



Tradition and technology

The Brabant Agenda

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Europe's heart of smart solutions

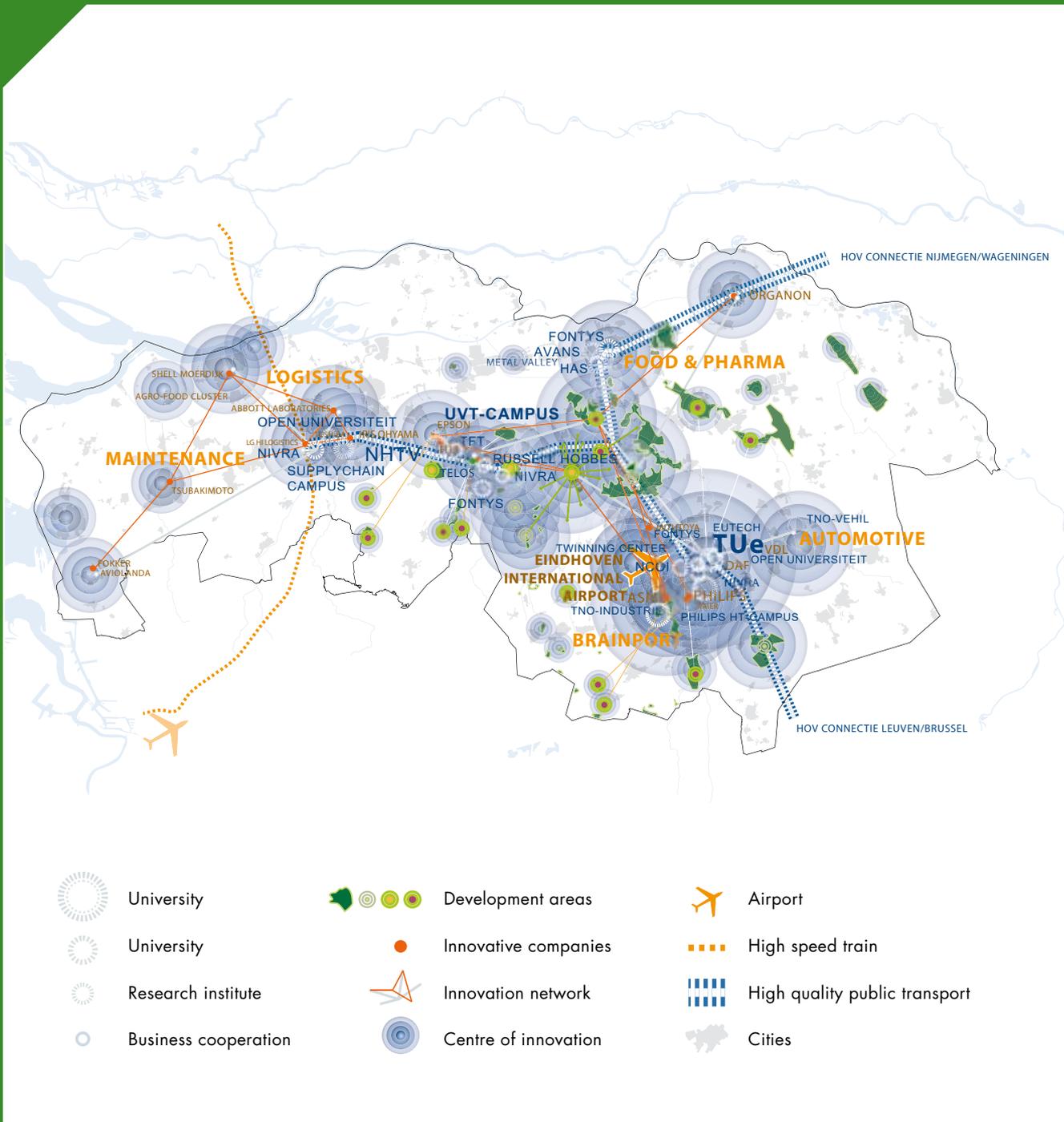
Provincie Noord-Brabant

Provincie Noord-Brabant
Postbus 90151
5200 MC 's-Hertogenbosch
The Netherlands

+31 (0)73 681 28 12

www.brabant.nl
info@brabant.nl





The Brabant region is a trend-setting centre of industrial innovation and technology. Its successful economic development is not only based on technology, but has been carefully supplemented and merged with activities linked to social innovation, sustainability, sports, culture and creative design, considered indispensable for economic competitiveness. Public and industrial research is clustered in different cities and regions: High-Tech Systems (Eindhoven and its Environs), Automotive Technology (Helmond and its Environs), Social innovation (Tilburg and its Environs), Agro-food ('s-Hertogenbosch and its Environs) and World Class

Maintenance and Logistics (Breda and its Environs). Provincial government and the Brabant cities, in close connection with its surrounding regions, are now combining their innovation policy efforts to turn this strong knowledge base into business by creating top-level science-industry interfaces, open innovation environments and clusters with Small and Medium Enterprises around these interfaces. The mission of the Brabant Agenda is to create an excellent environment for economic and social development towards a high quality of life and, through this, to achieve a innovative and globally competitive region.



The province of North Brabant is a region at the heart of Europe. Alongside the conurbation of Western Holland, it forms the main economic driving force of the Netherlands.

Future oriented government

The province of North Brabant is facing a new challenge. As in other regions of Europe, the economic crisis is exerting enormous pressure on public resources. At the same time, far-reaching social developments demand an innovative approach. The direct consequences of the financial, energy and climate crises require us to reflect on the future of Brabant. Current discussions about the effective and efficient organisation of civil administration also have a part to play here, necessitating a fundamental review of government responsibilities and the mutual relationships between the different levels of government: Europe, national, provincial and municipal. In this sense, the crisis is a crisis in the classical meaning of the word. It lets us appreciate that we are faced with a number of fundamental choices.

Precisely at a time when government attention appears to be focused on restructuring and budget cuttings, there is a need to deal with this on the basis of a clear vision. All around the world, in Europe and in the Netherlands, the cards are being re-shuffled. And this complicated

game has a direct impact on the future of Brabant. The provincial authorities play a particularly important role in positioning the region in the international network economy. More than ever before, the province of North-Brabant must focus on the future and make choices accordingly. Close cooperation with European partners is part and parcel of our process of regional vision and agenda building. Europe needs cities and regions if it is to fully achieve its goals. And therein lies the province's strength; in multi-level government, linking up ideas and plans and matching European and national plans with local initiatives on the basis of vision and intuition.

In Brabant, we can build on a tradition of substantiated 'thinking ahead' and future oriented policy making. For instance, economic development in Brabant has always been the result of a combination of enlightened self-interest with engagement in the future of the region, rather than a goal in itself. Brabant's remarkably persistent increase in affluence can be explained not so much by the free market, but rather by the connection between that market and the social and cultural community.

	European Union	The Netherlands	Province	Municipality
Appointed	Council of Ministers, government leaders and ministers of the member states	The Queen*	The Queen's Commissioner	Mayor
Appointed	European Commission (commission members)	Cabinet (chair, prime minister, ministers and state secretaries)	The Provincial Council (council members: number varies per province)	Aldermen (number varies per municipality)
Elected	European Parliament	Lower House 150 members Upper House 75 members**	The Provincial Executive: 55 executives in the province of North Brabant	Municipal Council (number of members varies per municipality)

* The Queen is not appointed. The Queen is the head of the government in the Netherlands.

** Members of the Upper House are elected by the members of the Provincial Executives of all the provinces.

The future of Brabant

But a persistent increase in affluence does not happen automatically. Today, new problems have arisen. As in the past, Brabant now faces a complex social mission. Brabant has to deal with problems that are both critical and long-term. In the short term, affluence and welfare in Brabant will come under pressure from the economic recession. This will be magnified by the credit crisis and, in the long term, by growing international competition between cities and regions, by climate issues, and by dwindling oil supplies – with the ongoing effects on energy supply and geopolitical world order.

It is therefore fundamentally important to have a clear, attractive vision for the future of maintaining long-term affluence and welfare – not only for the future of the region, but also for the role, position and responsibilities of the province as middle government. The Province of North Brabant is not alone in this. Other internationally-oriented regions with whom we have direct relations are also reflecting on the future from a strategic perspective.

The provincial authorities of North Brabant have linked future-oriented government and drastic reorganisation with each other. Named the 'Agenda of Brabant', proposals have been put forward for developing into a province with a clear profile and a modern set of responsibilities. A new, keener profile can only be created if we are clear about what the province stands for, what role it fulfils (both within Brabant and elsewhere), and what agenda it should adopt for presenting itself. The focus in the provincial set of responsibilities also allows scope for the necessary cut-backs. On the basis of the agenda and the corresponding profile, the provincial authorities have reviewed the responsibilities that should be phased out or carried out 'thinly'. The cutbacks should not be made in isolation. They must serve to reinforce the provincial profile.

Tradition and technology

Brabant will have to refocus, which will involve both opportunities and risks: opportunities that can deliver so much more if the region is prepared to take advantage of them. And risks that can hit even harder if the region underestimates them. As matters stand, the starting situation for Brabant's refocus is a good one. The link between the economy and social, cultural and ecological goals has not done the province any harm. Brabant has an attractive urban and village landscape, with plenty of greenery, a flourishing social life in the villages and a cultural climate of high international standing. Furthermore, there has been a remarkable transformation to a knowledge-driven economy over the past fifty

years. In Brabant, there is an exceptional and fairly unique alliance between knowledge-intensive businesses and high-quality manufacturing – from agro-food and the automotive industry to electronics and nanotechnology – which is often a continuation of the industrial activities of the past. Tradition and technology are combined cleverly. Matching superb craftsmanship with modern technology and design is a trademark of Brabant's industry. North Brabant has traditionally been the most industrialised province in the Netherlands. The export share of production is also higher in North Brabant than in the rest of the Netherlands. This is partly due to the province's central and strategic location and the proximity of the international ports of Rotterdam and Antwerp.

Settling in the region is made even more attractive by the presence of two universities (Eindhoven University of Technology and Tilburg University) and a variety of higher education institutions. The proximity of knowledge centres in Belgium and Germany also add to the appeal. Two of the six top regions referred to by the cabinet in the 2004 policy document 'Peaks in the Delta' are situated in North Brabant: the west, with a concentration of logistical activities, and the south-east, with a lot of high-quality technology. It is no coincidence that Brabant scores exceptionally well in the latest Regional Innovation Scoreboard (2009) issued by the European Union. North Brabant is a 'high innovating region' in an 'innovation follower country'. More than any other region in the Netherlands, Brabant has the potential to develop into an innovative, Europe-oriented knowledge region.

Will Brabant be able to maintain and increase its level of prosperity in this changing world? Will it be able to promote and defend its regional identity, core values and interests? As part of the visioning process the provincial authorities of North-Brabant have identified the key issues and developments which Brabant is likely to face and analysed how these might be addressed. This includes, inter alia: strengthening and modernising the Brabant model of economic success and social welfare, enhancing the competitiveness of the region, sustainable development as a fundamental objective of regional policy, demographic challenges, energy and climate protection, and the fight against loss of biodiversity.





Joep Lemmarts

Innovative region

At the present time, knowledge and innovation are absolutely vital. Brabant, too, needs increased added value from its future economic activities. The development and application of regional knowledge is, after all, the foundation for new products, services and processes – or innovations – which ultimately drive economic growth. In order to be successful and keep pace, Brabant must continue to fulfil the demands set by a knowledge economy. North Brabant is faced with the challenge of developing its strengths still further and combining existing knowledge networks in such a way that it leads to innovations and achievements that will benefit all the inhabitants of Brabant.

The main ambition of the Agenda of Brabant is to remain one of the top industrial knowledge and innovation regions of Europe. This will reinforce the quiet economic revolution that has actually been going on for some time now in North Brabant, and give it a new, alluring prospect. This ambition is also in harmony with the specific economic structure of the region and its unique, place-related situation, which form the basis of our regional innovative power. Within the place-related and historically developed context of this region lie real opportunities for innovation, and the possibility of forging an original link to modern trends.

The provincial authorities of Brabant are primarily concerned with spatial and economic development, and with promoting an attractive business and social climate. A spatial-economic policy can create the optimal preconditions for Brabant to excel as a region of industrial knowledge and innovation. However, we cannot isolate this in any way from a good social and cultural infrastructure, in both our towns and our countryside. Besides the importance of work and salaries, the quality of life is a vital factor in attracting the interest of people and businesses and in retaining talents. This quality of life will determine to a great extent whether Brabant is able to attract and retain high-quality workers.

Core tasks of the Province of North Brabant:

- *Spatial development (including water and countryside policy, environment, energy and climate)*
- *Accessibility and mobility for the region*
- *Regional economic policy*
- *Culture and regional identity*

Investing in Brabant's future

A clear focus on our own provincial tasks will not prevent us meeting the demands of close cooperation in a wide range of networks and partnerships in projects over the coming years. Knowledge development is not just a question of the physical environment, such as business parks, buildings and computers. It is also about the local entrepreneurs who use all these facilities, their mentality and the way they do business with one another. Ultimately, a knowledge economy involves people. A strong regional identity and a high degree of social capital are essential conditions for success in the new economy. It is no coincidence that Brabant has an effective network of authorities, educational institutions and businesses. A network that can improve the conditions for innovation and the creation of top-level science-industry interfaces and open innovation environments.. In North Brabant, lines of communication are short and thresholds are low everywhere.

In Brabant, we manage things together, making use of the good cooperative connections between urban and rural areas. Take BrabantStad and Brainport, for instance, which are joint initiatives of great significance to the spatial and economic development of the region. BrabantStad is a strong cooperation of the five largest cities of Brabant that have joined forces with the Provincial government. The urban network BrabantStad allows the BrabantStad partners to both take advantage of their economies-of-scale as a team and maintain all of their individual strong characteristics. Brainport is an incubator for innovation and home to world-class companies, knowledge and research institutions. Unique in Brainport is the intensive 'triple helix' cooperation between trade and industry, knowledge and educational institutes and the authorities. Here, we achieve more through cooperation and governance than through tough decisiveness and strong government. The same applies to our investment agenda. We are fortunate in Brabant in still having the opportunity to invest in the future. We have a fund of 1 billion euros for investment in the future, from the sale of shares in the energy company Essent to the German energy group RWE.

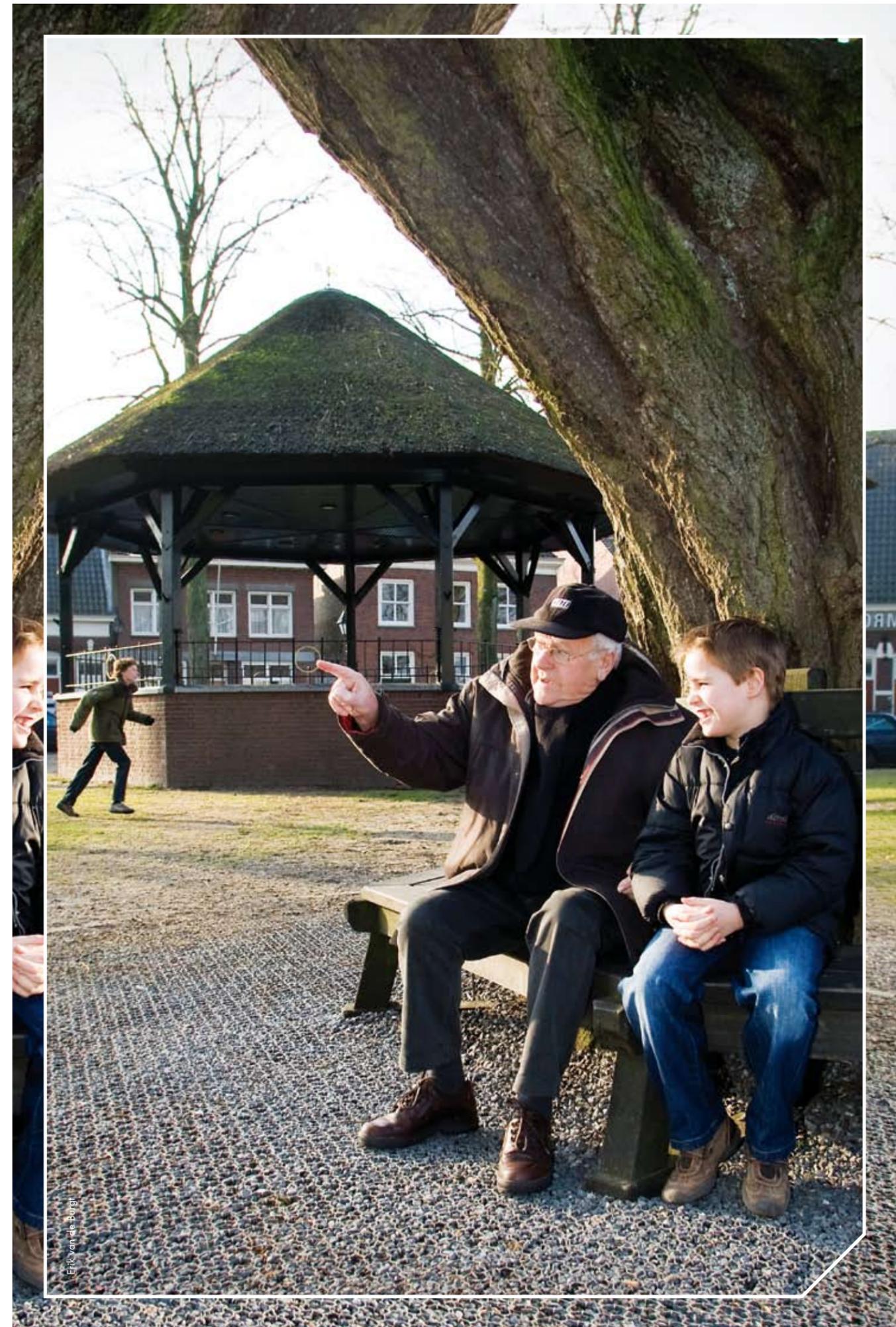
The main objective of our investment strategy is a focused structural reinforcement of the exceptional business and social climate in Brabant. Investments that will reinforce the structure are what we need if Brabant is to remain one of the top knowledge and innovation regions in Europe since, in addition to some obvious strengths that can be built on, there are also elements that are weaker, from an international perspective, and that

need reinforcing. For instance, the cultural, ecological and economic qualities of Brabant must be more visible on the global playing field. An initiative such as BrabantStad Cultural Capital 2018 can certainly contribute to this. After all, knowledge economy is also about a vibrant climate in which people from abroad would like to settle, and where the inhabitants of Brabant also feel at home themselves. It can also contribute to a stronger cultural profile and range of culture, and thus to the realisation of top cultural facilities in the region.

Another issue that is considered to be very important for the development and competitiveness of the region and, therefore, needs to be dealt with is the "battle for talent". How do we get sufficient qualified staff to maintain and expand the position of Brabant as a region of industrial knowledge and innovation? How do we minimise (upcoming) shortages in the labour market as well as possible? The establishment of International school campuses in the cities of Breda and Eindhoven is part of the regional ambition to make Brabant a more attractive location for international knowledge workers. Working together with the regional business community, public organisations in Brabant and European partners on a global scale will be needed to attract and retain knowledge workers from other countries.

In order to create an investment strategy focused on the future, the Agenda of Brabant has been used as the basis for formulating a number of criteria and proposing five investment areas that fit the province's new profile and set of responsibilities:

- **Knowledge: long-term innovation and smart craftsmanship**
- **The accessible region**
- **Quality of life: top facilities in the areas of sport and culture**
- **Brabant mosaic: the development of towns, villages and countryside, focusing on cultural heritage and regional identity**
- **Nature and landscape**







Erik van de Burgt

Opportunities for knowledge

International top regions may not be world class in every respect, but they are distinctive. Making smart combinations of strengths and improving a limited number of weaknesses will enable North Brabant, too, to continue to excel in its achievements. It is essential to create a top environment for the development of innovative products and services, and to forge innovative combinations of existing Brabant strengths. The trick is to start up a spiral effect between international flows of financial and human capital and the physical, social and cultural qualities of the region, recreating the typical DNA of Brabant.

The future of Brabant as a top knowledge region is intrinsically a combination of the good Brabant life at the heart of international networks, and our economic powers of competition and innovation; a smart connection between regional core values and a globally-oriented dynamism, and between tradition and technology. This evokes an image of Brabant as an extensive metropolitan campus landscape, a long-term testing field for knowledge, innovation and creativity, and a combination of high tech, high touch and high green – and of Brainport and Brabant traditions. It matches the core qualities of the region: the knowledge institutions, the industry, the creativity, the landscape, the way of life and history of this fine-grained rural/urban network in a blue-green mosaic.

Although realising this multiple task is bound to be complex, it is also typical of the way Brabant operates. Because, yet again, the economic development of Brabant is not an end in itself, but rather part of a broader agenda focussing on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and welfare of the people of Brabant. And in good Brabant tradition, the approach to this task demands a joint effort from all the knowledge and education institutions, the (knowledge-intensive) business world, the social partners within the region and beyond, and the government. Brabant will mobilise all the driving forces and take an active part in framing European and national reform programmes and flagship initiatives to realize its future-oriented agenda in the next decades.

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