



NATIONAL DELTA PROGRAMME 2025



TOWARDS A NEW BALANCE
IN THE LIVING ENVIRONMENT:
ROOM TO LIVE WITH WATER

OUTLINES



2025 Delta Programme

TOWARDS A NEW BALANCE IN THE LIVING ENVIRONMENT: ROOM TO LIVE WITH WATER

OUTLINES

This publication provides a concise visualisation of the outlines of the 2025 Delta Programme.

The full 2025 Delta Programme can be found at english.deltaprogramma.nl.

Cover photo: Bollard indicating the water depth on the road with rising water in the Ooijen-Wanssum high-water channel, September 2021. Photo: Tineke Dijkstra.

*“Today's extremes are
the climate of the future.
We have to take a different
approach to water shortages
and surpluses.”*

Delta Commissioner Co Verdaas

About the Delta Programme

Wet is getting wetter, dry is getting drier, hot is getting hotter, and the weather is getting more erratic. The low-lying Netherlands is vulnerable to climate change. In the Delta Programme, we are working on a safe and liveable delta:

- proper protection against flooding
- adequate supplies of fresh water
- climate-resilient spatial planning

What is the current status of the Delta Programme?
Are the goals achievable? What do we need to focus on?

The Delta Commissioner reports on progress annually.
The latest progress report is the 2025 Delta Programme.
See www.deltaprogramma.nl for the detailed report.

This outline brochure provides a concise overview of progress and the focus areas, primarily for administrators in The Hague and in the regions.
As a basis for a healthy discussion.

The National Delta Programme brings together the national government, provincial and municipal authorities, and water authorities. Knowledge institutes and stakeholder organisations are also actively involved.

CORE MESSAGE

The Netherlands must start dealing differently with water shortages and surpluses by implementing both water management and spatial measures.

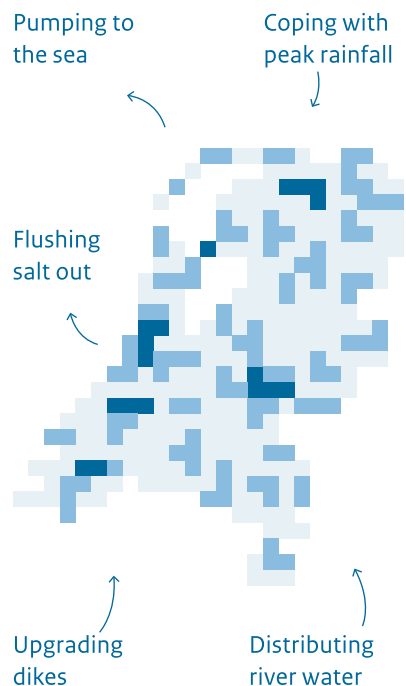
The leap to a safe and liveable future begins now

The past few years provided a foretaste of the new climate of the Netherlands. We had extreme water shortages and surpluses.

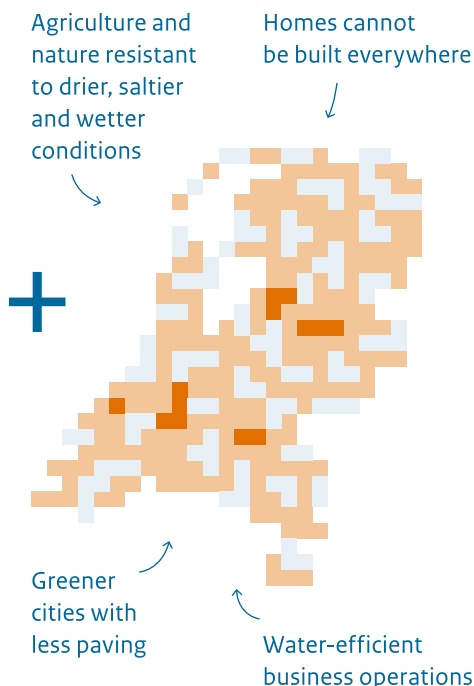
In the Delta Programme, we are preparing for the new climate. The current focus is still on water management solutions. They remain important but they are not enough.

Even if we pull out all the stops in water management, the challenge facing us will increase: more dike upgrades, more salinisation, more freshwater shortages, more problems with excessive water.

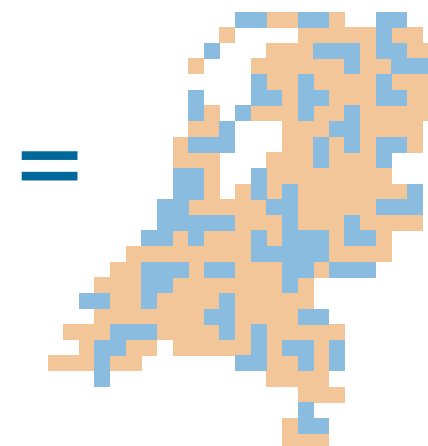
Additional efforts in water management will allow us to cope with climate change to some extent. But not completely (by a long way).



The solution is also to be found in how we plan and use the space we have.



With this combination, we will keep the Netherlands safe and liveable. We have to change our approach to water and land use.



Recommendations from the Delta Commissioner

In his role as government commissioner for the National Delta Programme, the Delta Commissioner submits recommendations to the cabinet

Think bigger and look ahead: break the deadlock



Investment plans are still failing to take more extreme weather into consideration enough. Prioritise a perspective for future-resilient agricultural land use that also contributes to the water and soil challenges. Target sectoral financial resources in a coordinated way.

Give water room



Make room to store surplus precipitation and retain water for drier summers. The Delta Programme can show for each region where there are vulnerabilities to water shortages and surpluses. On that basis, possible adaptations to spatial planning and land use can be identified, as can the remaining risks for water users.

Provide clarity for areas with earmarked zones



A number of areas have been set aside for water storage in extreme circumstances. For these areas and any new areas that are set aside, make it clear which land use is acceptable or not, temporarily or permanently.

Invest in financial certainty and training



In all regions, increasing water challenges are leading to more work. Invest in operational capacity. Make agreements about nominal increases in the budgets of the Delta Fund. And make arrangements with education and employers to train enough professionals in good time.

OUTLINES > PERIODICAL EVALUATION

More erratic weather, bigger challenges

Periodical evaluation of Delta Programme brings new choices into the picture

New delta scenarios – scenarios that show the water agendas of the future – were drafted in 2024.

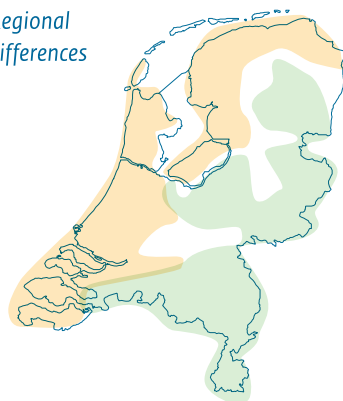
In all scenarios, more work will be needed to tackle problems relating to water shortages, water surpluses and flood risk management. This is mainly because the weather is getting more erratic: we will have wetter winters, drier summers and more peak rainfall. This will affect all areas and all water users.

In combination with other developments in the environment of the Delta Programme, this calls for new choices. The periodical evaluation of the Delta Programme, which will take place over the next few years, brings these choices into focus.

Problems with excessive water

More frequent disruption, larger consequences

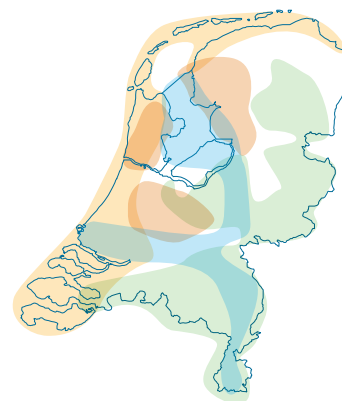
Regional differences



- Low-lying Netherlands: problems with excessive water during peak rainfall, and when pumping stations cannot drain water away quickly and discharge it to the sea due to sea level rise
- High-lying Netherlands: problems with excessive water when brooks and rivers burst their banks

Water shortages

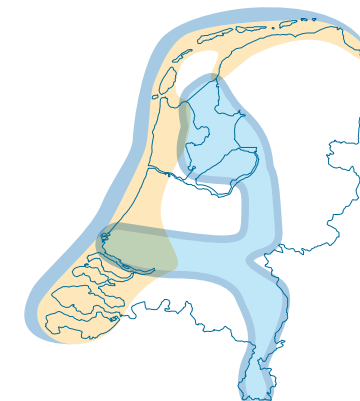
Less fresh water, higher demand



- Coast: increasing salinisation
- Low-lying peatland: higher water demand, but land subsidence and carbon emissions
- Rivers: more frequent low river discharges
- High-lying Netherlands: more frequent aridification

Flood risk management

More frequent high water, flooding has more impact



- Coast: sea level rise
- Areas outside dikes: inundated more often
- Rivers: more frequent high water levels in the rivers

OUTLINES > FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

Flood risk management is about flood protection

Flooding from the sea, the large lakes and the large rivers

Overarching goal

By 2050, everyone will have the base level of protection. The likelihood of large groups of victims and major economic damage will therefore be very low.



We will achieve this with dike upgrades, coastal management and river widening.

More dike upgrades

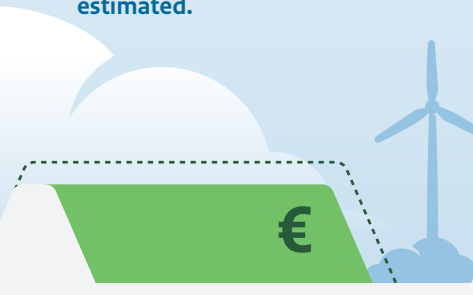
More dike upgrades will be needed until 2050. The pace has to pick up.



The assessment of the flood defences was completed in 2022: dike upgrades are needed in more places.

Higher costs

The dike upgrades required will cost more money than previously estimated.



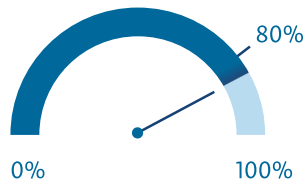
More upgrades are needed and the implementation costs have increased.

Setting space aside

We need to set aside more space for future dike upgrades.



For example, no new building in zones near dikes.



In 2020, 80% had the base protection level; by 2029 this will increase to 82%.

Completed now: ± 200 km

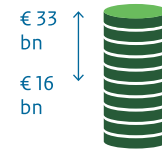


The previous scope was 1500km. An additional 500 km may now be required.

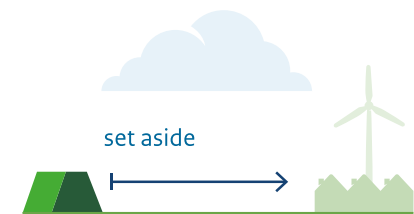
Current budget: € 12.6 bn



Probably needed: € 24 bn



It is still very uncertain how high the costs will be. The additional costs will be known in 2025.



The space required for future dike upgrades varies from area to area.

OUTLINES > FRESH WATER

The freshwater agenda is about resilience to water shortages

Coping with too little and too salty water

Overarching goal

The Netherlands will be resilient to water shortages by 2050.

We are working hard to achieve this but the work required is increasing in the meantime. On balance, we are behind schedule.

Even more frequent shortages

The shortfall in fresh water increases dramatically in the summer.

The river influx falls, evaporation increases sharply and there is salinisation due to sea level rise.

Be prepared

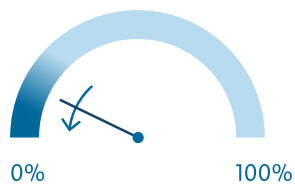
Increasingly, there is not enough fresh water for everyone. All sectors must be prepared for regular water shortages and more salinisation.

Water buffers and smart distribution will not help enough. More economical water use and transformations are also needed.

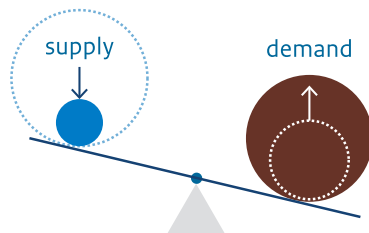
Maintain the pace

The pace of implementation is slowing. We have to keep moving.

More human resources are needed. As well as fast decisions about Provincial Programmes for Rural Areas.



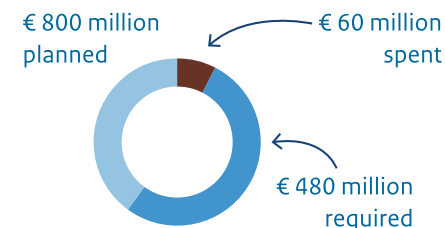
The objective is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve. The water system, land use and operations must change.



Meanwhile, demand is actually increasing. Water shortages could increase by as much as 80% by 2100.



Governments must anticipate and set priorities (e.g. in the National Spatial Policy Document, Provincial Programmes for Rural Areas, Novex and the National Water Plan)



Implementation is significantly behind schedule. 60% of the budget has been allocated, but only 8% has been spent.

OUTLINES > SPATIAL ADAPTATION

Spatial adaptation is about climate-resilient spatial planning

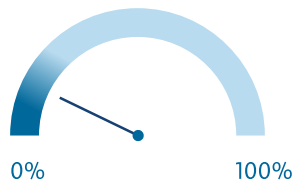
Resilience to damage as a result of problems with excessive water, drought, heat and the effects of flooding

Overarching goal

The Netherlands will be climate-resilient by 2050.



Measures to deal with problems with excessive water, heat, drought and flooding are being implemented everywhere.



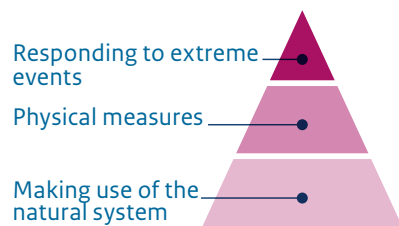
It is difficult to determine the level of climate resilience in planning at present. What is certain is that we are only at the beginning.

Substantive goals

We will give climate-resilient planning a boost with substantive goals and frameworks.



For climate-resilient planning, we must work on three levels:



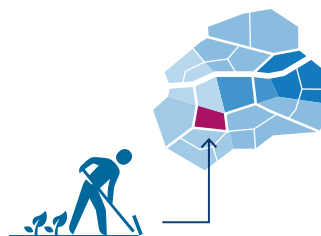
There will be concrete objectives for these three levels. That also helps to monitor how climate-resilient we are.

Everyone in action

Many more parties need to act: the financial sector, corporations, vital networks (energy, drinking water, telecom), local residents etc.



We all have a responsibility to make the Netherlands climate-resilient and more attractive.



Pioneers show that working together to improve your own locality generates energy.

Embedding

A range of studies have shown that making the Netherlands climate-resilient is going to cost tens of billions.

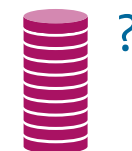


The costs are offset by even greater benefits: society is the winner.

Stimulus scheme was a success and has been used in full.



Structural funding



We are now going to explore the structural embedding of spatial adaptation, including governance and financing.

IMPLEMENTATION IN THE AREAS > PERIODICAL EVALUATION

What will have to change to achieve the goal?

Work on the agendas of flood risk management, fresh water and spatial adaptation is located in the areas of the Delta Programme. The parties here look for measures that fit in with the established preferred strategy for the area. Increasingly erratic weather and accelerating sea level rise add to the challenges. The periodical evaluation of the Delta Programme in 2026 will lead to changes in the preferred strategies. The areas will take the new delta scenarios and the outcomes of the Sea Level Rise Knowledge Programme into consideration here. This page shows the initial insights for each area.

Coast

Coastal maintenance with sand nourishment would seem to be feasible, even with more sea level rise; implementation does require attention.

Central Holland

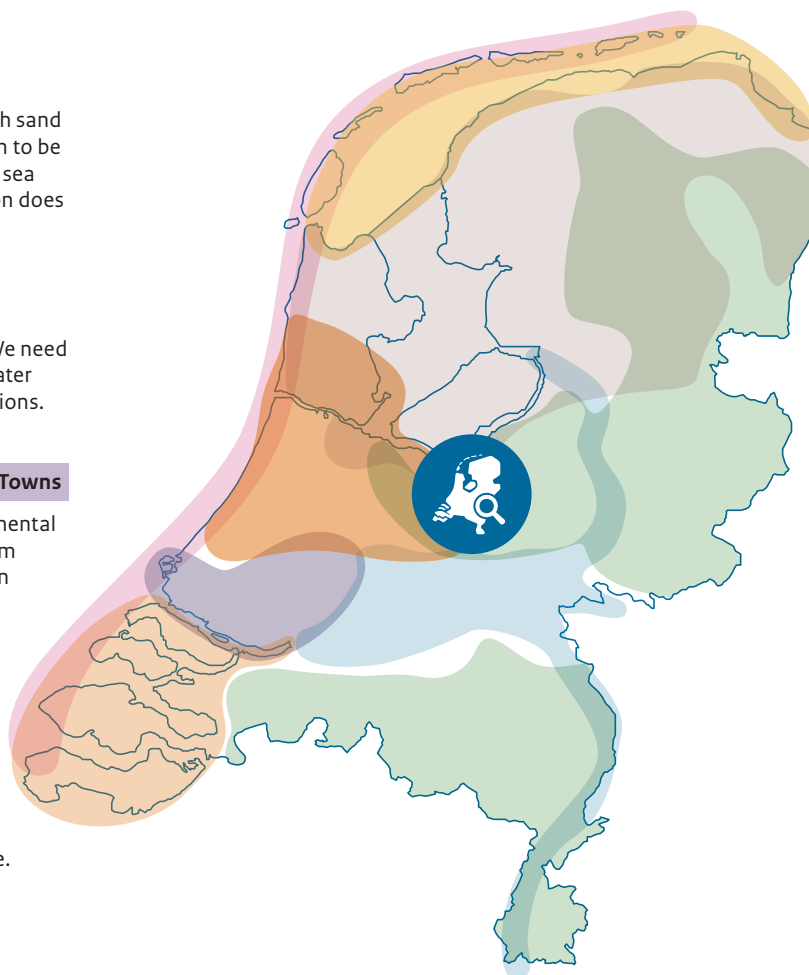
We are too vulnerable. We need pumping stations and water storage and spatial decisions.

Rhine Estuary - Drecht Towns

We are preparing fundamental decisions about long-term flood risk management in conjunction with nature and fresh water.

Southwest Delta

In an area process, we are optimising the freshwater function and ecological quality of the Volkerak-Zoommeer lake.



Wadden area

Work on flood risk management landscapes, and identify combinations with spatial adaptation and fresh water.

IJsselmeer area

New climate scenarios: either more pumping or a rise in water levels with consequences for dikes, nature and user functions.

High-Lying Areas with Sandy Soils

Commit to the societal and administrative willingness to make genuine change: without transitions, we will not be resilient.

Rhine and Meuse

In 2050, we will not be able to serve all functions equally well; choices are needed: for example with respect to freshwater distribution, the type of nature and the type of shipping.

IMPLEMENTATION IN THE AREAS > WATER AND SOIL AS LEADING FACTORS

What is needed for sustainable water-robust planning?

The water agendas are becoming increasingly interwoven with other spatial agendas, for example in the areas of housing construction, agriculture and nature. Problems with excessive water, water shortages and flood protection can no longer be solved in the water domain alone. Spatial planning must be more in line with what the water and soil system can handle. That is the essence of Water and Soil as Leading Factors. This plays a role in all areas.

Coast

Attention should be given to combining spatial agendas with flood risk management agendas.

Central Holland

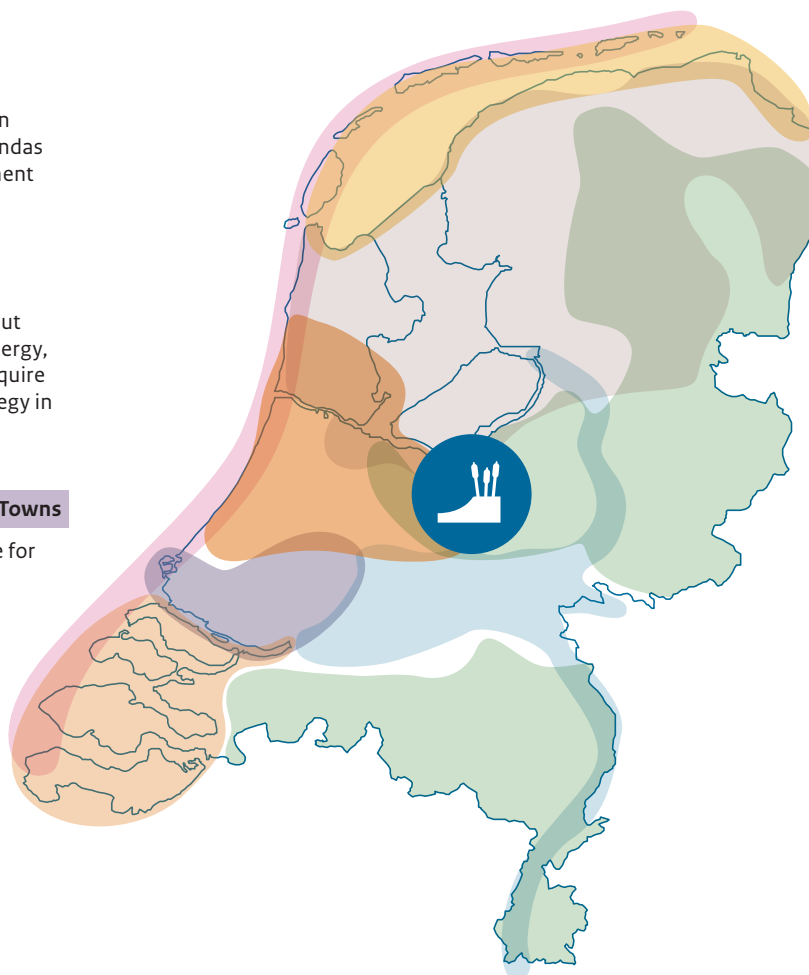
Long-term decisions about housing construction, energy, peatland and the port require a shared vision and strategy in the short term.

Rhine Estuary - Drecht Towns

We are earmarking space for dike reinforcements.

Southwest Delta

Climate-resilient land use requires tailored approaches for each subarea for a connected delta with a mosaic of water and land uses.



Wadden area

Look in an integrated way at flood risk management and problems with excessive water for the main water system and the regional water system.

IJsselmeer area

More space is needed for fresh water.

High-Lying Areas with Sandy Soils

Land users must prepare for water shortages. This means knowing how much water will be available in the long term.

Rhine and Meuse

In time, more space will be needed behind the dikes for flood risk management and water availability, in combination with water-related functions.

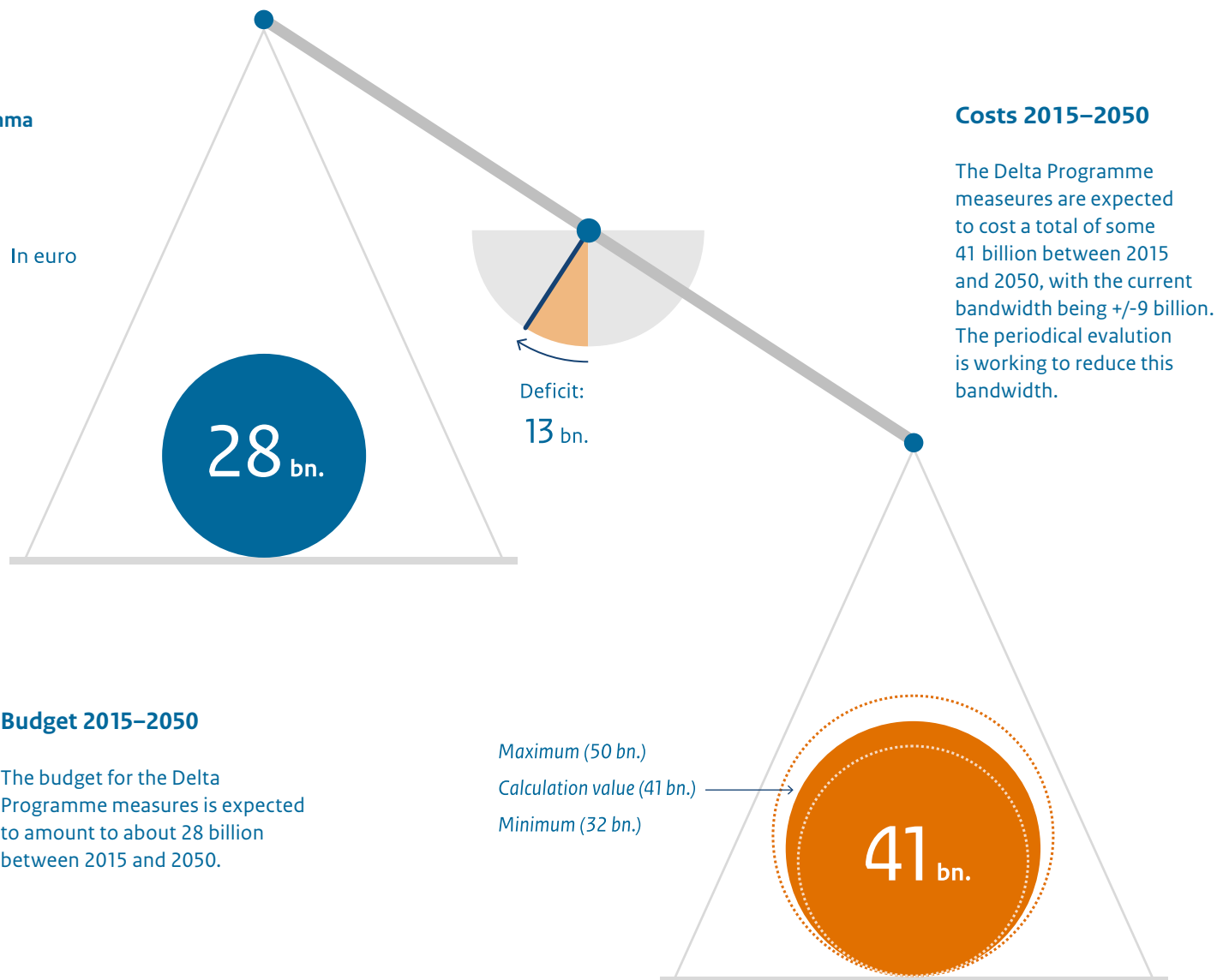
DELTA FUND OUTLINES

The Delta Fund

The financial cornerstone of the Delta Programma

The Delta Fund contains the financing provided by the national government to pay for some of the measures in the Delta Programme. Other government authorities contribute as well. In 2025, € 1.7 billion will be available in the Delta Fund, of which € 0.7 billion will be available for the objectives of the Delta Programme.

A total of € 28 billion – for the entire duration of the Delta Programme between 2015 and 2050 – is expected to be available for the measures. That is not enough. This is mainly because it became clear in late 2023 that much more work will be needed to upgrade the dikes than was estimated at the start of the Delta Programme.



The Netherlands is a low-lying country with a lot of water. The National Delta Programme protects the Netherlands against flooding, ensures that there are adequate supplies of fresh water and contributes to climate-resilient and water-robust spatial planning. The website of the national Delta Programme has more information about the work on our delta.

The national Delta Programme brings together the national government, provincial and municipal authorities, and water authorities. Research institutes, stakeholder organisations, the general public and business are also actively involved.

[ENGLISH.DELTAPROGRAMMA.NL](https://english.deltaprogramma.nl)

This is a publication from:

Delta Commissioner

Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature

Ministry of Housing and Spatial Planning

September 2024

NATIONAL DELTA PROGRAMME

ALL OUT FOR A SAFE AND LIVEABLE DELTA