Example plans and policies

Title: **Water Assessment**

Keywords: Water; spatial plans; water system

Governance level: National; regional; local

Messages in the ESPACE strategy to which the plan or policy applies:							
	1.X	2.	3.	4.	5.X	6.	7.
	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.X	13.	14.

Sentences linking the plan/policy to relevant strategy messages:
1. Experience from the Netherlands shows that a water assessment is an essential part of the spatial planning process when dealing with climate change.
5. Experience from the Netherlands shows that a water assessment is an essential part of the spatial planning process when dealing with climate change.
12. The Netherlands Water Assessment is an integrated process, bringing together water managers and spatial planners.

Overview:
The Netherlands Water Test provides specific guidance about how to deal with water in spatial plans. It is a process between spatial planners and the water board. It says that every spatial plan needs a water paragraph in which the spatial planner answers two questions:
1) Does your plan now or in the future have negative effects on the water system?
2) If yes, how do you (within your plan) compensate for this negative effect?

Description/Example policies: The Netherlands is a highly urbanised delta a great part of which is situated below sea level. In the past decade the country has been faced with extremely high river discharges which forced thousands of people to evacuate, with flooded areas caused by extreme rainfall, with groundwater problems in urban areas and desiccation of nature. It is widely acknowledged that, to prevent further increases in these problems, changes are necessary in water management as well as in spatial planning.

To ensure the integration of water aspects into the spatial planning process, 'Water Assessment' was introduced in 2001 and is a process in which water managers are involved actively in the development of any spatial plan from the earliest stages onwards.

The objectives of Water Assessment
The objectives of Water Assessment are to guarantee that water interests are taken into account in spatial and land use planning, so that negative effects on the water system are prevented or compensated for elsewhere. This integration of water in spatial planning works in two ways: a plan is assessed for its implications for the water system, and the restraints that the water system puts on land use are made explicit.

Implementation history
In 2001 the government organisations in the Netherlands agreed on the implementation of the Water Assessment for all spatial plans and decisions relevant to water. After two experimental years the experiences were evaluated. From November 2003 the Water Assessment has become obligatory for formal spatial plans, such as municipal land use

plans and provincial spatial policy plans. In addition, government organisations agreed to continue to apply the Water Assessment to all other non-formal plans and to decisions relevant to water, such as spatial perspectives and landscape plans. Thus the Water Assessment is applied to all scales of spatial planning, from national to local, and to all sorts of plans: urbanisation, industrial areas, infrastructure, landscape planning etc. A building permit itself may not be subject to the Water Assessment, if the water interests have been sufficiently covered in the Water Assessment of the higher-level plan – for example the municipal land-use plan.

The Water Assessment is not meant to be a new procedure, but a process of interaction that is fully integrated into existing spatial planning procedures.

Author: Niels Nijmeijer, Waterboard Rivierenland	Further information: http://www.watertoets.net/