

Exodus, in the worst case

By our editors

ROTTERDAM, Feb. 22nd. The probability is "low". But if within a hundred years the sea level will rise by five to six meters, this will probably lead to an exodus of residents and businesses out of the Randstad* to higher parts of the Netherlands and other parts of Europe. The government will be "to late" to prevent that. "We will not have to expect much initiative from the government".

That is the outcome of research concerning the reaction of Dutch society to a "gigantic problem with a low probability", as performed by the Institute for Environmental Issues of Amsterdam's Free University. The research concerning the *worst case scenario* has been performed by order of the European Community.

If, as of 2030, sea levels will rise by 5 to 6 meters as a result of the collapse of the land ice on the South Pole, it would be technically possible to retain most of the Dutch soil by raising the dykes by about 7 meters. Yet this will probably not happen, says researcher Peter van der Werff. "Politicians will react too late." Reasons for this are that politicians have difficulties with prioritising and are mostly focused on making policy for the short term

according to the researchers. Also the costs would be "gigantic" and partially not be in balance with the prevented damage.

The exodus from the lower parts of the Netherlands, like the densely populated Randstad, will be ushered by the business community. "When multinationals start to realise that such a raise in sea level will occur they will decide to move their headquarters from Rotterdam and Amsterdam to foreign cities like Paris, or to California, states social scientist Van der Werff. Thereupon a "Domino effect" will occur.

Already a trend of "increased mobility and migration of household" is afoot, according to the research, and that trend will continue. "The sense of insecurity will increase and with that the urge to move to higher grounds. Families will then increasingly move to other European countries. The current immigrant population has probably a lot of confidence in the government, but will on the other hand also very easily make the decision to return to their countries of origin.

Policymakers will probably also react too late to this to facilitate this exodus with extra infrastructure in the higher areas and compensating measures for people who have to leave their devaluated

houses, say the researchers of the Free University.

The raise in sea level, as induced by the climate change, which is currently anticipated by the KNMI** for the year 2100 is between 20 and 110 centimetres. This is based on the data of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) of the UN. KNMI climatologist Rob van Dorland: "I would call this a *worst worst case scenario*. A doom scenario."

* Randstad: the urban agglomeration of Western Holland.

** KNMI: Koninklijk Nederlands Meteorologisch Instituut, the Royal Dutch Meteorological Institute.

Climate change: worst case scenario

Effect of sea level rise of 6 meters during one century, as of 2030

□ Flooded land
■ Land



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