

# Third National Report of Belgium to the Convention on Biological Diversity

## C. ARTICLES OF THE CONVENTION

### Article 13 - Public education and awareness

<b>91.</b> Is your country implementing a communication, education and public awareness strategy and promoting public participation in support of the Convention? (Goal 4.1 of the Strategic Plan)	
a) No	
b) No, but a CEPA strategy is under development	X
c) Yes, a CEPA strategy developed and public participation promoted to a limited extent (please provide details below)	
d) Yes, a CEPA strategy developed and public participation promoted to a significant extent (please provide details below)	
Further comments on the implementation of a CEPA strategy and the promotion of public participation in support of the Convention.	
<p><b>Flemish Region:</b> the theme on biodiversity in the Environment &amp; Nature Policy Plan includes an education and public awareness programme. The aims of this programme are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- raise public awareness on biodiversity;</li><li>- enhance the understanding of how biodiversity affects them and the role they can play;</li><li>- ensure that people understand the links between environmental quality and quality of life;</li><li>- help people to learn more about biodiversity so that they can appreciate it and help to conserve it;</li><li>- develop public awareness and participation in biodiversity conservation.</li></ul> <p>The key objective is to increase awareness, understanding and enjoyment of biodiversity, and engage many more people in conservation. In each of the five provinces several Visitors Centres have been established nearby or in main nature areas with exhibitions on the local and regional biodiversity, organised guided tours and educational programmes for schools or interested public groups. The Nature and Forest Divisions participate on regular basis in provincial, regional and national exhibitions and fairs. Websites of these divisions are being revised to be more attractive and informative for the general public.</p> <p><b>Brussels Capital Region:</b> the biodiversity theme is integrated in the education and public awareness programme of the Brussels Institute for Environmental management. The aims of the programme are similar to those enumerated by the Flemish Region.</p> <p><b>Walloon Region:</b> the 'Plan d'Action pour le développement de la nature' (in preparation) will contain a chapter on education and public awareness. The decree approving the cooperation agreement between the French Community and the Walloon Region in relation to environmental education entered into force on 21.01.2004. This agreement foresees an array of actions in relation to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- information;</li><li>- pedagogy;</li><li>- integration of environmental education in school courses;</li><li>- exchange of experiences and knowledge;</li><li>- structural aid for schools incorporating sustainable development into their housing activities;</li><li>- logistic cooperation.</li></ul> <p>Public participation is a guiding principle for the implementation of action number 18 of the <b>Federal</b> Plan for Sustainable development (2004-2008), dedicated to the protection of biodiversity.</p> <p>The National Biodiversity Strategy, which should be ready for publication early 2006, will have a specific objective dedicated to the promotion of communication, education and public awareness on biological diversity. Public participation will be one of the guiding principles for the implementation of</p>	

**92.** Is your country undertaking any activities to facilitate the implementation of the programme of work on Communication, Education and Public Awareness as contained in the annex to decision VI/19? (decision VI/19)

a) No	
b) No, but some programmes are under development	
c) Yes, some activities are being undertaken (please provide details below)	X
d) Yes, many activities are being undertaken (please provide details below)	

Further comments on the activities to facilitate the implementation of the programme of work on CEPA.

**Flemish Region:** many statutory and non-statutory organisations and facilities have education activities, programmes and materials geared towards giving messages about biodiversity, its vital importance and the need to manage it sustainably.

Newsletters of the Nature Division and of the Nature & Environment Education Division are published regularly. Cooperation projects with NGO's include publication of brochures and leaflets that are widely distributed. School programmes include specific sessions on environment and nature aspects. NGO's organise almost weekly events on nature and forest conservation aspects through guided tours or exhibitions. There are also specific yearly programmes such as Forest Week, Nature Day, Day of Biodiversity, Day of Landscape Patrimonium, or events related to specific sites such as the Scheldt Estuary, or specific species (groups) such as the Night of the Bats.

**Walloon Region:**

- publication of brochures and organisation of colloquia on Natura 2000 and more specifically on Natura 2000 and forests, Natura 2000 and agriculture, Natura 2000 and wetlands, Natura 2000 and hunting and fishing, towards an informed audience but also the larger public;
- the Region has developed an extended network of 'Centres Régionaux d'Initiation à l'Environnement' (CRIE), centres for environmental education and awareness. Those centres develop programmes based on nature and biodiversity for public awareness purposes. Their actions are mainly (but not exclusively) oriented towards school children aged 6-12;
- naturalists' associations are financed in view to organise public awareness and education activities;
- sensibilisation and participation: the Nature and Forest Division launched several partnerships with municipalities aiming among others to sensibilise and involve them in the preservation and development of their natural heritage: 'Plans Communaux de Développement de la Nature', the road verges operation, 'Combles-et-Clochers', the tree week, etc.;
- school and education: different organisms (CRIE, Probio, associations promoting education) provide to schools educational programmes in relation to nature conservation. The 'Institut d'éco-pédagogie' organises additional training courses for teachers on how to get in touch with nature. Education within teachers colleges contains a similar aspect. The 'Réseau Idée' assists schools to integrate activities aiming for the discovery of and sensibilisation on nature and the environment. The Walloon Region finances and distributes pedagogic kits on different themes related to the environment and the natural heritage. The 'Centres de Dépaysement et de Plein Air' (CDPA), established by the French Community, conduct training and education activities in relation to the environment for schools;
- the Order adopted on 08.02.2002 by the Walloon Region regulates the approbation of organisations involved with the education and sensibilisation on nature and forests as well as the attribution of grants for their training and sensibilisation activities.

The **Brussels Capital Region** is granting many nature conservation associations and semi-official institutions to develop the conservation and promotion of biodiversity, through education programmes and education activities, trainings sessions, sensitisation activities, active communication through brochures, leaflets, media actions, nature events, etc. This sometimes goes to the very local level (eg guidelines for nature oriented management of private gardens).

The BIME has a regularly newsletter which promotes and encourages sustainable way of life for the citizens in general. Specific brochures and leaflets on nature conservation and biodiversity in urban green spaces are widely distributed in different information centers and via the local NGO. Information is also given through website, panels in public green spaces, etc.

There are also specific yearly events such as the 2 weeks of the forest, the environment day, the patrimonium day, the Batnight, several municipalities organise their green discovery days, etc.

The **Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences**, the **Royal Museum for Central Africa** and the **National Botanic Garden of Belgium** have educational sections, develop permanent and temporal exhibitions and other projects towards the public on biodiversity and related matters, organise guided tours in their musea, etc.

In the RBINS, this section also organises practical workshops for children that address a great variety of specific themes and promote awareness on nature and biological diversity.

The **CBD National Focal Point** manages a thematic library on biodiversity consultable online through the Internet and available to all. The CBD-NFP provides guidance to secondary school, high school and university students working on biodiversity-related subjects. It published in December 2004 the brochure 'Biodiversiteit in België: een overzicht / La biodiversité en Belgique: un aperçu' in 10,000 Dutch and 10,000 French copies which are distributed free of charge to the general public upon demand. Six months later, all copies have been sent out. A reprint is planned. Copies are also downloadable free of charge via [www.naturalsciences.be/biodiversity](http://www.naturalsciences.be/biodiversity).

On the 2005 International Day on Biodiversity, the CBD-NFP together with the Multimedia Team of the RBINS, launched an innovative interface on the biodiversity in Belgium on the Internet. This interface will be enriched by an educational component and then brought to the attention of the primary and secondary schools in Belgium ([www.naturalsciences.be/biodiversity/amai](http://www.naturalsciences.be/biodiversity/amai)).

**93.** Is your country strongly and effectively promoting biodiversity-related issues through the press, the various media and public relations and communications networks at national level? (decision VI/19)

a) No	
b) No, but some programmes are under development	
c) Yes, to a limited extent (please provide details below)	X
d) Yes, to a significant extent (please provide details below)	

Further comments on the promotion of biodiversity-related issues through the press, the various media and public relations and communications networks at national level.

**Flemish Region:** mainly through work of NGO's. Often the press and other media are only reflecting problematic aspects related with nature conservation such as conflict issues with regard to land owners or users. Press conferences are among others organised for the launch of Nature Reports and Environmental and Nature Reports.

**Walloon Region:** in order to inform on Natura 2000 in the broadest possible way, an entire media campaign was launched with tv and radio spots, press articles, specific brochures for farmers, foresters, hunters and fishermen.

For the French-speaking community, a specific tv programme 'Jardin Extraordinaire' addresses nature and biodiversity topics from Belgium and worldwide. For the moment, the Dutch-speaking community seems to lack such a programme.

**Brussels Capital Region:** each year, the Brussels Institute for Management of the Environment organises a one-day celebration of the environment for a wide audience, including the press and the general public.

The **Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences**, the **Royal Museum for Central Africa** and the **National Botanic Garden of Belgium** are organising special events in relation to the International

Day on Biodiversity, to World Ocean Day, etc. and are setting up press events when new exhibitions are opened. Discussion fora on diverse topics (IAS, inland waters, forests) are organised by BBPF. Widely accessible symposia are organised by various actors.

The **CBD National Focal Point** organised press meetings at the occasion of the publication of Biodiversity in Belgium, the overview brochure on the biodiversity in Belgium, the launch of the innovative interface on Belgian biodiversity, the celebration of the International Day on Biodiversity. Many interviews were given to radio and tv. Oral presentations on biodiversity and related themes have been and are made to diverse audiences such as NGO's, students, the private sector, etc.

**North Sea:** an exposition on the North Sea has been set up in 2004 on the initiative of the Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Security and Environment.

An awareness campaign on the North Sea has been organised in 2005 by the Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Security and Environment. This activity was made in parallel with the finalisation of the Royal Decree on marine protected areas in the North sea. The campaign made use of the following tools: radio, television, folders and summer activities on the Belgian coast for young people.

To enhance awareness about the North Sea, a specific website was launched recently: [www.de-noordzee.be](http://www.de-noordzee.be).

In 2002, the **Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Security and Environment** - DG Environment has developed and widely distributed a booklet in Dutch and French on biodiversity: 'Biodiversité: construire pour demain?!'

Regarding biosafety, the Federal Public Service organised on 30 November 2004 a GMO day open to all stakeholders and representatives, in order to explain all legislations concerning GMO's biosafety, from international to national ones, and to debate in various workshops actuality subjects related to the matter (coexistence, comparison of legislations in various countries, USA-EC WPO conflict, enlargement of the evaluation, etc.).

**94.** Does your country promote the communication, education and public awareness of biodiversity at the local level? (decision VI/19)

a) No	
b) Yes (please provide details below)	X

Further information on the efforts to promote the communication, education and public awareness of biodiversity at the local level.

**Flemish Region:** mainly through NGO's which run informal and formal programmes on local biodiversity issues. Provincial and municipal environment policies include an important chapter on public awareness and educational programmes. See also questions above.

**Walloon Region:** this is taken care of via the nature organisations, the CRIE, etc. Furthermore, the 'Plans Communaux de Développement de la Nature' (PCDN), River Contracts and Natural Parcs are three participatory instruments among others aiming to the sensibilisation and education of the public:

- the PCDN are municipal initiatives based on local partnership on nature development aiming for the preservation and development of biodiversity by taking account of the ecological network;
- a River Contract brings together all the actors of the valley with the aim to reach a consensus on an action programme for the restoration of the water course, the river banks and surroundings and the water resources. Invited are representatives of the political, administrative, socio-economic, educational, scientific and associative worlds;
- a Natural Parc is a rural territory with high biological and geographical interest, subject to measures to protect the environment in harmony with the needs of the population and the socio-economic development. The Natural Parcs organise several communication, sensibilisation and educational activities towards the public.

Most of the public awareness actions and educational programmes on a sustainable way of life and on biodiversity conservation in the **Brussels Capital Region** are also focused to the local level, as the Brussels Capital Region is a very small and urbanised region.

In 2003, two 'citizens fora' (one in the Walloon Region and one in the Flemish Region) were organised by the **Federal Public Service for Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment** and the organisation Foundation for Future Generations at the local communal level for statements, questions-answers sessions and discussions between scientists, officials, and local citizens around the problematics of GMO's biosafety. A report of those meetings was made by the Foundation for Future Generations.

See also under question 92.

**95.** Is your country supporting national, regional and international activities prioritised by the Global Initiative on Education and Public Awareness? (decision VI/19)

a) No	
b) No, but some programmes are under development	
c) Yes, some activities supported (please provide details below)	X
d) Yes, many activities supported (please provide details below)	

Further comments on the support of national, regional and international activities prioritised by the Global Initiative on Education and Public Awareness.

**Flemish Region:** support is given by the Nature and Forest Divisions or by provincial authorities for yearly events. See also comments above.

**96.** Has your country developed adequate capacity to deliver initiatives on communication, education and public awareness?

a) No	
b) No, but some programmes are under development	
c) Yes, some programmes are being implemented (please provide details below)	X
d) Yes, comprehensive programmes are being implemented (please provide details below)	

Further comments on the development of adequate capacity to deliver initiatives on communication, education and public awareness.

c) **Flemish Region:** within the Nature and the Forest & Green Spaces Division a specific section deals with 'communication, awareness raising, education' for which the colleagues are trained or expertise from outside is contracted on project base. Many actions happen in cooperation with NGO's, local authorities or Regional Landscape Associations. Main general actions include:

- extending the accessibility of nature and forest areas for the public supports the efforts to increase public awareness and support of the society for nature conservation. In a recent study about 75% of the consulted group of people indicated to visit at least once a year a nature or forest area. The category visiting nature areas regularly increased from 37.4% in 1997 to 43.4% in 2004. The study stresses the importance of nearby and easy accessible sites. By introducing subsidies for NGO's and for private owners in 1999 for giving public admission to their nature areas and for installations of visitor facilities enhanced the accessibility and attracted higher numbers of visitors;
- a bi-monthly newsletter is distributed for free by several institutions through website and in publication form, such as Nature Division ([www.natuur.be](http://www.natuur.be)), Forest Division ([www.bosengroen.be](http://www.bosengroen.be)), Institute for Nature Conservation ([www.instnat.be](http://www.instnat.be)), Institute for Forestry and Game Management ([www.ibw.vlaanderen.be](http://www.ibw.vlaanderen.be)), and for each of the LIFE and Interreg projects;

- website information development is on the increase. More interactive information systems are already taken up in the websites but should be enhance to trigger higher interest from the public. Every year several brochures are published on a specific theme or area;
- visitors Centres (10) established nearby protected areas have an important role in informing visitors on the nature values of the sites in that area, educational programmes and awareness rising;
- yearly events are organised around a specific theme: Biodiversity Day, Wetlands Day, Week of the Parks, Week of the Forest, Nature Day, European Night of the Bats, tree and hedges planting days; or for a specific area such as the Scheldt Weekend;
- participation in yearly fairs with a stand on nature and forest conservation events such as Country Side;
- public information sessions that were organised in each of the 5 provinces include: 20 years Birds Directive in the Flemish Region (1999), Natura 2000 in the Flemish Region (2001), FEN 1<sup>st</sup> stage of demarcation (2002).

NGO's play an important role in raising awareness for nature conservation and in nature education of the youth. Every weekend many events are being organised locally. The rising number of nature NGO's members reflects an increase in public interest. Several NGO's also spread a weekly newsletter by (e-)mail.

**Walloon Region:** the Nature Direction published brochures on the protection of amphibians and swallows, as well as a DVD on swallows, targeting a large audience. Four informative brochures and associated posters on birds (city birds, countryside birds, forest birds and wetland birds) have also been published.

**97.** Does your country promote cooperation and exchange programmes for biodiversity education and awareness at the national, regional and international levels? (decisions IV /10 and VI/19)

a) No	X
b) Yes (please provide details below)	

Further comments on the promotion of cooperation and exchange programmes for biodiversity education and awareness, at the national, regional and international levels.

The Nature Conservation and Site Protection Section of the Special Environmental Commission of the Benelux Union features a working group on environmental communication and education.

**98.** Is your country undertaking some CEPA activities for implementation of cross-cutting issues and thematic programmes of work adopted under the Convention?

a) No (please specify reasons below)	
b) Yes, some activities undertaken for some issues and thematic areas (please provide details below)	X
c) Yes, many activities undertaken for most issues and thematic areas (please provide details below)	
d) Yes, comprehensive activities undertaken for all issues and thematic areas (please provide details below)	

Further comments on the CEPA activities for implementation of cross-cutting issues and thematic programmes of work adopted under the Convention.

Throughout the country, CEPA activities have been organised in relation to protected areas and the ecological network / Natura 2000, forests, inland waters, wetlands, agriculture.

**Flemish Region:** in addition to the above, training sessions are organised by visitor centres, university departments or administrative divisions on specific aspects such as the Scheldt estuary, the coastal zone, wetlands, bat conservation, etc.

**Walloon Region:** the 'Plans Communaux de Développement de la Nature', River Contracts and Natural Parcs are three participative instruments among others aiming for the communication towards and the sensibilisation and education of the public.

**99.**  Does your country support initiatives by major groups, key actors and stakeholders that integrate biological diversity conservation matters in their practice and education programmes as well as into their relevant sectoral and cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies? (decision IV/10 and Goal 4.4 of the Strategic Plan)

a) No	
b) Yes (please provide details below)	X

Further comments on the initiatives by major groups, key actors and stakeholders that integrate biodiversity conservation in their practice and education programmes as well as their relevant sectoral and cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies.

NGO's, universities, institutes, etc. are supported by the competent federal, regional or community bodies.

Naturalists' associations are financed in view to organise public awareness and education activities. Nature protection organisations such as WWF, Natuurpunt, Natagora, AVES, the Royal Belgian Society for the Protection of Birds, 'Ardenne et Gaume', 'Les Cercles des Naturalistes de Belgique', Youth and Nature and 'Forêt Wallonne' all have educational activities oriented towards nature conservation (e.g. excursions, visits of nature reserves, management of nature reserves, publications, etc.) or towards specific thematic areas (e.g. forests, quality of watercourses, etc.).

Other associations such as GAWI (integrated and biological fruit production) and CARI (protection of pollinators) receive support from the **Walloon Region** to promote awareness programmes on sustainable management of natural resources.

**100.** Is your country communicating the various elements of the 2010 biodiversity target and establishing appropriate linkages to the Decade on Education for Sustainable Development in the implementation of your national CEPA programmes and activities? (decision VII/24)

a) No	
b) No, but some programmes are under development	X
c) Yes, some programmes developed and activities undertaken for this purpose (please provide details below)	
d) Yes, comprehensive programmes developed and many activities undertaken for this purpose (please provide details below)	

Further comments on the communication of the various elements of the 2010 biodiversity target and the establishment of linkages to the Decade on Education for Sustainable Development.

**Box LII.**

Please elaborate below on the implementation of this article and associated decisions specifically focusing on:

- a) outcomes and impacts of actions taken;
- b) contribution to the achievement of the goals of the Strategic Plan of the Convention;
- c) contribution to progress towards the 2010 target;
- d) progress in implementing national biodiversity strategies and action plans;

- e) contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals;
- f) constraints encountered in implementation.

**Brussels Capital Region:** the BIME is supporting a number of educational efforts on different levels: from children to adults. Specific attention is given to school children from 6 to 12 years, via special information centers (regional ecological information centers) and local nature centers, granted by the BIME. For the Sonian Forest, a specific information centre, the Information Centre of the Sonian Forest (CIFS-ICZO) has been installed. This centre provides more specialised information and education to school children of secondary grade (12-18 years) and students of higher education and universities.

Many naturalists' organisations are financed in view to organise public awareness and education activities oriented to nature conservation (excursions, visits of natural sites, management activities, publications, etc.).