

Report of the Advisory Division of the Council of State on the Dutch government's draft 2021 Climate Memorandum

Summary

The climate targets for 2030 and 2050 defined in the Dutch Climate Act are out of reach. In the cycle of the Climate Act, the biennial Climate Memorandum, which includes a progress report, provides the ideal opportunity for taking extra measures. However, the additional package presented in the Budget Memorandum is not enough to meet the climate targets. In the Advisory Division's opinion, the fact that the government is outgoing does not relieve it of the duty to do what is necessary. The nature and scale of the climate crisis calls for immediate action. This necessity also stems from the Climate Act. The law - stipulating climate targets and a procedural framework - is intended to support the government in pursuing a consistent, long-term climate policy and achieving cross-cabinet progress.

A recent report by the IPCC concludes that climate change is already impacting weather and climate extremes in every region of the world. This summer there was severe flooding in the south of the Netherlands and just across the border in Belgium and Germany. The likelihood of heavy rainfall as experienced this summer is exacerbated by climate change. It is not without reason that the EU has significantly raised its climate ambitions. All the more reason for the government to take additional structural measures now.

To combat climate change greater national direction is needed - in administration and implementation. A single cabinet minister who is responsible for climate policy as a whole is needed. In addition, an adequate, national programme organisation under his/her responsibility could be considered, aimed at monitoring and steering implementation. Municipalities, provinces and water boards must continue to play a significant role in the consultation and deliberation phase and, of course, in the implementation network.

The Dutch Climate Act needs substantial amendment in light of the new European Climate Act and other new European climate regulations. The European regulations are more ambitious and more specific. The Netherlands must follow suit and a proposed amendment to the Dutch Climate Act must be brought forward quickly. Moreover, it is obvious that the policy cycle in the Dutch Climate Act should also be aligned with the budget cycle.