakeholders, in line with the *'polder'*- process mentioned above. Parties to the contract agreed to implement 2050 targets on: i) energy efficiency: on average +1.5% per year, and 100 Petajoule overall in 2020; ii) the use of renewable energy: up to 14% in 2020, and to 16% in 2030; and iii) job creation of at least 15,000 new jobs. Implementation of the 2013 Agreement is still ongoing in 2019. Progress is measured periodically, although not much attention is given to it.

In 2015, the *Urgenda* Foundation filed a climate case against the Dutch government. The case was brought on the basis of 900 citizens holding their government accountable for 'contributing to dangerous climate change'. On 24 June 2015, the District Court of The Hague ruled that the government must cut national greenhouse gas emissions by at least 25% compared to 1990 levels by the end of 2020. The ruling required the government to immediately take more effective action on climate change. In September 2015, despite calls from leading scientists, lawyers, citizens and companies that the Court's ruling should be accepted, the Dutch government decided to appeal the judgment. It made this decision even though it was taking steps to meet the target set by the Court, and it further claimed that procedural and not substantial reasons had motivated the decision to appeal.

On 9 October 2018 the Hague Court of Appeal ruled in favour of the Urgenda Foundation: 'Failure to implement the verdict of 2015 would amount to a violation of the rights of Dutch citizens.' More specifically, the new ruling was based upon citizens' rights as stipulated by the 1953 European Convention on Human Rights.

On 16 November 2018 the Dutch government announced its intention to appeal again. It would now ask the Supreme Court for a ruling on the question of whether a political decision by the government can be overturned by a court verdict. In the meantime, the government has indicated it will undertake action to meet the target set by the Hague Court of Appeal. In doing so, it set aside an extra 500 million euros to cover the necessary expenses.

In March 2018 – after a series of new earthquakes – the Cabinet took the historic decision to scale down and ultimately end the mining of natural gas in Groningen as soon as possible. This extensive natural gas field has been exploited since its discovery in the 1960s. Since then, it has provided a major contribution to the energy needs of the Dutch (and European) economy. The Cabinet's decision to scale down the mining is based on the scientific knowledge that continuation of gas mining cannot 'guarantee the safety and safety experience of (the population of) Groningen'. The earthquakes are causing damage to houses and other buildings, and are triggering feelings of insecurity by people who live and work in the region. This decision has a far-reaching impact on how the Dutch economy will need to organise its energy supply for the middle and long term. And by extension, it has unmistakably accelerated support for an energy and climate transition.

Towards a consensus-based Climate and Energy Agreement, and parliamentary initiative for a Climate Bill

In February 2018 the government began the '*polder*'-process of fleshing out with stakeholders the aspired Climate and Energy Agreement. Representatives from over

100 stakeholder organisations were invited to participate at five negotiation 'tables' led by independent chairs with a strong reputation on the subject. As indicated above, the tables would develop policies for five key sectors: industry, mobility/transportation, built environment, electricity production, agriculture and land use. The overall process coordination is conducted by a so-called Climate Council, made up of the chairs of the five tables and independent experts. The Council itself is chaired by former Minister of the Environment Ed Nijpels, who also chairs the monitoring committee of the 2013 Energy Agreement for Sustainable Growth (mentioned above). Ed Nijpels formerly was a minister of the liberal-conservative party *VVD*, home to Prime Minister Rutte and currently the largest party in Parliament, holding 21% of the seats.

The 2017 *Regeerakkoord* included an indicative 2030 greenhouse gas emission reduction target for each of the five sectors (see table below).

The mission of the five negotiating tables is to reach agreement on concrete policies and measures to achieve the specific target for their sector, by focusing on reducing emissions on Dutch territory, and by defining cost-effective solutions. To start with, the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB) together with the Netherlands Environment Assessment Agency (PBL) provided an inventory of options for policies and measures per sector, including data on their cost-effectiveness.

First results of the table negotiations were presented on 1 July 2018.¹ Each table presented policy options by which its sector could contribute to the targeted emission reduction of 49% in 2030. Subsequently, PBL and CPB were asked to assess the emission reduction potential of the proposed policy packages. The proposals were criticised by commentators for lacking specificity. Probably, as a result, PBL and CPB

1 The chair of the Climate Council delivered the document *Proposals for main lines of the Climate Agreement* to the Minister of Economic and Climate Affairs.

**Indicative allocation per sector of overall -49% emission reduction in 2030
(in Mton CO² equivalents)**

Sector/negotiating table	Emission		Indicated reduction	
	Emission 2015	Ceiling 2030	compared to emission 2015	compared to reference 2030
Electricity production	52,8	12,4	40,4	20,2
Industry (incl. waste processing, oil refineries, extraction sector)	55,1	35,7	19,4	14,3
Built environment	24,4	15,3	9,0	3,4
Transportation/mobility	35,5	25,0	10,5	7,3
Agriculture and land use	27,3	22,2	5,1	3,5
Total	195,1	110,6	84,5	48,7

Source: Michiel Hekkenberg en Robert Koelemeijer (eds), *Analyse van het voorstel voor hoofdlijnen van het Klimaatakkoord*, Netherlands Environment Assessment Agency (PBL), 28 September 2018, p. 47 (table data translated in English)

concluded on 28 September 2018 that the policy proposals seemed to ‘offer sufficient potential to realise a 49% reduction in 2030’, and in addition that ‘they could not assess, as of yet, the actual emission reduction of the proposed packages’. Both agencies advised the government to prioritise the swift continuation of table negotiations on (more) concrete policy instruments and measures by which the reduction targets could be realised (such as standard setting, levies, subsidies, new regulations, binding agreements, and setting budgetary priorities).

Hence, in a second phase of the process, the government asked the tables to identify concrete policy instruments to implement their proposals. And they were asked to define more explicitly their individual commitment and concrete contribution to achieving the necessary emission reductions. To speed up the process, the government also offered clarity on its own commitment and role, by defining a framework for the aspired Agreement: In addition to emission reductions on national territory and cost-effectiveness, the policy proposals of the tables would need to be clear on affordability, i.e. the effects on income distribution (‘who would have to pay for what’). Furthermore, the negotiated outcome would need to secure broad-based and strong commitment for concrete policies

and measures. Along with this framework, the government defined specific guidelines for discussions at each of the five tables, in the form of a list of 29 points.

The second round of negotiations ended on 21 December 2018, when Ed Nijpels presented the *Draft Climate Agreement* to the Minister of Economic Affairs and Climate, Eric Wiebes. One day earlier, the green NGOs, the Labour Union FNV and the association of green industry CSR Netherlands walked away from the negotiations. Their view on the *Draft Agreement* is that ‘without equal burden sharing it will be an agreement without power’. They added that the *Draft Agreement* ‘does not contain the structural changes needed to tackle climate change appropriately; and on paying the costs, the big polluters can wave their hats’.

At the presentation of the agreement to the press one day later, Ed Nijpels and Eric Wiebes stated they regretted the walking away, adding that ‘the job is not finished, yet’. ‘The green NGO’s are welcome to re-join the negotiations later, anytime’. The chair of the powerful employers association *VNO-NCW* had his regrets, too. But he added that ‘we can also reach an agreement without the green NGOs’, and that they ‘play no major role in implementing it’.

On the *Draft Climate Agreement* itself: The document contains – more than 500 – negotiated proposals for policies and measures, to be implemented in the five key sectors. Now, it is once again up to PBL and CPB to assess the budgetary and income-distribution effects and, more importantly, the emission reductions set out in the negotiated proposals. The assessment may trigger adjustments of the package, ‘to safeguard the desired minimum emission reduction of 49% in 2030’. In addition, policy adjustments may be necessary, if and when the assessment brings forward disputable income-distribution effects. It is expected that the overall package, including these assessments, could be available for final decision making (i.e. a debate in Parliament) ‘before the end of the first quarter of 2019’.

Simultaneously, the parliamentary discussion on the Climate Bill is proceeding. On 21 December 2018, just moments before the *Draft Climate Agreement* was presented, a vast majority (117 out of 150 seats) in the Second Chamber of Parliament adopted the Bill. A first version of the Bill was submitted to Parliament in September 2016. The proposal was the initiative of two political parties, the Green Party (*Groen Links*) and the Social Democrats (*Partij van de Arbeid*). At that time, the Social Democrats were part of the parliamentary coalition that formed the Rutte II government. So, the foundation stone of the Climate Bill was an initiative of both a government and an opposition party. In line with the 2015 Paris Agreements, this first version of the Bill had high ambitions: a set of legally enforceable targets of -55% emission reduction in 2030 and -95% in 2050, and increasing the share of renewable energy up to 100% in 2050. After negotiations with other political parties and after the 2017 start of the Rutte III Cabinet (which is a four-party coalition), the now adopted version of the Bill has the support of a parliamentary majority of nine parties: the two initiators, *Groen Links* and *Partij van de Arbeid*, now both in opposition; three other opposition parties (*Socialist Party*, *50Plus* and *DENK*) and the four coalition parties (Liberal-Conservatives – *VVD*, Christian Democrats – *CDA*, Christian Union – *CU*, Liberal Democrats – *D66*). In order to generate this majority support, the recently adopted version of

the Bill has somewhat lowered ambitions: establishing a framework for negotiations on policy development towards greenhouse gas emission reduction up to 95% in 2050, a policy intention to achieve 49% emission reduction in 2030, and 100% CO₂-neutral electricity production (i.e. using biomass) in 2050.

Final steps in the process to turn the Bill into Law are a second debate in the Senate and a contra signing by His Majesty the King. Best guess is that this process will end in the first months of 2019, well before the regional elections of 20 March 2019 when (indirectly) a new seat allocation in the Senate will be assigned.

How the Dutch plans compare to the EU’s 2030 ambitions

As highlighted above, the 2017 *Regeerakkoord* indicated that the Netherlands would become a climate frontrunner in the EU. In Brussels, the country would advocate for an increase in EU targets for 2030 and 2050 of -55% and -95% respectively. The Netherlands would try to organise a group of frontrunners supporting these ambitions, in order to prove that achieving these ambitious targets was both politically and economically feasible. In line with this ambition the Netherlands is very active, not only in communicating its ambition in general, but also in integrating it into ongoing European policy development for key sectors such as energy production, industry, transportation, agriculture, built environment and financial services. In December 2018, at the UN Climate Summit in Katowice, Prime Minister Rutte repeated the Netherlands’ preference to increase the EU target for 2030 to -55%, and he also indicated his expectation that ambitious Dutch national climate policies would be agreed upon soon.

In the meantime, the Dutch government had put together its first Integral National Energy and Climate (INEC) report. According to new regulations in the context of the EU Energy Union, all EU Member States must produce a first draft of such a report for the

European Commission by the end of 2018. The INEC monitors Member States' progress in achieving the targets of the EU energy and climate policies, especially those regarding decarbonisation, energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy. The recently available Dutch INEC report outlines the current national (and European) climate and energy ambitions. It includes the key national policy focus on developing cost-effective policies and measures on national emission reduction. Since the ambitions are not yet translated into policy and measures, the Dutch INEC focuses on the supposed effects that the Climate and Energy Agreement will deliver, once it is in place.

So far, the Netherlands' actual contribution to the implementation of key EU climate policy targets – e.g. for emission reductions in sectors not covered by the EU emissions trading scheme, targets for energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy – is mediocre². The Netherlands is not on its own here, but other EU Member States joining the Netherlands in the EU frontrunner group have a better track record. It is remarkable that the Dutch INEC report is very quiet on what the Netherlands intends to do to step up its plans regarding the 2030 renewables and energy efficiency targets agreed upon in Brussels. Unlike the emission reduction target, these other targets are not legally binding, but EU Member States need to be transparent on their policy plans to achieve these targets. The Dutch INEC seems rather weak on this point, indicating only that the energy efficiency and renewables shares are likely to increase as a side-effect of policies focusing on cost-effective emission reductions.

The climate negotiations are reaching their end game, while societal debate is heating up

In the first half of 2019, policy negotiations seem to enter their decisive stage. Firstly, PBL and CPB will again assess the negotiation results of the five table discussions, answering two major questions: will the proposed policies and measures deliver the aspired emission reductions, and will the burden sharing of the economic costs be in line with the polluter pays principle. So far, the expectation is that the PBL and CPB assessment will not be available before the end of February, beginning of March. If necessary, when the answers to both questions above are insufficient, the Cabinet said it will restart the table negotiations. In other words, planning of final decision making is unclear so far. The possibility exists that a negotiation agreement could be finalised just before the upcoming regional elections of March 20, but not many see this as a realistic scenario.

Parallel to the official proceeding of the process, a societal debate was ignited, which is quite intense. As of December 21, an overload of comments, op-eds, columns on every aspect of the dossier entered the public domain (and still goes on by date). The opposition to the climate proposals by populist newspaper *De Telegraaf* was particularly strong, along the line that 'ordinary citizens finally will have to pick up the climate bill'. Overall, the vast exchange of views mirrors a polarisation of the debate, if not a multi-polarisation. In particular, three 'poles' compete for their right of way: i) The Netherlands will economically (and morally) gain by its front running role and ambition, ii) The Netherlands is too small to play an individual leading role; we have to act in coordination with our European allies, iii) The ambitions are those of the elite, the commons are not included but will have to pay the bill.

Defining a compromise in this complex landscape seems quite a challenge. Despite the initial support for the ambitious coalition agreement by many politicians from the conservative *VVD* and the Christian

2 See <https://www.pbl.nl/en/publications/national-energy-outlook-2017> for Dutch data and <https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/indicators/> for comparing EU member State data.

Democrats *CDA*, their enthusiasm now appears lukewarm at best, especially as their competitors on the political right, notably Geert Wilders and Thierry Baudet are fuelling fears about the costs of climate policies for ordinary citizens. And the liberal-democrats *D66* are keen to underline their green credentials, which to a somewhat lesser degree, is also the case for the Christian Union, a smaller coalition party with a more social Christian profile. These two parties fear electoral losses from the Greens (*Groen Links*), the Social Democrats (*Partij van de Arbeid*), and the Party for the Animals.

With regional elections coming up in March, the scenery of the debate is clear. The outcome of these elections will determine a new seat allocation in the Senate which is crucial for continuity in parliamentary support for the Rutte III coalition. The upcoming two months, politicians face a major dilemma: Either to opt for a parliamentary vote on the Climate Agreement before March 20, thereby risking a loss of votes in the upcoming regional elections and loss of future Senate seats, or to postpone the debate on the agreement until after the elections, thereby running the risk of losing votes due to being not transparent enough on their position in the climate debate to their potential electorate.

Key issues of debate and controversy

Several issues are subject to intense public debate and controversy.

At general level, the debate is whether big industry/multinationals and energy producers are being 'left off the hook' with regard to the transition costs. Roughly spoken, the industry, agriculture and energy production sector emit approximately 60% of total CO₂ emissions; households account for approximately 15%. So far, no reliable data are available to answer questions to what extent the cost sharing across sectors will be in accordance to their emission contribution.

More specific debates run in the industry, mobility and housing sector.

With regard to industry, the debate centres around the introduction of a national CO₂ levy for the sector. The issue was on the table from the start of the negotiations. In October 2018, they were triggered further by a research paper of the Dutch Central Bank, indicating that introduction of a substantive national CO₂ levy (Euro 50/ton CO₂) would be cost-effective and would have 'no big consequences for the national economy'. 'But – the paper stated – specific economic sectors might face major (negative) effects, which could be neutralised by spending the levy revenues on financial incentives for investments in clean technologies'. However, at the industry negotiation table representatives of employers association *VNO-NCW* successfully blocked the CO₂ levy, arguing that it would set back Dutch industry on the European level playing field and could conflict with the European emission trading scheme ETS.

The *Draft Agreement* of December 21 contains a so-called *bonus-malus* proposal, in which each company has to table its emission reduction plans. Subsequently, the government agency *RVO* will assess (and monitor) the reduction effects of each plan. The assessment results determine whether the company may collect a financial bonus or has to pay a penalty (*malus*).

With regard to the transport sector, road pricing proves the most contested item. At first, the 'mobility table' seemed to move towards the conclusion that – next to incentivising electric cars – several modes of road pricing may be the preferable, cost-effective policy choice. In the first week of December 2018, the table chair made a plea for this on public television. However, she was immediately attacked by Members of Parliament (MPs) of the Rutte coalition, who pointed to the *2017 Regeerakkoord*, which rules out road pricing at least until 2021. The presented *Draft Climate Agreement* of December 21 includes a proposal to start a feasibility study on road pricing.

Finally, a politically cumbersome issue is who will have to pay for the transition costs in the housing sector. The main focus is that natural gas for heating and cooking will have to be replaced by other energy sources.

The negotiating table introduced the concept of a so-called budget-neutral energy pricing scheme, in which home owners may pay the costs of a multi-annual investment loan to change to a gas free house by a yearly lower energy bill. However, it is unclear yet how a building-specific loan for a heat pump and insulation can be financed, while gas and electricity prices are already rising in 2019. A question is, to what extent individual home owners will accept additional tax rises on natural gas to incentivise energy-efficiency investments? Hence, the idea is that when public housing agencies will start large scale investing in their rental houses, the market prices of insulation, heat pumps and induction cooking will go down. But is this a realistic assumption? And what, if individual households cannot afford the heavy investment costs to make their houses gas-free? So far, the indistinctness of the matter which is frequently cited on television and in newspaper articles, creates insecurity and even fear among citizens.

Pressure is mounting, and even threatening the *polder*-tradition and political survival of Rutte-III

In the ongoing debate, even the Dutch '*polder*'-process itself has increasingly put into question. Initially, the government wanted to profile the Netherlands as a country that could successfully combine sustainable responsibility with socio-economic innovation. The bottom-up process with industry and civil society would ensure legitimacy and cross-partisan support for implementation of the policies. But now industry and the more conservative political parties are backtracking, in particular by pointing at the importance of guaranteeing a European-level playing field. On the other side, green political parties and NGOs indicate they will not sign up to an Agreement which includes high reliance on carbon capture and storage, and without a national CO₂ levy for industry. And they are critical on any arrangement that leaves households paying for the energy transition rather than industry.

Up front, the government has assessed the complexity and vulnerability of the Dutch '*polder*'-process in the 2017 *Regeerakkoord*, by pointing out the risk that the ambition might not be entirely fulfilled, eventually necessitating its scaling down. Recently, a debate has opened up on this particular issue between those who advocate sticking to the '*polder*', even if a negotiated societal compromise does not deliver in full, and those who advocate empowering the government to overrule the maximum outcome of the negotiations by means of additional regulations. Can a well-designed *polder* process still deliver an outcome with broad public support or is it too elitist and short-term oriented to be legitimate?

Hence, societal support for the outcomes of the five tables is deteriorating. The issues are complex, the stakes are high. Even though there is majority support for taking urgent action now, it is becoming clear that proposed policies will affect key elements of economic life and social welfare. Moreover, international developments are feeding and complicating the national debate. The French (and Belgian) '*gilets jaunes*' protests (which until now have been relatively small in the Netherlands) illustrate the risk of popular unrest when household expenditures on for instance energy are rising, and expose public anger about growing inequalities between elites and ordinary citizens. And what might happen when climate activists join the forces?

Moreover, the Urgenda rulings add complexity to the upcoming political decision-making process. Although the dispute in this case focuses on short-term policies (up to 2020), its societal impact extends further. Green NGOs in particular view the way the government was (and still is) handling the Urgenda case as 'somewhat arrogant'. This may well affect NGOs' confidence in – and support for – government policy development over the longer term. That would undermine the process of obtaining 'ownership' of the proposals among a wide range of stakeholders.

The decision to end natural gas mining in Groningen is yet another complication. It is now a *fait accompli* for the negotiating parties at the climate tables, whereas a majority of people in Groningen still have little confidence in the government sticking to its decision. The central government lost considerable credibility in how it managed the situation in Groningen, with Shell and state-owned gas mining company *NAM* initially being responsible themselves for judging claims about damage to properties (and doing this very reluctantly and slow), and downplaying the relationship between the earthquakes and gas exploration. The challenge for the government is now to re-establish trust and confidence, by showing that social inclusion and safety are important elements of the final policy packages.




The last, but by no means least complicating issue is the Climate Bill. Originally initiated by two left wing parties with a clear view on why and how to empower central government to ensure long-term climate policy commitment, the Bill now seems to be entangled in the *polder*-process. By seeking support from other parties in Parliament, the original ambitions of the Bill have been scaled down substantially. With a Senate debate still coming up, the risk now is that the process will deliver a Bill that serves only to facilitate the *polder* process, rather than guiding it.

Finally, in short and to conclude: Climate change policy in the low lands has become a divisive issue. Political backing for the compromises reached by around 100 stakeholder organisations is under immense pressure. However, a complete failure of the process would make the decision to stop gas exploration unrealistic. Moreover, it would also increase the scope for continued legal action against the state, and would damage Prime Minister Rutte's reputation as European leader in the field of climate change.

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Clingendael – the Netherlands Institute of International Relations – is a leading think tank and academy on international affairs. Through our analyses, training and public debate we aim to inspire and equip governments, businesses, and civil society in order to contribute to a secure, sustainable and just world.

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