

Gasunie in society

Relationship with stakeholders

Having a good relationship with our environment is very important for our 'licence to operate'. We maintain strong ties with a large number of stakeholders, such as the shareholder, representatives of national, regional and local politics, authorities, regulatory bodies, employees, the Works Council, our customers, suppliers, the local community, the media and nature conservation and environmental organisations. We are committed to striking the right balance between the interests of everyone involved.

Structural stakeholder dialogue

Internal

Good communication within a company leads to better cooperation and increases the involvement of employees at all levels of the company. This is not just a matter of efficiently providing information. Dialogue among employees also improves the working process and mutual cooperation. That is why this has become a key objective in our internal communication policy.

Our intranet, methaNet, plays a central role in our internal communications. In 2013, we significantly expanded the functionalities of methaNet. It has become more personal and more interactive: people can now comment on messages and respond to each other's questions and remarks. Employees can create their own profile, in which they say something about their work. This makes it clear to others who to turn to for specific matters. Employees can also create and manage special interest groups (forums), which can be used to share knowledge and discuss relevant topics.

We regularly organise employee meetings that focus on the exchange of information on a wide variety of topics. Besides meetings for people from all over the company, we also hold more specific meetings for departments, business units or managers. In addition, we organise themed sessions, for which employees can sign up. At the end of 2013, for instance, we held a number of 'pizza sessions' about the core values of our company. We find the feedback we receive from such meetings very valuable.

External

We often have a shared interest with external stakeholders, even though we may sometimes have a different perspective. We always try to find constructive ways to keep in touch with our stakeholders, and to this end we create various platforms and opportunities for discussion.

Good relationships with local residents

We consider it very important to maintain good relationships with the people who live near our locations, pipelines and installations. We own and manage one of the most elaborate and densely packed gas transport networks in the world. Over 15,500 kilometres of pipelines lie under the ground in the Netherlands and Germany, in one of the most densely populated areas in the world. This means that we have many 'neighbours', and we want to treat them all with respect. Our reputation for doing so, built up over the years, is good – and we would

like to keep it that way. That is why, as far as possible, we involve the people who live close to our operations in our plans. We create opportunities for dialogue, such as information and discussion evenings and Open Days. We attach great value to the feedback we receive from our stakeholders during these consultation sessions.

Laying a new gas pipeline is a major operation that can give rise to a lot of unrest in the immediate vicinity. Thanks to the short lines of communication between Gasunie and our municipality, we experienced the pipeline construction as a best-practice project. Preparations were good, execution was quick, and there was proactive communication between all parties involved.

Roderick Simons, Town and Country Planning Policy Advisor, Municipality of Zuidplas

Supply chain partners

We also maintain close relationships with our customers, shippers and companies directly connected to our network through regular annual meetings for these groups. In 2013, GTS again organised 'Shipper Meetings' and 'Industry Days'. These serve as information meetings and networking platforms for the stakeholders involved. During these meetings, we exchange ideas with customers about developments in the gas market and within GTS.

Governments and authorities

Various parts of our company maintain regular contacts with authorities at many different levels. On the one hand, laws, regulations, policies and other government decisions have a large impact on our activities; on the other hand, due to our role in the provision of energy, we form an important discussion partner for the government. We want to be a serious, constructive partner for governmental authorities. Our activities mean that we frequently need to consult with local and other authorities (e.g., on legislation, regulations and licences), and we are often also involved in consultations at the political level, in particular through our offices in The Hague, Berlin, Brussels and Moscow. On the one hand, our local presence there helps to foster good long-term relationships with governmental stakeholders; and on the other hand, it is easier for the authorities to use our local representatives, who have a great deal of specialist knowledge, as a single point of contact for their questions on gas and gas transport.

Social organisations

Cross-border or cross-sector policy issues are usually discussed through industry organisations. For this reason, we are members of a number of such organisations, such as Netbeheer Nederland, the European Network for Transmission System Operators Gas (ENTSO-G), and Gas Infrastructure Europe (GIE). We are also represented on the board of many of these organisations.

Stakeholder feedback

Customer satisfaction survey

Through an annual customer satisfaction survey, carried out in the Netherlands by GTS, we ask our customers for their opinion on various aspects of our services. Customers gave GTS a score of 7.2 (out of 10) for its services during 2013, the same score as in 2012. For certain aspects of our services (e.g., customer service through our new website and our Customer Desk), our scores in 2013 were higher than the year before. However, customers felt that some areas (e.g., following up on appointments, and the search function on our website) could be improved.

New platforms

We wish to play an active role in the energy debate so that we can exchange ideas on important themes. We are therefore proactively seeking contact with relevant stakeholders. To an increasing extent, these are parties who are involved in the provision of energy from a social point of view (e.g., NGOs and lobby groups) or on the grounds of their profession (e.g., architects or scientists). As a result, we are increasingly present on 'new' platforms. In 2013, for instance, we became an active participant in the annual sustainability festival, Springtij, on the island of Terschelling.

Handling complaints

In carrying out our operations, we take our surroundings into account as much as possible. Any complaints we receive – by telephone, email or otherwise – are directed in the first instance to our Corporate Communications department, who then deal with them in consultation with the relevant department. We aim to respond as quickly as possible and to the satisfaction of all parties concerned. Customers of GTS can address their complaints to the GTS Customer Desk.

Strategic Environs Management

We frequently need to carry out works at new and existing locations. Since we are committed to maintaining a good relationship with our neighbours, prior to embarking on new projects, we carry out an analysis of the surrounding area, and contact stakeholders at the earliest possible stage. In 2013, as part of our CSR policy, we started developing a Gasunie-wide approach for environs management. In doing so, we also look at what has been achieved with Strategic Environs Management (SEM), an approach that has successfully been used by large organisations such as the Port of Rotterdam. We also started pilots with social media to find out, for example, how we can use Facebook and Twitter. Our new website, Gasuniebouwt.nl, plays a central role in this. The first results are very promising.

Strategic environs research

In 2013, we hired a specialist agency to examine what key stakeholders think of our company. We felt that our 50th anniversary was a good time to commission a comprehensive study to find out how strategically relevant parties view Gasunie and how they think and expect Gasunie will develop in the future. More than forty stakeholders from our political, industrial, policy-making and social environs participated in this study. The stakeholders said that they see an important role for Gasunie in the European energy infrastructure, in the transition towards a sustainable energy supply. They also showed interest in our company's strategy and vision for the future. We intend to repeat this study in a few years' time, so that we can measure how we are developing in relation to our surroundings.

Stakeholder dilemmas

In our work, we are continuously balancing the interests of different stakeholders. We only expand our network if our customers ask us to do so: our primary aim is to guarantee security of supply. Similarly, we carry out maintenance work on our pipelines and installations. The activities that follow from this can sometimes cause a public nuisance. This results in dilemmas that, each time, require a good balancing of interests and good dialogue with the people who are directly involved.

Pipeline route Bergambacht: alternative location

In order to ensure stability in the supply of gas in the Netherlands, we wanted to lay a pipeline through the village of Bergambacht. The plot of land through which we had planned to lay this pipeline was zoned for agricultural use. This meant there would be nothing to prevent the pipeline being laid through it. However, during discussions with the local council, it turned out that, in due course, the council intended to build a small residential area at this location. The council had included this residential area in its municipal planning document, but had not yet drawn up a zoning plan for the intended location. The council then proposed an alternative route for the pipeline. We considered this carefully and decided to adopt it as our preferred option. These adjustments lengthened the preparatory phase, but the pipeline is now located such that it does not thwart the council's plans.

New General Terms and Conditions for Laying Pipelines

In 2010, the existing system of building leases (with rent paid to the owner for the right to lay pipelines through his land, e.g., agricultural land) was revised. At that time, Gasunie and the Dutch Agriculture and Horticulture Organisation (LTO) agreed to also revise the General Terms and Conditions for Laying Pipelines. LTO represented some 50,000 agricultural entrepreneurs. We have a relatively large number of pipelines in agricultural land, which is why LTO is an important stakeholder for us. We have an interest in reaching a good, objective arrangement that, as far as possible, does justice to the interests of all involved and can as such be applied by everyone concerned. LTO has an interest in an arrangement which also takes account of the interests of its members.

During the negotiations, we turned out to have different expectations and interests with regard to possible legal developments regarding annual rent. At first, our points of view seemed irreconcilable. But eventually, the two sides focused on improvements and adjustments, separate from any annual rent. This helped us to arrive at a transparent arrangement that works for everyone involved. We agreed to meet again whenever changes in legislation make it necessary.

Social commitment

We make a positive contribution to society in carrying out our statutory duty as a gas infrastructure company. However, we wish to do more for society, and we are doing so in various ways, such as described in the examples below.

Cooperation in the field of archaeology

Sometimes, our activities take place in areas where archaeological findings have been made or are expected to be made. In such cases, we cooperate with archaeological consultancy RAAP to first search the area for the presence of any archaeological remains.

Sponsoring and donations

We sponsor activities and events and make donations in regions where we are directly active, particularly to support cultural events and youth sports activities. We also organise lectures on CSR and other subjects at secondary schools and universities. We frequently give free access to our head office and our catering facilities to student associations and other relevant organisations. We also sponsor student events by providing free use of equipment and furniture for holding conferences. In 2013, we spent € 230,880 on sponsoring and donations.

In Germany, we sponsor '*Behinderten Sportverband Niedersachsen*', a sports association for people with disabilities. We are also sponsor of the regional paralympics for disabled children in Niedersachsen.

Employee initiatives

Gasunie greatly values and supports employees' social activities. Many of our employees do volunteer work for sports clubs, support cultural projects, participate in local politics, or are dedicated to the application of sustainable energy and improving the quality of life in their community. Many of our employees who go to work by bike take part in the Dutch national campaign '*Fietsen Scoort*'. The proceeds of this campaign are used to finance sustainable projects in developing countries. We double the amount that our employees collect for this good cause.

Educational package for safety

Whenever we conduct major infrastructure projects, such as laying a pipeline or building a station, it inevitably involves a great deal of heavy traffic. Our drivers have therefore been trained to focus on safety. To raise awareness about safety among local children, we have also compiled an educational package that we distribute to primary schools in the vicinity of our activities. In addition, we also participated in an episode of a Dutch children's TV programme, in which we explain why we transport gas and how this can be done safely. Most of the materials are freely available on our website.

Art

We believe that art in our office environment helps to create a pleasant workplace for our employees. Gasunie has a modest art collection that is displayed throughout our offices in the Netherlands and Germany. Each year, we organise several exhibitions at our head office. This provides a good platform for the (usually young) artists. In 2013, we spent € 15,716 on art.

Bees project with Wageningen University Research

In cooperation with Wageningen University Research (WUR), we initiated a project for studying wild bees. Wild bees are very important to the agricultural sector, but the mortality of bee populations in the Netherlands is increasing. This is partly due to the fact that their habitat is continuously shrinking. We therefore joined forces with WUR to examine whether, with some adjustments, industrial areas can be turned into suitable habitats for this type of bee. We gladly participate in this research, because we feel involved in the agricultural sector in the Netherlands. Many of our pipelines are, of course, located under agricultural land. One of our locations and various pipeline routes have been converted into habitats; for instance, by sowing flower seed mixes and creating nesting opportunities. Some Gasunie employees have been trained by an environmental scientist to collect data, which are then processed by WUR. The project, which was launched in 2012, will run for three years. If it proves to be successful, we will see if we can create more habitats of this type.