

Large companies and NGOs are calling on the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany to cooperate more: “Only by crossing borders do we make green industry a reality.”

In an open letter, Natuur & Milieu, Natuur en Milieufederatie Zuid-Holland, Bellona Europa, the Port of Rotterdam Authority, Clean Air Task Force, Aramis, Porthos, EBN, Gasunie, North Sea Port and Smart Delta Resources call on the Dutch, Belgian and German governments to work together better and more on making heavy industry climate-friendly. “Cross-border infrastructure is essential to achieve the climate targets”, says the special coalition. It emphasises the need for a shared vision for the capture and permanent storage of CO₂ emissions.

As much as 18% of European emissions come from the production of basic materials such as cement, steel and chemicals. A large part of the production of these basic products takes place in the industrial cluster that stretches across the Netherlands, Belgium and North Rhine-Westphalia. The cluster secures thousands of jobs and produces products that are key to achieving the green transition, such as steel and concrete for wind turbines. In order to fulfil their social role and combat climate change, these companies must join the European climate targets. At the same time, it is necessary for European and national governments to provide the industry with the necessary infrastructure.

Only effective with mix of measures

The NGOs, companies and government institutions recognise that there is no single golden solution to drastically reduce industrial emissions in the coming decades, but that a mix of measures is needed.

"We need to focus on energy efficiency, circularity, industrial electrification with renewable energy from sun and wind and the capture and underground storage of CO₂", says Michelle Prins, industry policy expert at Natuur & Milieu. "An effective future plan for the industry requires action in all these areas, coupled with a financial strategy and the rollout of the necessary infrastructure."

Role for CO₂ capture and permanent storage

Switching to green technologies is not yet always feasible for all sectors. That is why the capture and underground storage of CO₂ emissions is necessary, say the signatories of the letter. The captured CO₂ is then transported to and permanently stored in the empty oil and gas fields under the North Sea.

"This requires cross-border transport infrastructure (pipelines, ships, trucks, trains), CO₂ capture infrastructure in all countries involved and storage infrastructure in the Netherlands. It is crucial that Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany together develop a vision and roadmap for this", says Laurien Spruyt, senior climate & industry policy manager at Bellona Europe.

In addition to developing a concrete plan, the signatories also call for the removal of legislative barriers and the establishment of links with other industrial clusters in inland Germany or France.

Signatories

The open letter is endorsed by: Aramis, Bellona Europa, Bellona Germany, Benelux Business Roundtable, Bundesverband der Deutschen Kalkindustrie, Carbon Collectors, Clean Air Task Force, Energie Beheer Nederland, Fluxys, Gasunie, General Electric, HeidelbergCement, Holcim België NV, Lhoist, Natuur & Milieu, Natuur en Milieu Federatie Zuid-Holland, North Sea Port, Port of Antwerp, Port of Rotterdam, Porthos, Shell, Smart Delta Resources, TotalEnergies, Victrol and Verein Deutscher Zementwerke (VDZ).