

Sixth National Report of Belgium to the Convention on Biological Diversity (2019)

BACKGROUND

Article 26 of the Convention on Biological Diversity states that the objective of national reporting is to provide information on measures taken for the implementation of the Convention and the effectiveness of these measures. In accordance with Article 6, measures to be addressed, in light of specific national circumstances, are reflected in the national biodiversity strategy and action plan.

The fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties agreed that national reports would be called for on a four-yearly basis and considered at alternate meetings of the Conference of the Parties.

The process for the preparation of the 6th Belgian National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity includes the involvement of a national Steering Committee, while the report is compiled by the National Focal Point.

The final draft is submitted for approval to the national Steering Committee, as well as to the national Coordination Committee on International Environmental Policy.

PREAMBLE

Belgium is a federal state, composed of communities and regions. The power to make decisions is not the exclusive prerogative of the federal government and the federal parliament. The leadership of the country is in the hands of various partners, who independently exercise their authority within their domains.

The implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity is carried out by the federal government, the regions, the communities and the local authorities (provinces and municipalities).

The **regions** are in charge of territorial matters. They have therefore the greatest amount of responsibilities on biodiversity-related issues: nature conservation, forest management, agriculture, exploitation of natural resources, land use and spatial planning, hunting, fisheries, etc. They are also in charge of tourism, which is a competence that has been delegated to them by the communities.

The **federal government** is the competent body for the biodiversity management of the Belgian part of the North Sea, for the international dimension of the marine environment policy and coordinates the Belgian external relations with respect to biodiversity (see CCIEP below). It is the federal government that undertakes the follow-up of trade in threatened species and that takes measures relating to the trade of exotic species.

The **communities** take care of issues linked to culture, research, education and public awareness. The regions and the federal government can also conduct research and raise public awareness in their own fields of competence.

The **provinces and the municipalities** play an important role at the local level, in accordance with regional policy.

The coherence of international environmental policy at national level is ensured by a coordination mechanism composed of representatives from the federal government, the regions and the communities. It is called the **Coordinating Committee for International Environment Policy (CCIEP)**. This body functions under the high-level authority of the Inter-ministerial Conference for the Environment (ICE). Under the CCIEP different committees, convention related or thematic, have been established, such as for Biodiversity, Climate Change, Adaptation to Climate Change, Forests, Nature, etc.

SECTION I. INFORMATION ON THE TARGETS BEING PURSUED AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

If your country has set and/or adopted national targets or equivalent commitments related to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 please use the following template to describe them. Please complete this template for each of your country's national targets. National targets entered in this section will be linked to section III so that progress in their implementation can be assessed. If your country has not set or adopted any national targets related to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 please indicate so in the first box and move to section II.

I. Information on the targets being pursued at the national level

My country has adopted national biodiversity targets or equivalent commitments in line with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Targets.

"Biodiversity 2020, Update of Belgium's National Strategy (NBS)" has been developed as a direct response to Article 6 of the Convention on Biological Diversity. It was adopted on 13 November 2013 by the Inter-ministerial Conference for the Environment, which is composed of the competent ministers of the Federal Government and the three Regions of Belgium (Flanders, Brussels, Wallonia).

The Strategy spells out a range of priority objectives to anticipate, prevent and reduce the causes of biodiversity loss in Belgium. It is the unique national document on biodiversity that is applicable both at the federal and regional levels in order to comply with the European and international commitments made by Belgium. It offers a framework for the policy to follow and for the subsequent implementing actions to be developed.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 1 - Identify and monitor priority components of biodiversity in Belgium

Rationale for the national target

In principle, the entire wealth of biodiversity should be subject to protection. It is however not feasible to concentrate efforts on all the elements of biodiversity. The Strategy will therefore focus the efforts where they are most needed, *i.e.* on components of biodiversity that are most at risk or could be subject to high risks in the near future. Priority components of biodiversity requiring the most urgent protective measures must be identified and their status monitored.

Priority components of biodiversity include (1) ecosystems and habitats that are unique, rare, in danger of disappearance, or that play a crucial role for priority species; (2) species that are rare, endangered, vulnerable, or that are endemic or live in specific habitats; (3) genomes and genes of particular social, scientific or economic importance; and (4) functional components of biodiversity that are essential for the provision of ecosystem services.

Adaptive management is concerned with the complex and dynamic nature of ecosystems and their uses and the absence of complete knowledge of their functioning. Because circumstances change and uncertainties are inherent in all managed uses of components of biodiversity, adaptive management is able to respond to uncertainties and it contains elements of "learning-by-doing" or research feedback. Monitoring is a key component of adaptive management.

Adequate monitoring, followed by regular reporting on status and trends of priority biodiversity components, is important. It allows adaptive management and decision-makers to develop adequate policy responses. It is also a prerequisite to communicate progress towards the 2020 targets to the public and stakeholders.

Furthermore, it contributes to enhancing public awareness and participation. In order to avoid an additional reporting burden, the format of such reports should be streamlined in accordance with existing reporting obligations on biodiversity at European and CBD level.

A set of biodiversity indicators has already been adopted by the CBD to follow the implementation of the 2020 target (see box below). Several of these indicators have been tested and standardized at EU level by the European Environment Agency (set of EU headline biodiversity indicators, SEBI 2020 project) to monitor the state of biodiversity in Europe. The Member States are therefore asked to report annually to the EEA on these indicators.

Monitoring and reporting on the status of biodiversity in Belgium will need the development of suitable monitoring tools and indicators in line with the outcomes of the SEBI 2020 project (see also objective 7.3).

Furthermore, Belgian authorities need to argue for an effective use of other existing European biodiversity indicators in policy on, for example, agriculture or structural funds.

Level of application (Please specify the level to which the target applies):

Seen the national scope of the strategy and its objectives, all the objectives apply to the entire territory, unless the distribution of competences (see preamble above) states otherwise.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 19 - By 2020, knowledge, the science base and technologies relating to biodiversity, its values, functioning, status and trends, and the consequences of its loss, are improved, widely shared and transferred, and applied.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

The stakeholders involved in the implementation of this objective are: the federal and regional authorities, the relevant sectors (agriculture, fishery, forestry), nature conservation agencies, universities, nature conservation NGOs, the Belgian Biodiversity Research Platform and any association working towards the same goal as the NBS. Weblink to a list of actors for biodiversity in Belgium: www.biodiv.be/implementation/docs/stratactplan/biodiversity-strategy-2020/appendix-1-actors-for-biodiversity-in-belgium.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 1.1 - Define a common Belgian methodology for the identification and monitoring of priority components of biodiversity according to EU guidelines

Rationale for the national target

So far, no methodology to identify priority elements of Belgian biodiversity is available at national level. The Regions manage biodiversity according to their own criteria and priorities. Nevertheless common standards can be developed and therefore it is useful to compare the monitoring methods of the different Regions. The methodology could consider conducting the identification of priority components of biodiversity on the basis of a bioregional approach deciding to choose components of biodiversity which are most at threat of disappearing, or species that are of particular importance for the functioning of vulnerable ecosystems, together with a number of flagship species for Belgium.

Common standards for biodiversity inventories and monitoring should also be defined and applied for the evaluation of biodiversity status taking into account existing guidelines for monitoring and obligations for reporting at EU and CBD level. A short set of common indicators and evaluation criteria (cf. EU headline indicators and related indicators developed by the Regions [32]) would enable the evaluation of progress towards the 2020 target at national level and greatly help reporting to international bodies (i.e. the European Commission and EEA, PEBLDS, OECD, CBD, OSPAR and other conventions). The categories and criteria used by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species could also be considered. Synthetic and cost-efficient direct and indirect indicators could be developed (for example territory fragmentation, rate of fertilisation). The monitoring system could apply the method "Pressure - State - Response" prescribed by the CBD or the "Driving forces, Pressures, States, Impacts, Responses (DPSIR) method" adopted by the EEA.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 19 - By 2020, knowledge, the science base and technologies relating to biodiversity, its values, functioning, status and trends, and the consequences of its loss, are improved, widely shared and transferred, and applied.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 1.2 - Identify and monitor priority species, habitats, genetic and functional components of biodiversity

Rationale for the national target

Once a common methodology to identify components of biodiversity that need urgent protective measures has been agreed, lists of priority habitats, species and genetic components will be drawn up. Threatened species and ecosystems should benefit from adequate long-term policy, and the restoration of degraded habitats should favour the protection of threatened and rare species as well as the re-establishment of species that had disappeared from our country. Particular attention will be paid to wetlands that are under serious threat.

From the species conservation point of view, the loss of local populations implies a loss of genetic diversity, which in turn may result in a loss of resilience to environmental change, i.e. the ability to offer resistance to, or recover from, natural and human-induced pressures.

Lists of most sensitive (threatened, vulnerable and rare) species and ecosystems which need particular attention (included in Natura 2000 at EU level) will be used and adapted to the Belgian context. It is also important to take the specificity of Belgian ecosystems/species into account and to identify the elements of biodiversity that are rare, particularly threatened with extinction, vulnerable or of particular importance (for

ecosystem functioning; symbolic importance; cultural importance) at the Belgian level. Belgian regional and national red lists of threatened species already exist and could be used for this compilation of priority species. For the marine environment, a list of priority species and habitats has been developed in an international framework (OSPAR). National red lists and related synthetic indicators are very useful for example for reporting to the EU, OECD and IUCN and other organisations.

Monitoring of priority components of biodiversity (see also operational objective 7.2) is very important, as it is the key to adaptive management and for improving management policies and practices by learning from the outcomes of operational programmes.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 19 - By 2020, knowledge, the science base and technologies relating to biodiversity, its values, functioning, status and trends, and the consequences of its loss, are improved, widely shared and transferred, and applied.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

Regional or maritime red lists are ad hoc constructed by specialists and Citizen Scientist groups on an irregular basis (about every 10 years for every group of species) as a side product of regional species atlases.

Relevant websites, web links, and files (Please use this field to indicate any relevant websites, web links or documents where additional information related to this national target can be found.)

National red list (indicators): <https://statbel.fgov.be/fr/themes/environnement/biodiversite#panel-11>

34387 national and regional species and status (statistic and/or official):

http://www.especies.be/fr/index_adv.php

Flanders region red lists (official): <https://www.inbo.be/en/search-flanders-red-lists>

Wallonia region species and red lists (official): <http://biodiversite.wallonie.be/fr/especies.html?IDC=3025>

Brussels region new strategy for red list:

http://document.environnement.brussels/opac_css/elecfile/FD_14_Biodiversite

Brussels birds red list (official, as an example, other red lists exist):

http://www.aves.be/fileadmin/Aves/COA/Publis_COA/Liste_Rouge_oiseaux_BXL.pdf

Citizen Science maps and observations: <https://observations.be/>

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 2 - Investigate and monitor the effects of threatening processes and activities and their causes

Rationale for the national target

The major processes that constitute a threat to, or are likely to have significant adverse impacts on, biodiversity are identified in part I.4. These processes and the activities impacting directly on biodiversity must be further investigated and their effects monitored through sampling and other techniques. Their causes must be identified and monitored on a regular basis (see also operational objective 7.3).

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

The stakeholders involved in the implementation of this objective are: the federal and regional authorities, nature conservation agencies, the Belgian Biodiversity Research Platform, universities, market actors (including business and import sectors, consumers and other members of civil society), and any association working towards the same goal as the NBS.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 2.1 - Investigate and monitor the effects and causes of activities and processes, including new and emerging risks, that threaten components of biodiversity in Belgium

Rationale for the national target

Identifying new and emerging risks as early as possible is a precondition for early action.

Much can be done to avert loss of biodiversity if adequate information on potential threats is available. It is necessary to further investigate the impact on biodiversity of human activities and of threats arising from natural causes, as well as relations between those processes and activities in order to take the most appropriate measures to minimise their impacts. Particular attention must be paid to the potential risks to biodiversity posed by the development and use of new technologies, their processes and products. For instance, attention should be paid to the potentially negative impacts of nanotechnologies on biodiversity, to the use of GMOs in agriculture, forestry and fishery - detailed in Objective 4 - as well as other GMOs developed as bioindicators or bioremediators, GM cattle, domestic animals, decorative plants, or GM microorganisms and viruses used as pest regulators in agriculture, etc.). Among their potential negative impacts: the spread of invasive alien species, the threat to non-target organisms by GMOs producing specific pesticides, unforeseen interactions with biodiversity, or the ecosystem disequilibrium caused by the large-scale diffusion of such organisms. The development of new, not yet marketed genetic transformation techniques, like synthetic biology, should be carefully accompanied by, a. o., thorough EIA procedures and the elaboration and implementation of adequate regulations by the community involved in biodiversity preservation. The biodiversity research community has a role to play in identifying emerging issues and delivering relevant biodiversity policy information.

When considering the various potential impacts of these emerging risks, attention should be paid not only to impacts on specific components of biodiversity but also to community structures and global ecosystem functions and services and to the links between biodiversity and health, in particular to risks to health.

Appropriate monitoring will involve taking physical measurements/observations of the chosen biodiversity and activities indicators year on year for comparison with the current status of biodiversity and pressures from threatening activities. This comparison together with a study of the causes of threatening processes will be most useful for an adaptive management of threatening activities. Key questions to be addressed in the monitoring process can be based on the proposed indicator framework for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (CDB Decision XI/3) and the EU headline indicators to 2020 developed by the European Environment Agency (SEBI 2020).

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 10 - By 2015, the multiple anthropogenic pressures on coral reefs, and other vulnerable ecosystems impacted by climate change or ocean acidification are minimized, so as to maintain their integrity and functioning.

Other relevant Aichi Targets:

Target 8 - By 2020, pollution, including from excess nutrients, has been brought to levels that are not detrimental to ecosystem function and biodiversity

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 2.2 - Investigate and monitor the effects of climate change on biodiversity and ecosystem services

Rationale for the national target

As highlighted in Part I, some effects of climate change on biodiversity are already obvious. They are likely to increase further because of the projected rise in temperature. Climate change constitutes a direct threat to biodiversity and the provision of ecosystem services as it disrupts ecological relations, unbalancing ecosystem functioning; it increases the impact of invasive alien species, causes disturbance to the lifecycle of some species and migration or disappearance of others, and can affect specific ecosystem services such as water regulation, nutrient cycling, food provision. Populations of Northern species tend to move northwards or disappear altogether (e.g. plant species), not having been able to adapt to climate change. Terrestrial ecosystems are mainly affected in terms of plant phenology and distribution of plant and animal species, with specialist species being most at risk.

Even if society substantially reduces its emissions of greenhouse gases over the coming decades, the climate system is projected to continue to change in centuries to come. We therefore have to prepare for and adapt to the consequences of some inevitable climate change, in addition to mitigation measures.

To prevent or limit severe damage to the environment, society and economies, adaptation strategies for affected systems must be developed at national, regional and local level. In 2010, Belgium adopted its national climate adaptation strategy. It has 3 objectives:

- to improve the coherence between existing adaptation activities in Belgium (assessing the impacts of climate change, vulnerability to climate change and adaptation measures already implemented);
- to improve communication at national, European and international levels;
- to initiate a process to develop a national action plan.

The Strategy summarizes the expected impacts of climate change in Belgium in several areas including biodiversity and gives an overview of the adaptation measures that have already been made in these areas as well as two cross-cutting areas: research and international cooperation. This strategy has initiated the process of developing a National Adaptation Plan. In this context, the different levels of government (Federal Government, Wallonia, Flanders and Brussels-Capital) have carried out studies in order to prepare future Federal/Regional adaptation plans that will provide the baseline for the national adaptation plan.

Regional studies have led to the development of regional climate projections and to provide information on sectoral vulnerability to future climate conditions.

The Flemish Region has published in 2013 the regional plan for adaptation to climate change (Het Vlaams Klimaatbeleidsplan 2013-2020). The Walloon Region adopted in 2007 the Walloon Plan 'Air-Climate'. Brussels-Capital Region approved in September 2013 the proposal of pre-project for the regional plan air-climate-energy.

The European Commission adopted an EU strategy on adaptation to climate change in April 2013.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 10 - By 2015, the multiple anthropogenic pressures on coral reefs, and other vulnerable ecosystems impacted by climate change or ocean acidification are minimized, so as to maintain their integrity and functioning.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 2.3 - Investigate the potential impact on biodiversity of the internal trade (legal and illegal) of live animals and plants at a Belgian level and potentially adapt relevant regulations, including market regulation when appropriate

Rationale for the national target

Sending out the right market signals, particularly to final consumers, for biodiversity conservation is crucial. While the potential impact on global biodiversity of international trade with Belgium is covered under objectives 5.6 and 5.7, it appeared necessary to also consider, in a holistic way, the potential impact of the internal trade (legal and illegal) of live animals and plants on biodiversity. Animal welfare and public/animal health issues should be taken into account in this context. Relevant regulations, including market regulation, as well as consumer behaviour should be adapted where necessary. This can be done for example by implementing CITES Regulation or other relevant EU legislation.

In considering the internal trade of species, particular attention will be devoted to the numerous exotic species deliberately introduced into Belgium (import of ornamental plants, pets, species for breeding, fishing, hunting, used as biological controls or for biomass production, etc.).

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 4 - By 2020, at the latest, Governments, business and stakeholders at all levels have taken steps to achieve or have implemented plans for sustainable production and consumption and have kept the impacts of use of natural resources well within safe ecological limits.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 3 - Maintain or restore biodiversity and ecosystem services in Belgium to a favourable conservation status

Rationale for the national target

Healthy ecosystems are needed if we want to halt the loss of biodiversity and benefit from the many valuable services they provide. Despite the initiatives already put in place, habitats in Belgium are becoming increasingly fragmented and degraded. This affects biodiversity directly and indirectly as it makes the ecosystems vulnerable to other threats, such as biological invasions. It also undermines the many services that healthy ecosystems provide to society, such as clean water and protection against flooding and erosion.

In 2010, the Parties to the CBD agreed to make concerted efforts to achieve Aichi Target 9 (the introduction and establishment of invasive alien species is prevented), Target 11 (17 % of terrestrial and inland water areas and 10 % of coastal and marine areas have been conserved), Target 14 (ecosystems and essential services have been safeguarded) and Target 15 (ecosystems are restored and their resilience has been enhanced). These global targets are reflected in EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 under target 1 (implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives), target 2 (maintenance and restoration of ecosystems and their services) and target 5 (combating invasive alien species). It is therefore important to adapt the NBS accordingly.

Nature conservation activities across Belgium, in, among others, marine areas as well as rural and urbanised areas, need to be strengthened through optimal protection, management and restoration measures. The measures to be taken will depend greatly on the priority components of biodiversity selected in Objective 1 and on threatening processes and activities identified in Objective 2. Measures could be, for instance, the extension of a forest or grassland in a specific area, restoration of a degraded habitat of particular importance (e.g. wetlands) or establishment of a protected area.

The measures will have to be taken in cooperation with the different stakeholders in order to define ways that both conserve biodiversity and meet other stakeholders' interests. In this context, the application of the ecosystem approach and the implementation of the programme of work on Protected Areas (CBD Decision VII/28), as appropriate, will be of particular relevance.

The concept of favourable conservation status* (see box below) provides an objective concept that will be scientifically defined for the purpose of Objective 1, together with the identification of appropriate indicators to allow for the monitoring of the status of the priority components of biodiversity.

Concept of favourable conservation status (EU Habitats and Birds Directive)

The conservation status of a natural habitat is “favourable” when (i) its natural range and areas it covers within that range are stable or increasing, and (ii) the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and the conservation status of its typical species is favourable as defined below.

The conservation status of a species is “favourable” when (i) population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, (ii) the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and (iii) there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its population on a long-term basis.

Protected areas, ecological networks and green infrastructure in Belgium

Protected areas in Belgium represent many different types of ecosystems: forests, wetlands, pastures, calcareous grasslands, heath lands, caves, marine areas, etc. Their sizes range from a few ares to thousands of hectares. Protected areas include: nature reserves (public and private), Natura 2000 sites, forest reserves,

forest protection areas, caves, natural parks, Ramsar and other wetlands of biological interest, protected dunes and zones of high biological value. Different protection statuses have sometimes been attributed to the same site. For example, a nature reserve can also be a Natura 2000 site.

The **ecological network** is a coherent ecological structure of areas in which nature conservation policy is the main objective to be developed. The objective is to create a coherent and functional network of ecosystems that are (inter)nationally important and should be preserved in a sustainable way. It aims to merge the fragmented nature and forest reserves into larger and interconnected units of nature. It is composed of core areas of natural interest (protected or not) connected by buffer and corridor zones as small biotopes and natural linear features in the landscape (hedgerows, ditches, field margins, footpaths, small streams, narrow valleys, etc.). Zones under other effective area-based conservation measures are part of this network, such as some Agri-Environment Measures, late mowing of road banks, sustainable forestry management measures.

The **green infrastructure** encompasses the ecological networks but it also takes into account areas providing specific ecosystem goods and services. Its added value comes from broader investments in natural capital with a view to 'greening' existing infrastructure and strengthening the functionality of ecosystems that provide goods and services as well as mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change, and enhancing the quality of life (health, tourism, conserving historic and cultural heritage). It addresses the spatial structure of natural and semi-natural areas but also other artificial and environmental features (such as "green roofs" or trails) which enable citizens to benefit from its multiple services. The underlying principle of Green Infrastructure is that the same area of land can frequently offer multiple benefits if its ecosystems are in a healthy state. Green Infrastructure investments are generally characterized by a high level of return over time, provide job opportunities, and can be a cost-effective alternative or be complementary to 'grey' infrastructure and intensive land use change.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets:

Target 5 - By 2020, the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced.

Other relevant Aichi Targets:

Target 10 - By 2015, the multiple anthropogenic pressures on coral reefs, and other vulnerable ecosystems impacted by climate change or ocean acidification are minimized, so as to maintain their integrity and functioning.

Target 11 - By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.

Target 12 - By 2020 the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has been improved and sustained.

Target 14 - By 2020, ecosystems that provide essential services, including services related to water, and contribute to health, livelihoods and well-being, are restored and safeguarded, taking into account the needs of women, indigenous and local communities, and the poor and vulnerable.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

The stakeholders involved in the implementation of this objective are: land use planning departments, nature conservation agencies, managers, the federal and regional authorities (including the provinces and municipalities), various sectors (including the horticultural sector, agriculture, aquaculture, forestry, fisheries, the pet industry, hunting, mobility, tourism, public health, research), professional federations involved in the sectors concerned, teachers in the academic system including in the field of horticultural qualifications, consumers, environmental NGOs, land owners, the general public and any association working towards the same goal as the NBS 1.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 3.1 - At least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through the development of effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and are integrated into the wider landscapes

Rationale for the national target

The aim of this operational objective is to enhance existing terrestrial [39] networks of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures over the three Regions and to promote interconnectivity between them and with neighbouring countries. The target of 17 % was chosen to align with international commitments (Aichi target 11 and EU Target 1- see Appendix 4: concordance table of SNB objectives with Aichi and EU targets). The objective is based on the concept of ecological network and will include the ecological requirements of the priority components of biodiversity in order to ensure their maintenance or rehabilitation in a favourable conservation status. As small landscape elements play a key role in ensuring connectivity between networks, their conservation and/or rehabilitation will be promoted.

In accordance with Objectives 1 and 2, the integrated management of protected areas should apply the ecosystem approach. The network of protected areas should also be integrated into its socio-economic context and wider environment to enable adequate buffering of external influences on the network elements. Measures taken in the framework of Objectives 4 and 5 should particularly take into account the network of protected areas.

The Natura 2000 network currently covers up to 12.77 % of the Belgian terrestrial territory with an ecologically representative system of protected areas. Additionally to this network, other surfaces are effectively conserved through other conservation measures such as some Agri-Environment Measures, late mowing of road banks, sustainable forest management measures.

This is why the target of 17 % of effectively managed protected areas at land and other areas of particular importance to biodiversity is deemed to be an ambitious yet realistic target for Belgium. Besides the importance of extending the network of protected areas on paper, its effective management is crucial and has to be ensured. Attention will be paid to implementing coherent transboundary and transregional conservation measures within Natura 2000. For the time being, only a limited number of sites at land are effectively managed and it is vital that appropriate management plans are adopted and implemented as a matter of urgency.

For a large number of wild species, crop species and varieties and domestic animal breeds, the establishment of a system of protected areas alone is not sufficient. Existing measures taken to protect wildlife outside protected areas will be enhanced in several ecosystems (for example, urban, freshwater, humid, rocky/caved, marine, coastal, forest and agricultural ecosystems) and integrated into land use planning. Such measures can include buffer zones playing the role of a transition, the ecological management of railway sides and road- and riversides, ecological management of parks and green areas in urban areas, municipal nature development plans, hosting wild fauna in attics and belfries, etc. Several documents produced by the Regions can be used as guidance for implementing this strategic objective (for example, Codes for Good Nature Practices, Codes for Good Agriculture Practices, Vademecum for nature-oriented management of road verges and river borders, Management standards to favour biodiversity in woods under a forest regime, etc.) [40].

It is also crucial to promote the protection of biodiversity in private domains and in green areas surrounding companies (see “Nature and Companies: Operating instructions, “Qualité et développement durable des zones d’activité économique: Le cahier des charges urbanistique et environnemental”). Furthermore, partnerships with the private sector should be developed.

The quality of nature in urban and peri-urban areas (cities and municipalities) is of particular importance not only for biodiversity but also for the quality of life and human health. The quality of nature can be enhanced by integrated planning and harmonious management of urban and peri-urban green areas (for example Vademecum for harmonised park management of the Flemish Region).

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 11 - By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

Most relevant National Indicators:

- * FLE100 - Flemish Region: Surface of flemish ecological Network and areas to designated for nature
- * FLE111 - Flemish Region 11. Conservation status of habitats of European interest
- * WAL005 - Walloon Region: Conservation status of habitats

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 3.2 - At least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through the development of effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and are integrated into the wider seascapes

Rationale for the national target

The Belgian part of the North Sea is a sensitive ecosystem and is one of the most densely used marine areas in the world with important pressures from sea-based activities (e.g. fishing, coastal defence, sand and gravel extraction, shipping, off-shore energy, tourism) and land-based activities (agriculture, urbanization, harbours, industry).

Addressing the pressures resulting from these activities within a complex state structure is an important overarching management issue. The implementation of the management plans for the Marine Protected areas in the Belgian Part of the North Sea adopted in January 2018 as well as the Good Environmental Status objectives (to be reached by 2020) reviewed in 2018 and related measures as part of the EU-Marine Strategy Framework Directive [2008/56/EC] (MSFD) will contribute to this challenge.

Coastal and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are an important means of safeguarding the ocean's rich diversity of life. They may support local economies by providing a refuge from fishing pressure for commercial fish stocks. If properly located and managed, MPAs may act as refuge habitats and lead to reduction in fishing mortality and bycatch.

The establishment of ecologically significant MPAs in the Belgian marine zone, complemented by the Natura 2000 network (35.85% of the area of the Belgian Part of the North Sea), has been an important step. The existing MPA's are taken up in the Marine Spatial Plan adopted in 2014. This Royal Decree forbids a number of human activities in the Natura 2000 areas (e.g. industrial activities).

Additionally, a programme of measures for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive was adopted in March 2016. This programme of measures addresses all relevant pressures and (socio-) economic sectors to allow the recovery of degraded habitats and populations to achieve the Good Environmental Status (GES) and/or Favourable State of Conservation (FSC) by 2020. This programme of measures stimulates the transition from human activities (including fishery) with adverse effects on species and habitats to human activities that allow the achievement of the GES or FSC.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 11 - By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 3.3 - Ecosystems, their resilience and their services are maintained and enhanced by establishing, inter alia, a green infrastructure and restoring at least 15 % of degraded ecosystems.

Rationale for the national target

Protected areas are necessary but not sufficient to rehabilitate biodiversity to a favourable conservation status across the country and to maintain the provision of ecosystem services. Reaching the 2020 target implies, inter

alia, the development of a green infrastructure with a focus on representativeness and management effectiveness at land and at sea, the restoration of degraded areas and ultimately the compensation of new degradations if not avoidable (see operational [objective 3.8](#)).

The *Green infrastructure (GI)* is defined as a strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features designed and managed to provide a wide range of ecosystem services. It incorporates green spaces (or blue if it concerns aquatic ecosystems) and other physical features in terrestrial (including coastal) and marine areas. On land, GI is present in rural and urban settings (EU Commission, May 2013). More information on GI is provided in the box in [objective 3](#).

As small landscape elements play a key role in ensuring connectivity of a green infrastructure network, their conservation and/or rehabilitation will be promoted. The management of the green infrastructure should apply the *ecosystem approach* and be integrated into its socio-economic context. Indeed, it is necessary to step up efforts to integrate biodiversity into the development and implementation of other policies, taking into account the objectives of all policies concerned, in particular those national and EU policies on natural resources management, such as agriculture, food security, forestry, fisheries, and energy, as well as spatial planning, transport, tourism, trade, and development. Measures taken within the framework of Objectives [4](#) (sustainable use) and [5](#) (sectoral integration of biodiversity) of the NBS should particularly take these green infrastructure elements into account.

Building a green infrastructure can help overcome many of these challenges. It can reconnect fragmented natural areas and improve their functional connectivity and resilience within the wider countryside. Connectivity, restoration and conservation measures need to be mainstreamed throughout the entire territory and not limited to specific areas, to contribute to an ecologically coherent green infrastructure for the benefit of all, people as well as nature. Furthermore, the restoration of degraded ecosystems can contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Belgium currently works with the European Commission on the common understanding and operationalisation of the terms "restoration" and "degradation" and the nature of the 15 % target. The baseline (reference point) against which the 15 % restoration target is to be assessed is the EU 2010 Biodiversity Baseline Study produced by the EEA and supplemented by additional information to be generated through the MAES work programme. At the core of the concept is the idea that restoration should be regarded as a process rather than as a binary (restored vs. degraded) description of the state of play. If restoration is regarded as a process then this allows for the possibility of identifying different stages in the process. It also means that all significant efforts to improve the abiotic and biotic condition of a site can, in principle, be counted as a contribution to restoration even if the site is not fully restored to its "original/natural state". The approach also has the advantage that significant efforts to improve the ecological condition of a site that has been completely transformed (e.g. intensively farmed land) can also be taken into account.

In order to ensure resilience, evolving factors such as climate change will be taken into account when restoring ecosystems. Attention must be paid to the slow changing processes. Climate change or deposition of nitrogen, for instance, can have an irreversible effect on the "natural" population, the "natural" range of the species and on the "sufficiently large" area, which are factors that determine whether a species or habitat has a *favourable conservation status* (see box, [Objective 3](#)). Applying an adaptive management process is a good way of getting management to take such processes into account.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 14 - By 2020, ecosystems that provide essential services, including services related to water, and contribute to health, livelihoods and well-being, are restored and safeguarded, taking into account the needs of women, indigenous and local communities, and the poor and vulnerable.

Other related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is indirectly related.)

Target 5 - By 2020, the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced.

Target 15 - By 2020, ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks has been enhanced, through conservation and restoration, including restoration of at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to combating desertification.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

Most relevant National Indicators:

* WAL006 - Walloon Region: Protected natural sites

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 3.4 - Develop and implement action plans so as to ensure the maintenance or rehabilitation of our most threatened species to a favourable conservation status.

Rationale for the national target

The maintenance of biodiversity in a favourable conservation status implies maintaining a sufficient quantity, quality, and connectivity of habitats for terrestrial, freshwater, and marine species, with a focus on priority species as to be defined by Objective 1. The rehabilitation of species and restoration of ecosystems is done mostly by recreating habitats that resemble the target communities in terms of composition of plant, animal and microbial communities, ecosystem function and stability.

The Strategy will capitalise on both new and existing conservation and restoration efforts, by the development and implementation of specific action plans for species, habitats or local areas (for instance protected areas) as appropriate.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 12 - By 2020 the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has been improved and sustained.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

Most relevant National Indicators:

- * FLE110 - Flemish Region 10. Conservation status of species of European interest
- * WAL003 - Walloon Region: Conservation status of Species

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 3.5 - Adopt an integrated strategy for *ex situ* conservation of biodiversity together with measures for its implementation.

Rationale for the national target

Belgium houses extensive *ex situ* collections of endangered varieties, breeds and species originating both from within the country and worldwide. They are preserved in seed banks, gene banks, zoos, aquariums, botanic gardens and collections of museums and various research institutes. Belgium also takes part in several international initiatives aiming to cooperate in the area of *ex situ* conservation (*i.e.* Belgian Coordinated Collections of Micro-organisms, the International Association of Zoos, Botanic Gardens Conservation International, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation).

The development of an integrated strategy will provide a framework to facilitate harmony between existing initiatives aimed at *ex situ* conservation, to identify gaps where new initiatives are required, and to promote mobilisation of the necessary resources. Among other things, research and management capability of *ex situ* conservation facilities should be enhanced. In developing such a strategy, the guidance of various international commitments initiatives should be taken into consideration (CBD Art. 9, the targets for 2020 of the consolidated update of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation in CBD Decision X/17, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, Botanic Gardens Conservation International, etc.).

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 3.6 - Take measures to minimise the impact of the identified processes and activities threatening biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Rationale for the national target

Measures should be taken to reduce the impact of processes and activities threatening biodiversity and ecosystem services as identified by and monitored according to Objective 2, including at least habitat destruction and degradation, pollution, overexploitation, the spread of invasive alien species, the spread of some GMOs, and climate change. For example, air, soil and water pollution and water eutrophication and acidification can be reduced by the integration of biodiversity concerns into all relevant environmental policies (for example, product policy, water management policies). Land use planning should seek to limit land conversion (whether for urban, industrial, agricultural, transport or tourism purposes), which induces the drainage of wet ecosystems and the destruction, degradation and fragmentation of habitats.

As far as GMOs are concerned, the scrupulous respect of EU regulations relating to GMO evaluations, authorisations and the development of good risk management procedures, monitoring and urgency plans, the development of adequate coexistence rules, should help minimise or prevent the potential threatening impacts in Belgium and in Europe. At the international level, Belgium's strong involvement in the Cartagena Protocol and other related forums should help minimise potential negative impacts of GMOs on world biodiversity.

Particular attention should be paid to an integrated control (including trade control) of chemicals, pesticides, GMOs and alien species released into the environment. As an example, control and reduction of pollution-inducing eutrophication should be promoted. Another step could be made by implementing an integrated water management, including the North Sea coasts (cf. Directive 2000/60/EC in the field of water policy; Gland convention on rivers), and an integrated coastal zone management (EU Recommendation 2002/413/EC on ICZM), etc.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 8 - By 2020, pollution, including from excess nutrients, has been brought to levels that are not detrimental to ecosystem function and biodiversity.

Other related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is indirectly related.)

Target 10 - By 2015, the multiple anthropogenic pressures on coral reefs, and other vulnerable ecosystems impacted by climate change or ocean acidification are minimized, so as to maintain their integrity and functioning.

Target 15 - By 2020, ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks has been enhanced, through conservation and restoration, including restoration of at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to combating desertification.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 3.7 - Invasive alien species (IAS) and pathways are identified and prioritized, priority species are controlled or eradicated, and measures are in place to manage pathways to prevent their introduction and establishment.

Rationale for the national target

Biological invasions are the second most important cause of the extinction of species worldwide (and in Belgium) after the loss of natural habitats. Organisms can be introduced beyond their natural range, either intentionally or unintentionally. Those include disease-causing viruses, bacteria, fungi, algae, mosses, ferns, flowering plants, invertebrates and vertebrates. When invasive, they can cause environmental damage and can have a detrimental impact on health, the economy and safety.

IAS have an adverse impact on indigenous species and can have a profound negative effect on the functioning of ecosystems. At economic level, they can among others negatively affect crop yields, obstruct waterways, and generate public health problems (they can be vectors for parasites and diseases or produce

allergenic substances and toxins). Often, they result in significant management costs in order to restrict their development, to limit their damage or to restore the ecosystems.

The threat caused by IAS to biodiversity in Belgium is addressed in the NBS via operational objective 3.7 but also via other operational objectives (2.3, 5.7, 7, 8.3) dealing with internal and external trade and whose implementation is guided by ten principles, including the precautionary approach and the polluter pays principle (see part III of the NBS).

This target is in line with article 8h of the CBD (1992) supplemented by Aichi Target 9 (2010) as well as with the EU Biodiversity Strategy Target 5 (2011). At international level, the CBD has developed guiding principles in order to help Parties to prevent the introduction of IAS, to detect early new introduced IAS and to undertake mitigation measures for established IAS (CBD Decision VI/23).

In order to establish rules to prevent, minimise and mitigate the adverse effects of invasive alien species (IAS), the EU Regulation 1143/2014 entered into force on 1 January 2015. The Regulation stipulates a series of measures that apply to any organism listed on the list of invasive alien species of Union Concern.

At the European level, the actual implementation of the Regulation is performed through two main bodies:

- The EU Scientific Forum on IAS, made up of representatives of the scientific community appointed by the Member States, which provides advice on any scientific question related to the application of the Regulation, and in particular, on whether additional species for inclusion on the list of EU concern and their associated risk assessments are robust and fit for purpose.
- The EU Committee on IAS, composed of representatives of all Member States, discusses the compliance of the proposed species with the criteria for listing. Any update of the Union list is subject to the positive opinion of the IAS Committee.

The implementation of the EU Regulation on IAS is based on a close cooperation between all the Member States. Concretely, the species included on the list of EU concern are subject to restrictions and measures set out in the Regulation. These include restrictions on keeping, importing, selling, breeding and growing. Member States are required to take action on pathways of unintentional introduction, take measures for early detection and rapid eradication of these species, and to manage species.

In Belgium, the implementation of the Regulation involves the competences of the Federal State and the Regions. Therefore, in order to implement this Regulation in Belgium, a Cooperation Agreement has been drafted and is under the process of being endorsed between the federated entities. The Cooperation Agreement creates three official national structures:

- The Scientific Council on IAS, composed of scientific experts providing advice to the National Committee on IAS.
- The National Committee on IAS, composed of decision-makers who develop and adopt Belgium's position on the Union List and its updating (Belgium's position is then shared with other Member States within the EU Committee on IAS).
- The National Scientific Secretariat on IAS, supporting the Scientific Council in answering questions of the National Committee on IAS.

According to article 13 of the EU IAS Regulation, all member states are required to identify and prioritize pathways of unintentional introduction of alien invasive species of Union concern. Priority pathways of unintentional introduction for the 49 invasive alien species of Union Concern listed to date, were identified at the scale of Belgium. Based on this exercise, a set of action plans are under development in order to address the priority pathway identified. Belgium will establish and implement these action plans for its territory and as far as possible coordinated at the appropriated regional/federal level.

Additionally, member states are required to take a decision on the management options. For this purpose, Belgium performed a manageability assessment in 2018. The project relies on experts to score the feasibility of management strategies for Union List species using an adaptation of the Non-Native Risk Management scheme (NNRM) of Booy *et al.* (2017) <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10530-017-1451-z/fulltext.html>. Species that are believed to be unable to establish in Belgium are excluded from the exercise. The NNRM uses semi-quantitative response and confidence scores to assess seven key criteria linked with management feasibility of an invasive species: Effectiveness, Practicality, Cost, Impact, Acceptability, Window of opportunity and Likelihood of re-invasion. The approach was slightly adapted to fit the needs and practice in Belgium. The undertaking of this assessment was agreed upon and formalized by the Belgian IAS scientific council & IAS committee and aims to: 1) Support the EU Regulation implementation in Belgium; 2) Provide a sound evidence base for decisions on IAS management through a transparent, repeatable process; 3) Provide an evidence base for derogations on the rapid response obligation (Art 18); 4) Provide a means of structured decision making for IAS management through a participatory approach of the Belgian expert community on IAS. The outcome of the present manageability assessment therefore provides support to the decision-making process but is not in any way a management recommendation.

The Commission will also be considering how to better integrate additional biodiversity concerns into the new Plant and Animal Health Regimes.

As a Party to the Bern Convention (Council of Europe), Belgium should implement the specific Bern recommendations on IAS issues including article 11, 2 b) which states that each Party should take measures to strictly control the introduction of non-native species. In order to implement this provision, the Standing Committee adopted a Pan-European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species which inter alia recommends drawing up and implementing national strategies on IAS taking into account the above-mentioned pan-European strategy (Recommendation No. 99/2003).

Tackling the IAS issue in an integrated way is a particular challenge in Belgium due to its complex institutional framework resulting in a division and fragmentation of competences on issues dealing with different aspects of IAS (e.g. environment, health and agriculture). In order to address this problem and meet the various commitments regarding alien species under treaties to which Belgium is a Party, concrete steps must be urgently taken and coordinated action plans developed when necessary by and between all the competent authorities.

The TrIAS project is currently undertaken It is aimed at dynamically, from year to year, track the progression of alien species, identify emerging species, assess their current and future risk and timely inform policy in a seamless data- driven workflow. One that is built on open science and open data infrastructures. By using international biodiversity standards and facilities, TrIAS ensures interoperability, repeatability and sustainability. This makes the process adaptable to future requirements in an evolving IAS policy landscape both locally and internationally.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 9 - By 2020, invasive alien species and pathways are identified and prioritized, priority species are controlled or eradicated, and measures are in place to manage pathways to prevent their introduction and establishment.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 3.8 - Define the framework and the conditions to ensure no net loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Rationale for the national target

The compensation principle is included in the ten guiding principles for implementation of the NBS (see Part III). Whereas compensation for deteriorated habitats is a legal requirement of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives in the case of damage to Natura 2000, there is no explicit EU requirement for compensation of unavoidable residual impacts on species, habitats and ecosystem services that are not covered by Natura 2000, which leads to net losses. Environmental Liability Directive does not cover damage to protected species, habitats and related services when it has been authorized by a plan or a license in accordance to EU or national nature conservation law. Further action should therefore be taken to promote a wider no net loss approach to biodiversity and ecosystem services when damage is caused by an authorized plan or project (EU Biodiversity Strategy, Action 7).

Belgium will closely follow the work of the Commission (under the EU Common Implementation Framework) to clearly define the principle of “no net loss”, its range, ensuring that sufficient safeguards are put in place to preserve biodiversity and ecosystem services whilst avoiding any drift/abuse, and make proposals for its implementation in the country. In order to ensure real equivalence between ecosystems and services, Belgium will review and take the literature recommendations into account when defining the guidelines for the implementation of the “no net loss” principle in the country.

According to Born et al. (2012), compensation or offset mechanisms should among others respect the following principles:

- principle of ecological equivalence: compensation measures and offset mechanisms should ensure the re-creation or the restoration of ecosystems similar in size, composition, structure and functioning to the deteriorated ecosystems;

- principle of ecological continuity: the compensation measures should be located as close as possible to the damaged site and should also be implemented and effective before the damage is caused;

- principle of additionality: should be excluded as compensation those measures that do not provide a significant improvement in the status of biodiversity after the occurrence of the damage, in order to ensure that this damage is effectively repaired. The restoration should be based on the best available scientific knowledge.

In any case, according to the principle of preventive action (see Part III), the damage and its compensation should be authorized only if no other reasonable alternative can be found to reach the objectives of the damaging plan or project, and after having applied the appropriate mitigation measures. The authorities should therefore select the measures to be taken according to the following hierarchy: in priority, avoidance measures, then mitigation measures (minimization), and finally, as a last resort, necessary compensation measures.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 5 - By 2020, the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4 - Ensure and promote the sustainable use of components of biodiversity

Rationale for the national target

The sustainable use of biodiversity refers to “the use of components of biodiversity in a way and at a rate that does not lead to the long-term decline of biological diversity, thereby maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of present and future generations” (CBD art. 2). This concept is based on the assumption that it is possible to use biodiversity in a manner in which ecological processes, species and genetic variability remain above the thresholds needed for long-term viability, and that therefore all resource managers and users have the responsibility to ensure that that use does not exceed these capacities.

Non-sustainable activities with a negative impact on biodiversity must be identified (see Operational objective 2.1) and options developed in order to minimise these impacts. Synergies between economic growth, social progress and ecological balance in the long run should be created, with quality of life as the central factor. A well-thought equitable and fair management of our natural resources will be a key element for the sustainable use of our biodiversity. It is crucial to ensure that ecosystems are capable of sustaining the ecological services on which both biodiversity and the human population depend.

The Ecological Footprint tries to face this challenge. It measures how much land and water area a human population requires to produce the resources it consumes and to absorb its wastes under prevailing technology, and it enables people to track progress towards sustainability.

Calculated footprints are estimations based on assumptions which are used as a communication tool to help individuals, organisations, and governments formulate policies, set targets and track progress towards sustainability (WWF, 2005).

The Belgian Ecological Footprint is about 4.9 ha per inhabitant (WWF, 2004), when the earth’s carrying biocapacity is only 1.8 ha per person. This means that surface used by the average Belgian is over 170 % larger than that which the planet can regenerate. This finding indicates that Belgium’s ecological stocks are being depleted faster than nature can regenerate them.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets:

Target 4 - By 2020, at the latest, Governments, business and stakeholders at all levels have taken steps to achieve or have implemented plans for sustainable production and consumption and have kept the impacts of use of natural resources well within safe ecological limits.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.1.1 - Identify and promote good practices involving the sustainable use of biodiversity.

Rationale for the national target

Existing good practices involving sustainable use of biodiversity in various areas of activity (agriculture, fishery, forestry, hunting, tourism, etc.) must be identified, compiled and made widely accessible. Furthermore, bad practices (and lessons learnt) also need to be highlighted and publicised widely.

The establishment of such compilation documents will be compulsory for the stakeholders (farmers, fishermen, hunters, etc.) and will represent a significant step forward towards sustainable use of our biodiversity.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 1 - By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.

Other related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is indirectly related.)

Target 8 - By 2020, pollution, including from excess nutrients, has been brought to levels that are not detrimental to ecosystem function and biodiversity.

Target 4 - By 2020, at the latest, Governments, business and stakeholders at all levels have taken steps to achieve or have implemented plans for sustainable production and consumption and have kept the impacts of use of natural resources well within safe ecological limits.

Target 6 - By 2020 all fish and invertebrate stocks and aquatic plants are managed and harvested sustainably, legally and applying ecosystem based approaches, so that overfishing is avoided, recovery plans and measures are in place for all depleted species, fisheries have no significant adverse impacts on threatened species and vulnerable ecosystems and the impacts of fisheries on stocks, species and ecosystems are within safe ecological limits.

Target 7 - By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.2 - Sustainable products, consumption and production policies

Rationale for the national target

Not only consumption patterns but also the production processes for many products may adversely impact on biodiversity (unsustainable use of natural resources, overexploitation, use of harmful substances, habitat destruction, impacts of surface water pollution on biodiversity, etc.). These impacts are rarely apparent at the point of purchase or use so that we continue to use products that destroy our biodiversity, even when alternatives exist. Not only consumption patterns but also the production processes for many products may adversely impact on biodiversity (unsustainable use of natural resources, overexploitation, use of harmful substances, habitat destruction, impacts of surface water pollution on biodiversity, etc.). These impacts are rarely apparent at the point of purchase or use so that we continue to use products that destroy our biodiversity, even when alternatives exist.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 4 - By 2020, at the latest, Governments, business and stakeholders at all levels have taken steps to achieve or have implemented plans for sustainable production and consumption and have kept the impacts of use of natural resources well within safe ecological limits.

Other related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is indirectly related.)

Target 6 - By 2020 all fish and invertebrate stocks and aquatic plants are managed and harvested sustainably, legally and applying ecosystem-based approaches, so that overfishing is avoided, recovery plans and measures are in place for all depleted species, fisheries have no significant adverse impacts on threatened species and vulnerable ecosystems and the impacts of fisheries on stocks, species and ecosystems are within safe ecological limits.

Target 7 - By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

The stakeholders involved in the implementation of this objective are: the federal and regional authorities, producers, consumers, various sectors (including agro-food, energy, industry...), NGOs, the general public and any association working towards the same goal as the NBS.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.2.1 - Avoid or minimise the risk to biodiversity posed by production and consumption, products and services.

Rationale for the national target

Products and good practices that have a positive impact on biodiversity have to be promoted to the entire chain from producers to consumers.

Unsustainable production and consumption patterns (food, energy, water, travel, waste, etc.) need to be changed, for example through eco-design, eco-performance and appropriate product standardisation.

Consumers can impact on biodiversity by adapting their consumption patterns (for example by opting for certified products, by consuming local and diversified products or by deciding not to consume specific products).

There is a need to identify and evaluate negative impacts of unsustainable patterns on biodiversity and to ensure that markets reflect environmental costs. The lifecycle approach should be used to reduce environmental impacts along the production chain.

A consistent message also needs to be given to consumers so as to guide them to take sustainable consumption decisions. For example, the world's growing demand for biomass energy or meat creates pressure to extend industrial crop cultivation area, threatening not only agricultural biodiversity but also wild ecosystems. Public awareness of consumption behaviours increasing such threats should be raised. Furthermore, there is a need to influence suppliers to provide biodiversity-friendly products.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 1 - By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.

Other related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is indirectly related.)

Target 3 - By 2020, at the latest, incentives, including subsidies, harmful to biodiversity are eliminated, phased out or reformed in order to minimize or avoid negative impacts, and positive incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity are developed and applied, consistent and in harmony with the Convention and other relevant international obligations, taking into account national socio economic conditions.

Target 4 - By 2020, at the latest, Governments, business and stakeholders at all levels have taken steps to achieve or have implemented plans for sustainable production and consumption and have kept the impacts of use of natural resources well within safe ecological limits.

Target 6 - By 2020 all fish and invertebrate stocks and aquatic plants are managed and harvested sustainably, legally and applying ecosystem based approaches, so that overfishing is avoided, recovery plans and measures are in place for all depleted species, fisheries have no significant adverse impacts on threatened species and vulnerable ecosystems and the impacts of fisheries on stocks, species and ecosystems are within safe ecological limits.

Target 7 - By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.2.2 - Adopt biodiversity criteria in public procurement policies to prevent biodiversity loss.

Rationale for the national target

Public authorities are major consumers. In Europe, for example, they spend 16 % of the EU's gross domestic product. By using their purchasing power to purchase goods and services that also respect the environment and biodiversity, they can make an important contribution towards sustainable development. Public authorities can also show citizens, enterprises and organisations how they can really change their attitudes by making the right consumer choices.

Green public procurement can have a positive direct or indirect impact on biodiversity. It covers areas such as transport and construction, office equipment, recyclable paper, organic food in canteens and activities in developing countries with support from Belgian authorities.

Initiatives have already been taken in Belgium to use green procurement policies in order to promote goods that are less harmful to the environment (for instance, promotion of the use of wood products originating from sustainable forests or inclusion of environmental - including biodiversity - criteria in the procurement procedure for Clean Development Mechanism and Joint Implementation).

In 2006, the Belgian Parliament passed a new law on public procurement that provides some opportunities to integrate sustainable (biodiversity) criteria in public procurement procedures.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 3 - By 2020, at the latest, incentives, including subsidies, harmful to biodiversity are eliminated, phased out or reformed in order to minimize or avoid negative impacts, and positive incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity are developed and applied, consistent and in harmony with the Convention and other relevant international obligations, taking into account national socio economic conditions.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.3 - Agriculture

Rationale for the national target

The importance of agriculture for the natural environment and for biodiversity is emphasised by the fact that nearly half the land surface in Belgium is farmed. Farming is an activity which goes beyond simple food production, affecting and using natural resources such as soil and water. Over the centuries, farming has contributed to the creation and maintenance of a large variety of agricultural landscapes (fields, pastures, quickset hedges, mixed woodland and pasture, etc.) which provide important semi-natural habitats for wildlife. Furthermore, the agricultural sector plays a multi-functional role as a food producer, biodiversity manager, motor for the economy in rural areas and guarantor of in situ conservation of local species, varieties and domestic animal breeds. However, in recent decades, intensification and specialisation of agriculture, and at the same time marginalisation of land, have resulted in significant biodiversity loss in and around farmland. Farmland bird populations in particular have shown a decline over last decades.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), together with broader developmental dynamics of the agricultural sector has only gradually taken on concerns regarding biodiversity loss. The CAP has its roots in 1950s Western Europe, whose societies had been damaged by years of war, and where agriculture had been crippled and food supplies could not be guaranteed. The emphasis of the early CAP was on encouraging better productivity in the food chain so that consumers had a stable supply of affordable food. The CAP offered subsidies and guaranteed prices to farmers, thus providing them with incentives to produce, and a viable income. Financial assistance was provided for the restructuring of farming, for example by aiding farm investment, aiming to ensure that farms increased in size and that farmers developed management and technology skills so that they were adapted to the economic and social climate of the day. Although successful in reaching its original objectives, this policy also led to reducing high nature value farmlands, the removal of hedgerows and the draining of wetlands, and intensification exerted a variety of pressures on ecosystems (high fertilizer and chemicals inputs, drainage, increasing cutting frequencies, grazing pressures, early mowing, over sizing of agricultural parcels).

Since 1992, however, the CAP has been adapted to better integrate biodiversity needs. Increasing use of agri-environment measures, Good Farming Practice, organic farming and the support of Less Favoured Areas have favoured farmland biodiversity. The 2003 CAP reform promotes these and other pro-biodiversity measures. Measures under market and income policy, including mandatory cross-compliance, the single farm payment (decoupling) and modulation, should have provided indirect benefits to biodiversity. These

measures have been implemented at EU level since 2005. The on-going reform of the CAP (2013) goes a step further in this direction by introducing a Greening Payment as an essential part of the direct payments to farmers.

Reducing pressure on biodiversity from agriculture is a big challenge for farmers in Belgium because our agriculture is one of the most intensive, specialised and productive in Europe. Furthermore, farmers are currently facing serious challenges with regard to the continuation of their profession. The number of farmers is decreasing every year. They leave the profession for various reasons, including competitive pressures from the market, compensation for the drop in prices by a rise in the cultivated area and risks posed by the move towards energetic crops. Between 2000 and 2010, 19,072 farms ceased their activities (30.8 per cent of Belgian farmers) with the total agricultural area decreasing only slightly (decrease of 2.6 per cent), so that the average area per farm is growing (FPS Economy - Directorate-general Statistics Belgium, agriculture census 2000 and 2010).

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 7 - By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

The stakeholders involved in the implementation of this objective are: the regional and federal authorities, farmers, agricultural research bodies, various sectors (including public health, food chain safety, agro-food, bioenergy...), universities and any association working towards the same goal as the NBS.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.3.1 - Promote measures favourable to biodiversity under the implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Rationale for the national target

The ongoing CAP reform provides for the introduction of a payment for agricultural practices that are beneficial to the climate and the environment within the direct payment scheme, the Greening Payment. From 1/1/2015, 30 % of the budgetary envelope for direct payments will be assigned to this kind of mandatory measures. The payment will reward the delivery of environmental public goods that go beyond cross-compliance and promote sustainable production. Farmers who receive first-pillar payments will receive the Greening payment (except for organic farms and small scale farms) when they respect the 3 basic measures:

- maintaining permanent grassland
- crop diversification
- maintaining an “ecological focus area” of at least 5 % of the arable area of the holding for farms with an arable area larger than 15 hectares. The Commission can propose to increase this figure to 7 %, on the basis

of a Commission report in 2017, by presenting a new legislative proposal. This measure can contribute to the establishment of the green infrastructure.

During the mid-term interim review of the CAP in 2002, it was decided that the whole-farm payments made by the CAP would be backed up by a compulsory set of cross-compliance requirements, covering environmental, food safety, plant and animal health and animal welfare standards. Farmers should observe a minimum level of environmental standards and have to maintain agricultural land in good agricultural and environmental condition as a condition for the full granting of the CAP direct payments. With the on-going CAP-reform the list has been simplified to exclude rules where there are no clear and controllable obligations for farmers. The CAP imposes the framework of cross-compliance criteria. As a Member State, Belgium only has limited freedom in defining its minimum requirements for a good agricultural and environmental condition.

Environmental cross-compliance criteria address the conservation of habitats through ecologically managed Natura 2000 areas, and protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources. These cross-compliance criteria are based on articles emanating from specific European directives, such as the Habitat Directive 92/43/EEC and the Directive on the conservation of wild birds 2009/147. The requirements for good agricultural and environmental condition include inter alia the retention of landscape features.

This operational objective aims to stimulate authorities and farmers to implement the Greening payment and cross-compliance in a way that delivers a real profit to biodiversity.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 7 - By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.3.2 - Enhance and encourage the role of farmers as biodiversity actors.

Rationale for the national target

The role of farmers as actors for biodiversity protection through implementation of good farming practices and technologies should be encouraged. Farmers play a key role in agro-ecosystems, protecting and enhancing the environment, biodiversity, natural resources, soil and genetic diversity (for instance, crop rotation, organic farming and set-aside of small land parcels) and maintaining the landscape and the countryside (for instance, maintenance of open environments, management of linear and small landscape features, ecological compensation areas*). In several areas, semi-natural habitats can be preserved only if appropriate farming activities are continued.

Apart from the principle that farmers should observe a minimum level of environmental standards (cross-compliance) as a condition for the full granting of the CAP direct payments, the CAP provides financial incentives called “agri-environmental measures” within the framework of the rural development policy (see also 4c.4). These measures support specific farming practices that go beyond the baseline level set by the cross-compliance obligations and help to protect the environment and maintain the countryside.

Farmers who commit themselves, for a five-year minimum period, to adopt environmentally-friendly farming techniques that go beyond cross-compliance obligations, receive in return payments that compensate for additional costs and loss of income that arise as a result of altered farming practices. Examples of commitments covered by regional agri-environmental schemes are: environmentally favourable extensification of farming; management of low-intensity pasture systems; integrated farm management; preservation of landscape and historical features such as hedgerows, ditches and woods; conservation of high-value habitats and their associated biodiversity.

This operational objective complements the previous one, by targeting the development of clear and detailed guidance at exactly what farmers should do to implement cross-compliance criteria and agri-environmental measures. This could be achieved for example through the establishment of guidelines that will provide an easy and understandable way of getting information across given that the wording of CAP reform is rather complex. Continuous appropriate education of and the provision of information to farmers, farm contractors, agriculture advisers and teachers in agricultural colleges are crucial. For instance, guidebooks, workshops, conferences, publications and information campaigns could address the following issues: soil management best practices, impacts of pesticides on wild fauna, the establishment of set-aside strips and their appropriate management for fauna and flora preservation, soil erosion control or landscape improvement, importance of the preservation of notable indigenous farmland trees and other small landscape elements, the protection of breeding wildlife and nests in pasture and fields, the protection of ponds and rivers from pollution from manure, etc.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 1 - By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.3.3 - Promote agricultural diversification.

Rationale for the national target

Agricultural diversification can be defined as all gainful activities by farmers outside agricultural core activities, i.e. outside production zones. This operational objective aims to encourage agricultural diversification that specifically benefits biodiversity and to support creative research into new diversification possibilities that can stimulate the conservation of local biodiversity, including traditional varieties. The system of advisory councils could provide guidance to farmers interested in diversification. Diversification is promoted in the Rural Development Policy and can be further promoted by the Regional Rural Development Plans.

Agricultural diversification can meet the demand for varied quality products as well as rural recreation activities and at the same time stimulate public interest in biodiversity conservation. It can lead to an increase in a product's added value and farms' profitability and to an improvement in the image of agriculture. Creative solutions could also seek to meet sanitary constraints of neighbourhood production, promote the interests of consumers and ensure access of the products concerned to the market.

Examples of such diversification activities in rural areas are (i) assisting in the management of nature reserves, (ii) the development of agricultural and nature tourism which arouse the interest of the public in biodiversity conservation, (iii) organic production of fruit and vegetables or organically reared chickens, (iv) neighbourhood production such as farm cheese, ancient varieties of fruit and vegetables, snails, and (v) other initiatives that reduce standardisation of agricultural production.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 7 - By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.3.4 - Promote the integration of biodiversity into rural development.

Rationale for the national target

Agricultural and environmental policies must give farmers complementary signals if environmentally sound agricultural practices are to be applied to a sufficient extent. A new policy for rural development was introduced in 1999 as the second pillar of the CAP. This second pillar of the CAP aims to accompany market and income policy (“first pillar”) by providing financial aid to farmers in order to influence rural structures. In its revised version for the period 2014-2020, the Rural Development Policy still includes important biodiversity-friendly measures, like agri-environmental measures, compensatory schemes in Natura 2000 sites, ecological forest-management aid, etc. They have to be scheduled by a national (regional) rural development programme and are co-financed by the EU. These measures can be a useful financial instrument for farmers who face a drop in income as they comply with the set regulations.

One of the six Union priorities for rural development in the period 2014-2020 is restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry with one focus area on “restoring, and preserving and enhancing biodiversity, including in Natura 2000 areas, areas facing natural or other specific constraints and high nature value farming, and the state of European landscapes “. Besides, at least 30 % of the rural development programmes' budget will have to be allocated to agri-environmental measures, support for organic farming, forestry measures or projects associated with environmentally friendly investment or innovation measures. Agri-environmental measures are obligatory for all programmes and will be stepped up to complement greening practices. These measures will have to set and meet higher environmental protection targets (guarantee against double funding).

Another important tool in rural development regulation for promoting the integration of biodiversity that the Member states may chose to use is the “non-productive investments ” support. Support could be granted to investments linked to the achievement of agri-environment-climate objectives including biodiversity conservation status of species and habitat as well as enhancing the public amenity value of a Natura 2000 area or other high nature value systems to be defined in the programme.

Therefore, one priority of this Strategy is to integrate biodiversity aspects better and more clearly in current and future rural development plans.

In particular, the elaboration of rural development plans for the period 2014-2020 will be an occasion to streamline integration of biodiversity in these plans at Belgian level.

Furthermore, policies for nature conservation and rural development must take into account the commitments of the Kiev Resolution on biodiversity (2003) which foresees (i) the identification, using agreed common criteria, of all high nature value (HNV) areas in agricultural ecosystems in the pan-European region and (ii) their biodiversity-friendly management through appropriate measures (e.g. instruments of rural development). Designation of HNV and integration of ad hoc protection tools should be fully implemented in the Rural Development Plan.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 1 - By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.3.5 - Promote the sustainable use of genetic resources for food, and agriculture.

Rationale for the national target

Humans' age-old agricultural activities have contributed, in the course of history, to the creation of a large pool of biodiversity. Since the 1950s, however, due to economic pressure and intensive urbanisation, drastic genetic erosion of old landraces and cultivars took place and actions for collecting, evaluating and conserving them became, and still are, urgently needed. Data show that about 50 per cent of the main native livestock breeds (cattle, pig, sheep, goat and poultry) in the EU-15 countries are either extinct or classed as endangered or critical ([EEA, 2006](#)).

Biological and genetic diversity in agriculture is essential for the sustainable development of agricultural production and of rural areas. Genetically poorly diversified agricultural areas are indeed more threatened by environmental stresses and disasters; besides, genetically diversified food offers a greater variety of nutrients useful for good general health and resistance to disease. The necessary measures should be taken to collect, conserve, characterise and utilise the potential of that biodiversity in a sustainable way to promote the global aims of the CAP. The conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources in agriculture is one of the objectives of the CBD. It is also a major objective of the FAO's Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilisation of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and it is a key topic of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

Coordinated actions at Belgian level (including regional level) must be set up for a better, safe conservation strategy for the genetic diversity that is essential for food and agriculture. The conservation of agricultural genetic diversity is to be achieved through *in situ* conservation of local species, varieties, domestic animal breeds and microbial life forms with actual or potential value. Actions should also be taken to improve the development of adequate gene banks useful for the *ex situ* conservation of genetic resources for food and agriculture. Such conservation requires an adequate system of economic and social incentives, combined with increased consumer awareness. The Regions take the conservation of breeds and varieties into consideration in their agri-environment measures. Ongoing initiatives cover, among other things, the establishment of private

orchards, the safeguarding of poultry varieties and a programme to promote the rearing of the “Blanc-Bleu mixte” breed of cattle and the “mouton ardennais roux” breed of sheep in Wallonia (*in situ* conservation) and the establishment of cryo-banks for ruminant rearing in Wallonia (*ex situ* conservation).

A specific national strategy focusing on the management of agricultural biodiversity should be developed in the first place for coordinating the diverse actions already going on and to promote new ones. All the actions will contribute to the implementation of both the FAO’s Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA) and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture that stipulate clearly the implementation of a National Strategy and a National Inventory of plant genetic resources for agriculture.

Furthermore, the importance of biodiversity for food and nutrition should be taken more into account by public health and food chain safety policies and their scientific bodies.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 13 - By 2020, the genetic diversity of cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and of wild relatives, including other socio-economically as well as culturally valuable species, is maintained, and strategies have been developed and implemented for minimizing genetic erosion and safeguarding their genetic diversity.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.3.6 - Reduce the impacts of pesticides on biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Rationale for the national target

Pesticides are used to combat organisms considered to be harmful to crops and have therefore a detrimental effect on biodiversity. It is nevertheless possible to reduce the impacts of pesticides on biodiversity and ecosystem services by lessening their impacts on non-target organisms. A range of measures, if correctly applied, can contribute to reducing these impacts; they are either related to the choice of the pesticide or to the way it is spread into the environment (for example, organic agriculture, integrated agriculture, biological control, prohibition of pesticides with long-term repercussions for the abundance and diversity of non-target species; and application of risk mitigation measures such as buffer zones in order to protect aquatic organisms).

From 2013, the NAPAN (Nationaal Actie Plan d’Action National) has been established as the Belgian national action plan for pesticide reduction as requested by the EU directive 2009/128. It includes the Federal Reduction Plan for Pesticides 2013-2017 (FRPP), and the plans from the three Regions. Each of these plans comprises both specific actions and actions carried out jointly with the other members of the NAPAN Task Force. It aims to reach the objectives of reducing risks linked to pesticides as defined in EU Directive 2009/128/CE establishing a framework for Community action to achieve the sustainable use of pesticides.

The FRPP is coordinated by the federal agencies in charge of the standardization of products, which allows to take many structural changes related to pesticides issues through legislative changes [50].

Examples of the measures foreseen in the federal and regional plans to be implemented at the national level are (i) the harmonization of methods, standards and reports on water contamination by pesticides, (ii) ensuring balanced information for non-professional users of products at the point of sale regarding the right conditions of use, the risks to public health and the environment, including biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 8 - By 2020, pollution, including from excess nutrients, has been brought to levels that are not detrimental to ecosystem function and biodiversity.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.3.7 - Prevent cultivated GMOs from leading to the loss, displacement or genetic introgression into local agricultural varieties and related wild flora and prevent them from affecting the surrounding natural biodiversity.

Rationale for the national target

The use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in agriculture for food or feed crops and their release into the environment per se are issues of growing importance. This importance increases in line with the technological progress made in this area, as the use of GMOs can potentially have negative impacts on the biodiversity of the environment. One risk is the escape of newly introduced genes into the surrounding environment (especially through pollen) so that the genetic material of local agricultural varieties or wild related flora can become contaminated. This can be prejudicial for instance if the newly introduced gene (transgene), aimed at agricultural purposes, has adverse effects if spread into the wild nature. Since the purpose of genetic modification will often be acceleration of the growth of cultivated plants or growth in adverse environmental conditions, cross-pollination could lead to mutations in wild plants that make such plants more invasive. Depending on the new character conferred by the transgenes, the impact of genetically modified plants should be carefully evaluated with regard to various components of biodiversity, representative of the various functions of the ecosystem, not only in the agricultural ecosystem itself but also with regard to the related vicinal wild terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

There is also a risk that GM standardised cultivated varieties will supplant locally adapted agricultural varieties, mainly for economical and marketing reasons and generally as large monocultures, and would therefore counteract Objectives 4c.2 to 4c.5 and Objective 5.8.

Moreover, with GM varieties being covered by patents generally owned by multinationals, efforts must be made to prevent that their release in the environment would alter traditional agricultural practices, thus counteracting Objectives 5.10 and 6.

We must also prevent marketing, economic forces and consumption habits from threatening and contaminating wild ecosystems. Public awareness of consumption behaviours increasing such threats should be raised (cf. obj. 4b.1 and 4g.1).

On the other hand, GM plants are developed for industrial purposes (to make pharmaceuticals, bioplastics and other biomaterials), and industrial crops take over the area previously used for food crops. Once again, it is extremely important to carefully monitor the ecological consequences of the spreading of those transgenes as well as the ethical and social consequences, and decisions must be taken to avoid negative impacts.

Some GM cultures are resistant to herbicides or insecticides. Cultivation of these plants could lead to adjustments in agricultural practices (a change in the amount and type of herbicides/insecticides used) that have a direct impact on the environment and on biodiversity in particular.

In order to pursue the operational objective mentioned above, case-by-case studies on environmental risks for biodiversity and on socio-economic considerations of introduction of GMO cultures in Belgium are needed. Such studies would provide a scientific background to facilitate cooperative discussions between the Regional and Federal authorities and between the various stakeholders in Belgium when deciding to import and/or cultivate GMOs. These studies should be coordinated with the implementation of Objective 7.8 aimed at promoting research on and assessing the effects of GMOs on biodiversity and socio-economic aspects. Finally, such environmental and socio-economic impact studies would have to be based on a good knowledge of the existing agricultural biodiversity of our country. The establishment of complete “living” (adaptable) catalogues covering this should therefore be encouraged.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 7 - By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.3.8 - Ensure that the production of plants, inter alia non indigenous plants, for renewable energy does not negatively impact on biodiversity.

Rationale for the national target

Biomass* energy and biofuels* are set to cover an ever-increasing share of the EU’s future transport and heating needs. The EU is supporting biofuels with the aim of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, boosting the decarbonisation of transport fuels, diversifying fuel supply sources, offering new income opportunities in rural areas and developing long-term replacements for fossil fuel.

In 2003, the Biofuels Directive on the promotion of the use of biofuels and other renewable fuels for transport set out indicative targets for Member States.

In December 2005: the European Commission adopted an Action Plan designed to increase the use of energy from forestry, agriculture and waste materials.

With regard to CAP, the decoupling of income support from production introduced in 2003 by the reformed CAP helps to facilitate the supply of energy crops. In particular, crops that were eligible for direct payments only under the non-food regime on set-aside areas may now be cultivated on any area without loss of income support.

Under Rural development policy, investments on or near farms, for example in biomass processing, as well as the mobilisation of unused biomass by forest holders, can also be supported. The Commission has proposed Community strategic guidelines for rural development that emphasise renewable energy, including biofuels. It is also proposing a specific ad hoc group to consider biomass and biofuel opportunities within national rural development programmes.

EU Directive 2009/28/EC on the promotion of the (sustainable) use of energy from renewable sources raises the share of renewable energy to 20 % by 2020 and the share of renewable energy in the transport sector specifically to 10 %. This directive is challenging, especially because a large number of plants grown to produce renewable energy are non-indigenous. As demonstrated by numerous studies on biofuels, imports to meet our need for renewable resources have dramatic consequences for the fight against climate change or the protection of biodiversity, as they indirectly lead to land use changes: they contribute to accelerate the destruction or degradation of natural habitats and increase the introduction of non-indigenous plants for that production. Intensive production of any form of biomass has serious negative impacts on biodiversity as a result of the use of fertilizers, pesticides, monoculture and forest clearing. In order to meet the growing demand for biomass and biofuels, the EU already imports large quantities of crops with substantial environmental impacts, such as palm oil or sugar cane. This must not lead to unacceptable pressures on biodiversity and food production in the exporting countries. This is not only an issue for biofuels, but biofuels will increase the pressure.

It is necessary to consider carefully how policies in Belgium can best increase the use of biomass and biofuels without damaging biodiversity. However, current attribution criteria in Belgium (established until 2013) only take into account the limitation in the use of fertilizers and pesticides, yet there are no specific criteria related to biodiversity. As a follow-up to the two studies on the impacts of biofuel production on biodiversity carried out in 2009 and 2010, Belgium will defend a position aiming at the compulsory inclusion of new environmental criteria within the framework of the revision of Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC. Incentives should be restricted to the promotion of biofuels produced from feedstock that do not create an additional demand for land and do not compete with other uses like food, materials, biodiversity.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 9 - By 2020, invasive alien species and pathways are identified and prioritized, priority species are controlled or eradicated, and measures are in place to manage pathways to prevent their introduction and establishment.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.4 - Fishery in marine and inland waters

Rationale for the national target

Marine waters

Belgium has a limited coastline and the country's professional marine fishing fleet is relatively small. Its ships only land 1 % of total landings of the countries bordering the North Sea. About 30,000 tons of fish (mostly flat fish and cod) are brought ashore by Belgian fishermen each year. Other marine products (oysters) and the aquaculture* production in marine waters and freshwaters are currently not exploited. Taking into account that the state of the commercially exploited fishery resources is assessed at the European level and not at the level of the individual member states, marine biodiversity is particularly threatened in our coastal zone and shelf sea, where direct and indirect disturbances are concentrated. Two important threats are the overexploitation of marine resources and the adverse effects of certain fishing methods (in particular bottom-affecting gear) employed not only by Belgian fisheries but also by fishing vessels from

foreign countries active in Belgium waters. Despite the creation of several international instruments to regulate fishery and its impact on the environment, the pressure on the marine ecosystem and fish populations is still present. Besides professional fishermen, also recreational fishermen are active at sea.

Fishery and aquaculture in the North Sea are governed by the EU's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), established in 1983 and reviewed in 1992, 2002, and 2013. The new CFP came into effect from 2014 with the objective of an ecological sustainable fishery and aquaculture (see art.1 of the CFP) and to achieve Maximum Sustainable Yield by 2020. The CFP takes into account the biological, economic and social dimensions of fishing. The CFP addresses four main areas, dealing with (1) conservation of fish stocks (such as establishment of total allowable catches (TACs) of sea fish that can safely be caught every year to allow for renewal of fish stock), (2) structures (such as vessels, port facilities and fish-processing plants), (3) the common organisation of the market and (4) an external fisheries policy which includes fishing agreements with non-Community members and negotiations in international organisations.

EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC) on the protection and conservation of the marine environment establishes a framework for Member states to take the necessary measures to achieve Good Environmental Status of the marine environment by 2020 at the latest. For that purpose, marine strategies shall be developed and implemented in order to (a) protect and preserve the marine environment, prevent its deterioration, or, where practicable, restore marine ecosystems in areas where they have been adversely affected and (b) to prevent and reduce inputs in the marine environment, with a view to phasing out pollution so as to ensure that there are no significant impacts on or risks to marine biodiversity, marine ecosystems, human health or legitimate uses of the sea.

An important national instrument is the Law of 20 January 1999 on the protection of the marine environment in the areas under Belgian jurisdiction. This foresees the identification and designation of marine protected areas (MPA) (among others in application of the EU Habitat and Birds Directives). Work on MPAs and threatened and declining species is also ongoing under OSPAR. An impact analysis of human activities (including fisheries) and measures in view of achieving the objective of Good Environmental Status (Marine Strategy Framework Directive) are included in the programme of measures. Already in 2014 the Marine Spatial Planning proposed measures to reduce the impact of bottom-affecting gear that would contribute to the Good Environmental Status. As there are also foreign fishermen active in the Belgian part of the North Sea, these measures had to be negotiated and adopted following the procedures of the Common Fisheries Policy in order to make them legally binding for all fishermen. After a long and hard negotiation process the European Parliament rejected the proposed measures. As measures are still needed to reduce the impact of bottom affecting gear, the new Marine Spatial Plan (which will enter in to force in 2020) contains 4 searching zones where new measures will be developed and proposed.

For CITES-listed marine species, the permitting procedure with regards to the commercialisation of species caught in the high sea was approved at CITES CoP16 (March 2013). This way there is a common understanding of the provisions of the Convention relating to the introduction of sea specimens taken in the marine environment not under the jurisdiction of any State in order to facilitate the standard implementation of trade controls for such specimens introduced from the sea and to improve the accuracy of CITES trade data.

Inland waters

In Belgium, inland water fishery can be considered to be a leisure activity or a sport. It is practised mostly for entertainment and on a limited basis for food, both in artificial areas specially managed for fishing (private ponds, fishing grounds) and in the public hydrographic network of rivers and canals. Belgium's current legislation only covers the management of the public hydrographical network. Several improvements in the management of standing waters by fishermen should be promoted both to ensure an ecological management of the aquatic ecosystems and improve the quality of the local fish populations.

Belgium is a Party to the Ramsar Convention on the protection of wetlands (i.e. inland waters and marine waters) established in 1971 which provides the framework for conservation and sustainable utilisation of wetlands.

The ICES Code of Practice on the Introductions and Transfers of Marine Organisms sets forth recommended procedures and practices to diminish the risks of detrimental effects from the intentional introduction and transfer of marine (including brackish water) organisms (ICES, 2005).

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 6 - By 2020 all fish and invertebrate stocks and aquatic plants are managed and harvested sustainably, legally and applying ecosystem-based approaches, so that overfishing is avoided, recovery plans and measures are in place for all depleted species, fisheries have no significant adverse impacts on threatened species and vulnerable ecosystems and the impacts of fisheries on stocks, species and ecosystems are within safe ecological limits.

Other related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is indirectly related.)

Target 7 - By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

The stakeholders involved in the implementation of this objective are: fishery management bodies; owners, managers and charters of fishing vessels; the federations of fishermen, as well as fishermen, the general public and any association working towards the same goal as the NBS.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.4.1 - Promote the implementation of good fishing practices in the North Sea, favourable to fish protection and their habitats, including the implementation of the Common Fishery Policy.

Rationale for the national target

Belgium will promote the implementation of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries to ensure the long-term sustainability of living marine resources and protection of their habitat. To help implement the provisions regarding fishing operations (Article 8 of the Code), Technical Guidelines are addressed to the individual states, international organisations, fishery management bodies, owners, managers and charters of fishing vessels as well as fishermen and the general public. They provide practical advice to ensure all fishing operations are conducted responsibly. Particular attention will be paid to minimising bycatch. Implementation of this objective should be in accordance with the management of marine protected areas and an Integrated Coastal Zone Management strategy (see Operational objective 3.2), as well as with the future European Marine Strategy. The CFP is the instrument (legal basis) to implement the fishery-related measures.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 1 - By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.

Other related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is indirectly related.)

Target 4 - By 2020, at the latest, Governments, business and stakeholders at all levels have taken steps to achieve or have implemented plans for sustainable production and consumption and have kept the impacts of use of natural resources well within safe ecological limits.

Target 6 - By 2020 all fish and invertebrate stocks and aquatic plants are managed and harvested sustainably, legally and applying ecosystem-based approaches, so that overfishing is avoided, recovery plans and measures are in place for all depleted species, fisheries have no significant adverse impacts on threatened species and vulnerable ecosystems and the impacts of fisheries on stocks, species and ecosystems are within safe ecological limits.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.4.2 - Ensure that recreational and sport fishing practices at sea and inland waters respond to ecological management objectives to avoid adverse impacts on biodiversity.

Rationale for the national target

The impact of recreational fishing at sea on fish stocks or on other elements of the marine biodiversity has not been assessed yet. At present, recreational gill-net fishing at sea is prohibited to limit the bycatch of birds and sea mammals. In the MPA “Vlaamse Banken” that covers about 1/3th of the Belgian Part of the North Sea all recreational fisheries with bottom disturbing gear are prohibited.

Wherever it takes place, inland water fisheries should respect the ecosystem quality by avoiding unnecessary, inefficient or harmful fish stocking (overstocking, ponds connected to other water bodies, etc.). When necessary, the planting of indigenous fish should respect local genetic strains and the populations structure. Populations of species of no fishing interest should be respected. Stocking of non-indigenous species should be avoided in order to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive alien species. Introgression of wild fish populations by domestic strains of fish should be avoided. Exaggerated baiting and consequent dystrophication must be avoided, especially in lakes and reservoirs. Furthermore, the monitoring of these activities should be strengthened.

Planning and restoration of inland water systems should be promoted: through biomanipulation, fisheries may contribute to rehabilitation of clear water systems with macrophytes and high species richness instead of poor and banal turbid water systems characterised by algal blooms. Stocking of fish should achieve a balance between the carrying capacity of aquatic ecosystems and the size and structure of fish populations in order to promote clear water systems, so preventing turbid water systems with poor species diversity. Stocking of pools should be avoided: they are too small to carry populations of large fish. Furthermore, maintenance and creation of fish-free ponds should be promoted for specific biota, for example amphibians.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 10 - By 2015, the multiple anthropogenic pressures on coral reefs, and other vulnerable ecosystems impacted by climate change or ocean acidification are minimized, so as to maintain their integrity and functioning.

Other related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is indirectly related.)

Target 4 - By 2020, at the latest, Governments, business and stakeholders at all levels have taken steps to achieve or have implemented plans for sustainable production and consumption and have kept the impacts of use of natural resources well within safe ecological limits.

Target 6 - By 2020 all fish and invertebrate stocks and aquatic plants are managed and harvested sustainably, legally and applying ecosystem-based approaches, so that overfishing is avoided, recovery plans and measures are in place for all depleted species, fisheries have no significant adverse impacts on threatened species and vulnerable ecosystems and the impacts of fisheries on stocks, species and ecosystems are within safe ecological limits.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.4.3 - Prevent GM fish from threatening marine and freshwater biodiversity and populations.

Rationale for the national target

GM varieties of fish have already been commercialised in some parts of the world, intended including to grow faster and reach a bigger size. This practice is not applied in Belgium yet. Whereas those fish are supposed to be raised in confined areas, drastic measures should be taken to prevent those varieties from escaping into the wild. After all, some GM varieties of fish have already been shown to threaten the future of the species when they come into reproductive contact with the wild related members. Furthermore, GM fish could threaten local species and ecosystems through their invasive behaviour.

Similarly for other marine GM products, the consequences of interbreeding and competitive behaviour with wild relatives should be carefully investigated and, as a rule, should be avoided at all cost. The Belgian Marine Environmental law prohibits the deliberate introduction of genetically modified organisms.

Specific attention needs to be given to side effects of genetic manipulations aimed at increasing the size of commercial species (amplification of growth hormone gene).

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 6 - By 2020 all fish and invertebrate stocks and aquatic plants are managed and harvested sustainably, legally and applying ecosystem-based approaches, so that overfishing is avoided, recovery plans and measures are in place for all depleted species, fisheries have no significant adverse impacts on threatened species and vulnerable ecosystems and the impacts of fisheries on stocks, species and ecosystems are within safe ecological limits.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.5 - Wise use of wetlands.

Rationale for the national target

Wetlands are essential components of Belgian biodiversity which are under severe threat. They provide for useful ecosystem services such as water retention, water purification, recreational areas, wildfowl habitats and more.

The Convention requires that “The Contracting Parties shall formulate and implement their planning so as to promote the conservation of the wetlands included in the List, and as far as possible the wise use of wetlands in their territory” (art. 3.1). Wise use of wetlands has been defined by the COP of the convention as “the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development”. “Ecological character” is “the combination of the ecosystem components, processes and benefits/services that characterise the wetland at a given point in time” (Rés. XI.1. Annex A COP Ramsar Convention, 2005).

Nine Ramsar sites are designated in Belgium (4 in Flanders and 4 in Wallonia).

The Water Framework Directive (Directive 2000/60/CE) sets a framework for a Community policy in the field of water. It establish a framework for the protection of inland surface waters, transitional waters, coastal waters and groundwater in order, among other things, to prevent further deterioration and protect and enhance the status of aquatic ecosystems and, with regard to their water needs, terrestrial ecosystems and wetlands directly depending on the aquatic ecosystems.

The wise use provisions of the Convention apply, as far as possible, to all wetland ecosystems. Societal choice is inherent in advancing human well-being and poverty alleviation, which depends on the maintenance of ecosystem benefits/services. Within the context of ecosystem approaches, planning processes for promoting the delivery of wetland ecosystem benefits/services should be formulated and implemented in the context of the maintenance or enhancement, as appropriate, of wetland ecological character at appropriate spatial and temporal scales. (Rés. XI.1. Annex A COP Ramsar Convention, 2005).

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 7 - By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

The stakeholders involved in the implementation of this objective are: the federal and regional authorities competent for wetlands management or wetlands related issues, the Belgian Ramsar Committee, wetland site managers, key business sectors (water and sanitation, irrigation and water supply, agriculture, waste disposal, fishing...) and any association working towards the same goal as the NBS.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.5.1 - Apply Ramsar Convention guidelines on Wise use of Wetlands Concept as far as relevant.

Rationale for the national target

The COP of Ramsar Convention has published detailed guidelines on various issues of wetlands use. Main guidelines are about: Integrated Coastal Zone Management; Inventory; Laws and institutions; Management planning; National wetland policies; Participation in management; Restoration; Risk assessment; River basin management; Water and water allocation; Wise Use concept. Those Guidelines should be implemented through relevant public authorities competent with wetlands management or wetlands related uses.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.6 - Forestry

Rationale for the national target

The forestry sector plays a multi-functional role as a producer of a renewable natural resource, provider of income and employment, biodiversity manager, guarantor of in situ conservation of local tree varieties and provider of environmental services (like soil and water protection) and of recreational activities.

The biodiversity of Belgian forests is threatened locally, among other things by intensive management, pollution, changes in groundwater levels, fragmentation, recreational activities and high population densities of big game species (ungulates). Indirectly, they also pose a threat to the forest as a productive resource. To ensure that the biodiversity in Belgian forests is maintained, it is necessary to work on quantitative aspects (for instance, halt deforestation and fragmentation) and qualitative aspects, and to focus on “internal measures” within the forest and nature conservation policies and practices, as well as external measures lying outside the forest sector (for example environmental quality, land-use planning). The guiding principle should be the promotion of sustainable forest management. Sustainable forest management (SFM) is defined as “the stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way, and at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local, national, and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems” (Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe, 1993). In this context, the Flemish Government approved the Act of the Flemish government concerning the determination of criteria for sustainable forest management for forests in the Flemish Region (Decree of the Flemish Government of 27/06/03, Belgian Official Gazette 10/09/2003). Management standards for the

promotion of sustainable forest management have been proposed in Flanders (“Beheervisie”) and Wallonia (“Walloon Biodiversity Guidelines” - Branquart & Liégeois 2005).

The improved pan-European criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management are taken into account in regional forest inventories.

Forest certification is seen as one of the most important initiatives from the last decade to promote sustainable forest management and since 1994, work on certification has been carried out in Belgium. Several different certification schemes exist world-wide; the best-known initiatives are the “Forest Stewardship Council” (FSC) and the “Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes” (PEFC). The Flemish Region and Brussels-Capital Region actively encourage the use of FSC-certified wood in public works, while the PEFC is mainly favoured by, and is fully operational in, the Walloon Region. The Federal Government supports all certification systems that prove that the timber comes from sustainable managed forests, for example through its public procurement policy.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 7 - By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

The stakeholders involved in the implementation of this objective are: the federal and regional authorities, foresters, public and private forest owners, forest industries, forest groups, public procurements actors, NGOs, research institutes, universities and any association working towards the same goal as the NBS.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.6.1 - Promote the conservation of forest biodiversity through independent credible forest certification systems that provide a guarantee for sustainable forest management.

Rationale for the national target

This operational objective supports the use of sustainable (certified) timber products and the promotion of credible certification systems. This can be achieved, for example, by actions in several fields such as public procurements policy or public and forest owner’s awareness activities.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 1 - By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.

Other related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is indirectly related.)

Target 8 - By 2020, pollution, including from excess nutrients, has been brought to levels that are not detrimental to ecosystem function and biodiversity.

Target 3 - By 2020, at the latest, incentives, including subsidies, harmful to biodiversity are eliminated, phased out or reformed in order to minimize or avoid negative impacts, and positive incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity are developed and applied, consistent and in harmony with the Convention and other relevant international obligations, taking into account national socio economic conditions.

Target 4 - By 2020, at the latest, Governments, business and stakeholders at all levels have taken steps to achieve or have implemented plans for sustainable production and consumption and have kept the impacts of use of natural resources well within safe ecological limits.

Target 7 - By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.6.2 - Promote nature-oriented forestry that provides a guarantee for sustainable forest management, including forest conservation.

Rationale for the national target

The declining health of forests, new insights in forest ecology as well as the increased interest of society in the protection of the environment demand a change in forest-management priorities, with a greater emphasis needing to be laid on close-to-nature forest-management practices. Nature-oriented forest management means the use of management forms where self-regulating natural processes are used and promoted to regulate the required functional efficiency of forests.

Besides the adoption of close-to-nature forest management systems, it is also of vital importance to promote the development of a representative network of protected forest areas (see objective 3.1.).

Nature-oriented forestry has to be understood as a flexible system to maintain the natural characteristics of forests, via adequate planning, harvesting methods, origins of plant material and management practices that take into account the ecological requirements of all the natural values of the forest. This system should provide options rather than strict rules. Its promotion needs to be based on a better knowledge of its economic benefits (for instance, through innovative research) and a better illustration of its advantages for biodiversity (for instance through demonstration areas). Belgian public forests are progressively applying nature-oriented forestry, and it should be promoted for the private forest owners too. In Flanders, voluntary associations (forest groups) offer different services to help the small-scale forest owners with the management of their forests.

Positive incentives need to be enhanced to promote sustainable forestry. In Flanders, subsidies are given for afforestation of farmland and pilot projects are receiving financial and technical support for the development and implementation of forest management plans.

In Wallonia, both public and private owners must meet sustainable forest management (SFM) criteria in order to obtain financial incentives for forest operations.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 1 - By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.

Other related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is indirectly related.)

Target 4 - By 2020, at the latest, Governments, business and stakeholders at all levels have taken steps to achieve or have implemented plans for sustainable production and consumption and have kept the impacts of use of natural resources well within safe ecological limits.

Target 7 - By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.6.3 - Protection of forest genetic diversity.

Rationale for the national target

Genetic diversity has become one of the keywords for the scientists and managers who are concerned with the sustainable management of forests. Scientific evidence suggests that high levels of genetic diversity provide a guarantee for perennial forests. Biodiversity in forests is therefore not only important for its economic potential, but also because the genetic variation within species influences growth and resistance to stresses such as harsh weather, disease and plagues.

For the reasons mentioned above, Belgium needs to protect its forest genetic resources in order to ensure healthy tree populations and to preserve all the potentials of the forests. It is to be achieved through a better knowledge of the conservation of forest genetic resources, in parallel with the adoption of practical measures for conservation. The “Technical Guidelines for genetic conservation and use” that are being produced by the EUFORGEN network can be used as a basis for such work in Belgium.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 13 - By 2020, the genetic diversity of cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and of wild relatives, including other socio-economically as well as culturally valuable species, is maintained, and strategies have been developed and implemented for minimizing genetic erosion and safeguarding their genetic diversity.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.6.4 - Prevent GM trees from having a negative impact on forest and general biodiversity.

Rationale for the national target

Genetically modified trees are currently in development in various countries worldwide mostly for industrial uses, to speed up the growth of the plant, to make them more resistant to various environmental stresses, to enhance the photosynthesis process, to reduce lignin content (reducing the need for toxic chlorinated organic compounds as bleaching method in the paper industry), etc. As for GMOs in agriculture, not only the ecological consequences of the transgenic trait itself and of the spreading of the transgenes into nature should be carefully looked at, but also the impact that economic forces can have on the spreading of those patented GM forests area, leading possibly to loss in forestry biodiversity and to negative social consequences (see also Objective 7.8).

It is also noted that GMO forest trees are not allowed in certified forests.

Level of application (Please specify the level to which the target applies):

- Regional/multilateral – please indicate area concerned <Text entry>
- National/federal
- Subnational – please indicate area concerned <Text entry>

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.7 - Hunting

Rationale for the national target

Hunting is a leisure activity for about 23,000 hunters in Belgium. It generates a societal debate with discussions on the pro and cons, and compromises always have to be reached. There has been an evolution over the last 20 years, with cooperation between hunters, foresters, farmers and conservationists improving. Important progress has been made in putting new wildlife management insights into practice and in recognising the ecological interactions between hunting and biodiversity.

Belgian hunting was regulated by a law of 1882 but is now a full competence of the Regions, with different regulations in Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels-Capital Region. These laws differ between the Regions to better fit the respective game situations. The law of 1882 was first revised by the Regions in the 1990s in order to obtain a sustainable use of wild species and their habitats. In Brussels-Capital Region, hunting is completely prohibited since 1991. Since the 1990s, modifications of Walloon and Flemish laws on hunting, along with efforts from hunters, aim to a sustainable use of wild species and their habitats.

In Flanders, management plans for the game management units are controlled, and if necessary amended, by the responsible Minister on a 6 years basis. In Flanders and in Wallonia, cull plans in general are drawn up every year for the most part by game management units for certain big game (red deer in Wallonia and roe deer in Flanders) and approved by the Regions in order to guarantee a coordinated management of these types of game.

Since 1978, both in Flanders and in Wallonia, a compulsory hunting exam aims to guarantee best safety practices, ethics, and good knowledge of game species and their habitats.

For birds, the Council Directive 79/409/EEC provides the framework for the management of bird-hunting in the EU. The Guidance document on hunting under Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds published by the European Commission in 2004 accepts hunting activity in accordance with the general objectives of the Birds Directive. The AEWA action plan and Bern Convention foresee the phasing out of the use of lead shot for hunting in order to prevent saturnism. The use of leadshot in wetlands is prohibited since 1993 in Flanders and since 2006 in Wallonia. Since 2008, there has been an absolute ban on the use of leadshot anywhere in Flanders.

Historically, hunters have played an important role in the conservation of habitats. More recently, through their commitment in game management units, hunters took management measures with a positive influence on biodiversity, for instance management of field edges, promotion of agro-environmental methods, planting of indigenous shrubs and trees, infrastructural actions such as roe deer-reflectors along roads.

Hunters' behaviour has changed significantly given they have to take courses and pass an exam on theory and practice to gain a hunting permit. The creation and approval of game management units has had a major impact on vision and attitudes of hunters in Belgium. However, specific efforts need to be done to avoid harmful behaviour that can have an impact on biodiversity by individual hunters and landowners. The hunting sector still needs proactive policy initiatives with a vision on the long term to contribute to the objective of halting the loss of biodiversity in Belgium.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

The stakeholders involved in the implementation of this objective are: the federal and regional authorities, farmers, foresters, hunters, hunting organizations, environmental NGOs, land owners, landscape and land use planning departments and any association working towards the same goal as the NBS.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.7.1 - Promote integrated management of hunting grounds in cooperation with farmers, foresters and environmental NGOs and the application of good hunting practices.

Rationale for the national target

Game habitats should be managed in an integrated manner fully compatible with maintenance and rehabilitation of biodiversity (Objective 3) and in cooperation with farmers, foresters, other users of the countryside and environmental NGOs. For instance, attention should be paid to create and maintain refuge areas for small game, in particular in agricultural habitats. Hunters should participate to semi-natural habitats restoration and small landscape elements conservation in open lands taking into account that today farmers and land owners are the key role players for landscape management. To achieve this goal, legislative initiatives, such as modification of set-aside regulation, should be taken by the competent governments.

In the long term, game management units should be stimulated and plans should be extended to all native game species in all Regions.

Hunters should be aware of the carrying capacity of habitats. Total achievement of annual big game cull plans and game management plans will help restore the equilibrium between economic, ecological and social functions of forest and countryside. High densities of ungulates are locally a problem for foresters that can

be managed in partnership with hunters. Populations of big game have increased over the last 20 years due to a lack of severe winter periods for several years, the positive effect of storms on forests' nutritional potential (CEEW, 2000), but also due to the absence of natural predators since more than 150 years and hunters' tendency to protect females of big game and the feeding of wild boar (CEEW, 2005). This phenomenon has led to an over-density of total population of wild boar, roe deer and red deer in Wallonia (a similar evolution is observed in neighbouring regions) which locally cause damages to trees, hamper forest regeneration, threat several species and sensitive habitats, and cause other problems, including in suburban zones.

It is important to develop legal instruments in order to enable taking concrete measures for field management on favour of biodiversity. Several field measures still miss a legal framework or lack financial incentives (for instance, wildlife set-aside measures).

Some current legislation even has adverse effects on biodiversity (a.o. in Flanders, the berm Decree still allows mowing before 15 July and this hampers the breeding success of partridge and other species; in Wallonia, farmers are obliged to cut some set-aside covers in May-July during the main period of wildlife reproduction).

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 1 - By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.

Other related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is indirectly related.)

Target 3 - By 2020, at the latest, incentives, including subsidies, harmful to biodiversity are eliminated, phased out or reformed in order to minimize or avoid negative impacts, and positive incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity are developed and applied, consistent and in harmony with the Convention and other relevant international obligations, taking into account national socio economic conditions.

Target 4 - By 2020, at the latest, Governments, business and stakeholders at all levels have taken steps to achieve or have implemented plans for sustainable production and consumption and have kept the impacts of use of natural resources well within safe ecological limits.

Target 7 - By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.7.2 - Promote the involvement of hunters as biodiversity actors.

Rationale for the national target

Sustainable hunting should be widely promoted. The use of wild species may not have a significant impact on the long-term viability of all species populations in their natural habitats. Several practices could be improved in order to limit pressure on biodiversity. The breeding and introduction of non-indigenous stocks

of small game should be strictly controlled and avoided in order to limit genetic pollution. In Flanders the introduction of wildfowl is prohibited since 2001; illegal introduction nevertheless remains a concern. Excessive feeding of game should be avoided. As to the control of predators, hunters should strictly follow legislation as predators play an essential role in the natural control of populations.

The issue of alien species detrimental to indigenous biodiversity can partly be dealt with in cooperation with hunters as they could help contain certain species or even be responsible for their systematic elimination.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 1 - By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.7.3 Promote stability within the hunting sector.

Rationale for the national target

For their investment in long-term biodiversity protection, hunters must be assured to some extent of their hunting rights in a given area and of a more stable legislative environment. This can stimulate their investment in the preservation and management of hedgerows, edges of woods and fields, game crops, and ponds or wetlands.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.8 - Tourism and leisure.

Rationale for the national target

Many people regularly visit parks, green areas, forests and other natural areas, including Belgian protected areas and natural reserves to enjoy nature and observe wildlife. Some of our most attractive destinations encompass the sea coast and the polders (for example the Zwin and the Westhoek), heaths and peat bogs (for example Kalmthout, the Hautes-Fagnes and the Ziepsbeek Valley), ponds and marshes (for example the Zwarte Beek Valley, the Haine Valley, Harchies and Virelles), limestone hills (for example the Meuse escarpments and the Viroin Valley), natural caves and caverns (for example Han-sur-Lesse, Remouchamps, La Merueilleuse and Hotton), and woods and forests (for example the Meerdaelwoud, the Hertogenwald, the Sonian Forest and the Anlier-Rulles Forest).

The development of tourism in natural and protected areas and other nature-based destinations is a source of increasing stress on fragile ecosystems. Its social, economic and environmental impacts are immense and complex. In the absence of appropriate policies and plans, tourism to natural areas may have a negative impact on biodiversity.

The challenge is to ensure that tourism is developed in harmony with environmental considerations. Sustainable tourism can generate employment and income, thus providing an incentive for conservation. Tourism policies should therefore be formulated and implemented in a way that generates incentives and revenues to cover a share of the costs of managing and protecting marine and terrestrial protected areas. Sustainable tourism can also raise public awareness of the many goods and services provided by biodiversity.

Worth mentioning here is the EU expert meeting 'Natura 2000 and Leisure' in 2004 where the participants shared their experiences and approaches to nature and recreation. The report 'Jewels in the crown - Good practices Natura 2000 and leisure' illustrates the synergies existing between recreation and protected Natura 2000 areas.

Another challenge is the development of knowledge on carrying capacity and the raising of consciousness among Belgian tourists abroad and foreign tourists in Belgium.

The Commission has published in 2003 a communication laying down basic orientations for the sustainability of European tourism (COM/2003/0716). This communication addresses current and future possibilities of community intervention in tourism, makes an analysis of the European situation and its difficulties and establishes orientations for the future.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

The stakeholders involved in the implementation of this objective are: the regional and municipal authorities, recreation and tourism organizations, guides and interpreters, sports/adventure associations, transportation and other service providers, environmental NGOs, the general public and any association working towards the same goal as the NBS.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 4.8.1 - Apply CBD tools to monitor and control the impact of tourism on biodiversity, in particular in protected areas.

Rationale for the national target

Ideally, the conception of tourism in protected areas should be one of environmentally responsible travel to and visiting of natural areas, promoting conservation, having a low visitor impact, and providing for positive active socio-economic involvement on the part of local populations.

As protected habitats with high biodiversity value are becoming popular tourism destinations, tools (such as environmental impact assessments) and methods (such as the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum* and the Limits of Acceptable Change*) should be used in order to balance the frequency and (possible) impacts of the visits in protected areas against the carrying capacity of the area. In vulnerable ecosystems, based on these methodologies, relevant background information and application of the ecosystem approach, tourism should be restricted and where necessary prevented. These tools and methods should be equally applicable to any tourism activities and development that may have an impact on biodiversity in geographical locations and tourist destinations at all levels (including areas that are neither protected nor vulnerable).

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 11 - By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 5 - Improve the integration of biodiversity concerns into all relevant sectoral policies

Rationale for the national target

As biodiversity touches upon almost all economic sectors, the protection of biodiversity cannot be achieved only through environmental policies. Biodiversity must become the base of an integrated economic and social development. The link between social policies (like job creation) and biodiversity needs to be emphasized too, as well as the impact of biodiversity loss on human well-being and health in particular. A major cause of biodiversity loss is the implementation of a number of sectoral and horizontal policies that affect ecosystems and species (cf. Chapter 3 Part I.4 Threats).

The necessity of incorporating into other policies the objective of halting the loss of biodiversity between now and 2020, given the importance of biodiversity for certain economic sectors, was underlined by the Council Conclusions of the European Council in March 2005.

The Belgian Biodiversity Strategy needs to be clearly articulated with the future national Strategy on Sustainable Development as the protection of biodiversity is an essential condition for sustainable development as well as with the actual Belgian programme of structural reform (Lisbon Strategy 2005-2008).

The impact of sectoral activities on biodiversity must be taken into consideration and biodiversity actors should be consulted. This implies that biodiversity concerns must be taken into account during the development and implementation of all relevant sectoral plans, programmes, legislation and policies that may have an impact on biodiversity.

There is also a need to assist administrations and different departments in developing competence and expertise in dealing with biodiversity issues in their own area of influence. Biodiversity is an important socio-economic asset and integration of biodiversity concerns in sectoral policies also benefits the sector as it encourages a more sustainable use of this resource.

Several sectors are particularly important with regard to biodiversity: spatial planning has a major impact on biodiversity, as it can play a major role in habitat fragmentation and can cause uncontrolled development pressures on biodiversity; industry, transport and energy sectors can have global and regional impacts on biodiversity through climate change and acidification, and furthermore can have a local impact through habitat fragmentation, destruction of habitats and disturbance of wildlife; etc. The 2020 objective will only be achieved when all the relevant sectors integrate consideration for biodiversity in their plans and policy.

Specific attention also needs to be given to the involvement of the private sector in biodiversity issues. Furthermore, companies and industries possess relevant knowledge, technological resources and research and communication skills, which, if mobilised, could play an important role in the protection of biodiversity.

According to the subsidiarity principle, the lowest appropriate level has to take efficient and effective action. Therefore, regional and local authorities should be involved in coordinating and facilitating such actions where possible. The use of participative approaches can here be helpful.

Fundamental social and economic processes in society are the key underlying drivers of environmental change. Demographics, consumption and production patterns, scientific and technological innovation, economic demand, markets and trade, institutional and socio-political frameworks and value systems all play a part in determining the impact that humans have on the natural world. This impact is expressed through a number of direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss, the most important of which are habitat degradation and land use change, overexploitation, pollution, invasive alien species and climate change.

Objective 5 of the NBS is the backbone of achieving sectoral integration of biodiversity concerns and engaging stakeholders in the delivery of the NBS. Important updates have been done hereunder.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

The stakeholders involved in the implementation of this objective are: the federal public services, the regional and local authorities, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform (e.g. through its Communities of Practice on 'Ecosystems and Society' (BEES) and 'Biodiversity and Health' (COPBH)), the various social and economic sectors, the professional federations involved in the sectors concerned (agriculture, fisheries, forestry, mining, energy, tourism, transport, the chemical industry, finances, sciences policy, the pet trade, imports/exports), farmers, fishermen, conservationists, natural resource managers, foresters, the private sector, researchers, NGOs, the Belgian CITES service, business, civil society, the general public and any association working towards the same goal as the NBS.

Relevant websites, web links, and files (Please use this field to indicate any relevant websites, web links or documents where additional information related to this national target can be found.)

- <http://www.biodiversity.be/3949> (Belgian Community of Practice on Ecosystems and Society)
- <http://www.biodiversity.be/4033> (Belgian Community of Practice on Biodiversity and Health)
- Keune H. et al. (2013). Science-policy challenges for biodiversity, public health and urbanization: examples from Belgium. *Env. Res. Letters*, 8 (2), doi:10.1088/1748-9326/8/2/025015.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 5.1 - Promote and support stakeholder involvement inter alia through partnerships at all levels of decision-making relating to biodiversity.

Rationale for the national target

Stakeholders (Regional, Federal and local authorities, farmers, fishermen, conservationists, natural resource managers, foresters, the private sector, researchers, non-governmental organisations, etc.) must all be able to have a say in the decisions affecting biodiversity. The Aarhus Convention (Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters) grants rights to the public and imposes obligations on public authorities regarding access to information and public participation and access to justice. Belgium signed this convention on 25 June 1998 and ratified it on 23 January 2003.

Individual behaviours need to be addressed, as individuals are biodiversity actors that need to be responsabilized. Specific methodology needs therefore to be developed.

Partnerships that actively link stakeholders should be developed in order to share information and expertise and promote positive linkages between biodiversity and other sectors. This implies consultation and collaboration between and within the different authorities and stakeholders in the field. Participation by the different stakeholders will increase their cooperation and involvement. This will increase the support for biodiversity protection and so stimulate the carrying out of actions in this area.

Furthermore, collaboration in a complementary and integrated way between administrations, both from different sectors as from different policy levels (federal, regional and local levels), on the basis of the subsidiary principle, is crucial to protect biodiversity.

Several initiatives to involve stakeholders have already been taken; there are 'Plan Communaux pour le développement de la Nature, PCDN', which 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; and also River Contracts that brings together all the actors of a river 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.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 4 - By 2020, at the latest, Governments, business and stakeholders at all levels have taken steps to achieve or have implemented plans for sustainable production and consumption and have kept the impacts of use of natural resources well within safe ecological limits.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 5.2 - Encourage the involvement of the private sector in the protection of biodiversity, as an integral part of business planning and operations.

Rationale for the national target

Companies are more and more scrutinized on their impacts on biodiversity by stakeholders (investors, employees, consumers, etc.). Many businesses own and manage land, their activities therefore directly affect biodiversity (companies active in sectors such as agriculture, water, woodlands and forestry, tourism and transport for example). Other companies can have indirect impacts, such as financial services companies through loan or investment policies, and retailers, through the purchase of intensively produced agricultural products.

Therefore it is important to consult private sector and ask their advice on the best way to apply enterprise's instruments, such as environmental reports, labels, integrating biodiversity requirements into company management systems, green purchases, etc., to improve their environmental performance and engage more fully in managing and reporting on biodiversity.

The establishment of Company Biodiversity Action Plans to manage the company's overall impacts on biodiversity (including management of sites in its ownership or control) can be an appropriate instrument to manage biodiversity impacts and contribute to biodiversity protection.

Furthermore, the private sector needs to understand the importance of biodiversity and be aware of the legislations protecting it and the opportunities to take actions to preserve it.

State aids to private sector operators are an important instrument to promote activities that take biodiversity concerns into account (see operational Objective 5.5.).

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 5.3 - Ensure that this Strategy is taken into account in decision-making and policy discussions and encourage the development and use of guidelines for the integration of biodiversity into all relevant sectoral policies.

Rationale for the national target

The Belgian Biodiversity Strategy should play a part in decision-making processes and be considered at the decision-making and planning levels. Biodiversity concerns should be considered from the early stages of the drafting process when developing new plans, programs, legislative and regulatory frameworks.

The biodiversity policy should not be seen as independent of sectoral policies, but both should be mutually supportive: sectoral policies should support the implementation of national biodiversity goals while integration of biodiversity goals should be beneficial to the sectoral policies.

The sectoral integration of biodiversity, or its "mainstreaming", means the integration of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in both cross-sectoral plans such as sustainable development, climate change adaptation/mitigation, trade, international cooperation and poverty reduction, and in sector-specific plans such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry, mining, energy, tourism, transport, the chemical industry, finances, sciences policy and others. It implies changes in development models, strategies and thought patterns.

To operationalize the integration of biodiversity concerns into decision-making and policy discussions in sectors other than nature conservation, the application of sectoral guidelines on biodiversity mainstreaming will be promoted. The work will build on existing tools (such as the CBD's Capacity Building module on Biodiversity Mainstreaming) and adapt them for Belgium if necessary. It is also extremely important to continually review the adequacy of legislation in furthering the objectives of the Belgian Biodiversity Strategy. The use of participative approaches can here be helpful.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 1 - By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.

Other related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is indirectly related.)

Target 4 - By 2020, at the latest, Governments, business and stakeholders at all levels have taken steps to achieve or have implemented plans for sustainable production and consumption and have kept the impacts of use of natural resources well within safe ecological limits.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 5.4 - Identify in strategic planning the negative and positive effects of the different sectoral policies (land-use planning, transport, energy) on priority elements of biodiversity, and take measures to correct or strengthen these effects.

Rationale for the national target

Activities with potential negative impacts must be identified and investigated in order to determine the exact causes and effects of those activities on biodiversity. These analyses will allow solutions (including better alternatives) to be identified that avoid or minimise the impacts of sectoral policies on biodiversity.

Activities must be boosted that have a potentially positive effect on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Early discussions between the sectors and biodiversity experts could help identify such 'win-win' situations and improve the positive interactions.

Through clear and legally binding rules, competent authorities should not approve projects and plans that would lead to irreversible damage for the priority elements of biodiversity, unless justified by imperative reasons of major public interest.

Therefore environmental impact assessment (EIA) and strategic environmental assessment (SEA) procedures must include biodiversity criteria and should refer to relevant national policy documents such as the Belgian Biodiversity Strategy, the CBD and biodiversity-related conventions and agreements. In this context, the guidance documents on integrating climate change and biodiversity into EIA and SEA issued by the European Commission (2013) under the EIA and SEA Directives (see below) should be implemented.

In order to promote a participative environmental policy, it is important to link the strategic planification (evaluation of impacts of plans and programmes related to environment) with public participation, as required by the European Directives.

The Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo, 1991) and its protocol and amendments set out the obligations of Parties to assess the environmental impact of certain activities at an early stage of the planning process. It also lays down the general obligation of individual states to notify and consult each other on all major projects under consideration that are likely to have a significant adverse environmental impact across national boundaries.

The assessment of impacts caused on biodiversity by projects and plans is already provided for by the European legislative framework:

- Environmental Impact Assessment Directive 85/337/EEC has been amended three times and is codified by Directive 2011/92/EU. It requires Member States to ensure that projects likely to have significant effects on the environment because of their nature, size or location are subject to an assessment of their environmental effects.

- Article 6 of the Habitats Directive requires that an appropriate assessment be undertaken for any plan or project which, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, would be likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site.

- The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC) requires that certain plans and programmes from the public sector be made subject to systematic environment assessment. The SEA directive specifically mentions biodiversity as one issue that has to be reported on in the environmental report.

These dispositions have been transposed into the Belgian Federal and Regional legal framework. However, there is a need to provide guidance to the initiators of relevant projects, plans and programmes to assess whether their projects, plans and programmes would be likely to cause any significant effects on biodiversity and if so, whether they should be subject to an SEA (for example, development of guidelines or establishment of an advisory committee including biodiversity experts). Furthermore, a set of criteria on biodiversity aspects to be taken into consideration during the environmental assessment, i.e. in the evaluation report, could also be useful in this regard.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 5.5 - Eliminate, phase out or reform incentives, including subsidies, harmful to biodiversity in order to minimize or avoid negative impacts on biodiversity and encourage the development and application of incentives favourable to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, including economic, fiscal and financial instruments.

Rationale for the national target

It is crucial to provide the right market signals for biodiversity conservation. Since 2006, the NBS has been planning to combine market-based instruments in addition to normative instruments and processes (regulations, access and market restrictions, management plans, etc.), in order to provide positive incentives for biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services. Such instruments are core elements for the application of the 'polluter pays' principle through the establishment of environmental liability regimes.

There is a need to make greater and more consistent use of domestic economic instruments with respect to biodiversity protection. The adoption of socially and economically sound measures (like subsidies, state aid, grants-in-aid, and measures prescribed in the tax system) that act as incentives for biodiversity is of central importance to the realisation of the three objectives of the CBD. Public authorities should promote companies that have a responsible investments policy that take biodiversity into account. State aids should take a more holistic approach to promote environment. In particular, state aids to operators must be better used to promote and avoid any negative effects on biodiversity. Internalisation (the incorporation of external costs and benefits) should be considered to be one of the guiding principles for selecting appropriate incentive measures to prevent, stop or reverse the loss of biodiversity.

Some Regional initiatives, co-financed by the EU, have already been taken in Belgium: subsidies are granted for activities which take biodiversity into account such as private sustainable management of nature reserves, environmental measures in farming (for example enlargement and maintenance of natural borders, and use of manual or mechanised systems instead of chemicals), sustainable forestry (forest owners receiving subsidies for the development and implementation of forest-management plans that are based on sustainable forest management, for example conservation of indigenous tree species, and use of endemic species in re-afforestation projects), exemption from succession rights for private forests and exemption from

succession rights and a levy for real property for land in the Flemish Ecological Network, exemption from death duties and real-estate deductions for land property situated in Natura 2000 Walloon sites, exemption of succession rights for non-profit associations that make natural area accessible for the public, etc.

Economic incentives measures must be further promoted to encourage the protection of biodiversity in Belgium. For example, imposing a higher cost on products using virgin resources, promoting products obtained from sustainable managed resources (like wood products certified as being harvested in sustainable conditions), creating positive financial incentive for biodiversity friendly products, or providing payment to farmers who maintain biodiversity on their land, could be used as incentives to make sustainable use of biodiversity more attractive than unsustainable activities.

Alongside the introduction of incentives to support conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, consideration must be given to removing or redirecting perverse economic incentives that accelerate the loss of biodiversity (these range from public subsidies that support unsustainable farming and fisheries to projects that erode or destroy biodiversity). It is a critical and necessary step in terms of preserving biodiversity that would also generate broader net socio-economic benefits. This also includes work to reform, phase out and eliminate harmful subsidies (Aichi target 3; EU Target 6). The work done at EU level to eliminate the adverse impacts of sectoral EU policies (such as commercial fishing, agriculture, forestry development cooperation) will be complemented by appropriate measures at national level, including the possible reform of economic, fiscal and financial instruments.

As single measures will often not suffice to address the complexities involved in decisions on biodiversity protection or sustainable use, a mix of measures may be needed. It is also important that the different instruments (at the different levels) are linked, that they are efficiently used and that shortcomings are followed up.

Furthermore, the 'value' of biodiversity needs to be addressed (link with Objective 7.6. 'Improve our knowledge of the socio-economic benefits of biodiversity') in order to integrate market and non-market aspects of biodiversity into economic and social decisions. Indeed, the pressures to reduce biodiversity are so great that to demonstrate the value of biodiversity, we need to encourage the introduction of incentives.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 3 - By 2020, at the latest, incentives, including subsidies, harmful to biodiversity are eliminated, phased out or reformed in order to minimize or avoid negative impacts, and positive incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity are developed and applied, consistent and in harmony with the Convention and other relevant international obligations, taking into account national socio economic conditions.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 5.6 - Take biodiversity concerns into account in national export credit policy.

Rationale for the national target

Export Credit Agencies provide financial support (loans, guarantees, insurance) for projects in southern and eastern Europe. They aim to help national industries abroad. Export credit policies may have very significant

impacts on environment and biodiversity in particular (for example by supporting construction projects of dams, pipelines, etc.).

The impact on biodiversity needs to be fully incorporated in the procedures for evaluation of projects applying for support by export credit agencies. It is important to examine the environmental criteria used to assess investments by Export Credit Agencies and other publicly funded financial institutions and to ensure that these criteria take biodiversity into consideration. Project screening procedures must ensure that activities that lead to irreversible damage to biodiversity are not promoted.

Export Credit Agencies need to be more transparent in the eligibility criteria used and indicate which international obligation and engagements subscribed by Belgium they take into account. The following actions could also help credit export agencies to take biodiversity concern into account in national export credit policy:

- Implement a harmonised procedure to check whether a project respond to the international biodiversity related obligations and engagements subscribed by Belgium.
- Organise training for credit export agencies staff Belgium's international obligations and engagements related to biodiversity. Another measure to promote integration of biodiversity in credit export policies is to ask companies to sign a declaration of intent setting out the commitments of the companies to meet the objectives of the national biodiversity strategy.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 5.7 - Consider the potential impact on biodiversity, and in particular the invasiveness of species, in making import and export decisions.

Rationale for the national target

The international trade may adversely impact biodiversity by introducing new species such as invasive alien species (IAS), GMOs or diseases that affect related species.

Many alien species enter Belgium unintentionally, for example through wood imports, or they are imported intentionally for use in many areas (agriculture, horticulture, pet trade, etc.).

It is crucial to consider the potential impacts on biodiversity when developing national legislation and regulations that deal with the trade in live animals or plants.

Besides biodiversity-related conventions, several international conventions and organisations are relevant when taking import/exports decision in order to avoid damages on biodiversity. For example, the issue of IAS is dealt by the following forums:

- The World Trade Organisation (WTO) was invited by the CBD, through its committee on trade and the environment, to take invasive alien species issues into account when considering the impacts of trade and trade liberalisation.
- The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) is a multilateral treaty deposited with the Director-General of the FAO. Its purpose is to ensure common and effective actions to prevent the spread and introduction of pests and plants and plant products and to promote measures for their control.

- The FAO has compiled codes of practices to deal with alien species and has developed products such as the FAO Database on Introductions of Aquatic Species.

- The IMO International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments (adopted in 2004) addresses the introduction of invasive marine species into new environments through ballast water, hull-fouling and other vectors.

- The CITES convention aims to prevent trade from having an impact on species by controlling movements of certain categories of endangered species. The CITES Animals and Plants Committees are working in collaboration with the CBD on the preparation of a list of potentially invasive animal and plant species to be included in the CITES appendices. The EC Regulation for the implementation of CITES within the EU provides a basis for controlling imports of certain species that are recognised as being invasive (Regulation 338/97, Article 4.6(d)).

- The ICES Code of Practice on the Introductions and Transfers of Marine Organisms sets forth recommended procedures and practices to diminish the risks of detrimental effects from the intentional introduction and transfer of marine (including brackish water) organisms (ICES, 2005).

There are opportunities for synergies between several forums and the CBD in dealing with the introductions of species that are potentially harmful for biodiversity.

On the other hand, experience gained (for example, experience gained under CITES in wildlife trade controls) could contribute to national and international efforts to avoid negative impacts on biodiversity.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 9 - By 2020, invasive alien species and pathways are identified and prioritized, priority species are controlled or eradicated, and measures are in place to manage pathways to prevent their introduction and establishment.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 5.8 - Maximalise the advantages for health arising from biodiversity and ecosystem services and expand the collaboration between the interested organisations / public services.

Rationale for the national target

Inadequate attention is being paid to the important contributions biodiversity can make to human health. The links between biodiversity and human health are complex because they are often indirect, displaced in space and time, and dependent on a number of modifying forces. Human health ultimately depends on ecosystem products and services which are requisite for good human health and productive livelihoods, such as water and air purification, the provision of food and medicines, pest and disease control, medical research.

Since 2011 the Belgian Community of Practice Biodiversity and Health (COPBH), facilitated by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, tries to enhance biodiversity & health related science, policy and practice in Belgium.

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform is a science policy practice interface related to biodiversity issues, and is funded by the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office (BELSPO).

In 2011, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform organized a Belgian Biodiversity & Health conference (Keune et al. 2013). This event was where the COPBH was founded. The COPBH facilitates an online expert registry and newsletter, and some research project initiatives emerged from bigger and smaller meetings of the COPBH. Apart from scientific partners, there is also collaboration with practice organization, both with policy institutions and NGO's. Recently, especially connections to the health sector are strengthened with collaboration with a Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences and the Province of Antwerp, with the launch of the Chair Care and the Natural Living Environment at the University of Antwerp. Within this collaborative context on October 4th a big networking event "Nature on prescription" (<http://www.biodiversity.be/4035/>) was organized with over 160 participants. Further, an advisory expert committee working within the framework of the Belgian Superior Health Council was initiated at the end of 2017, with support from the COPBH. The aim is to better connect to health care professionals and other relevant groups for collaboration. In 2016 the COPBH coordinated the organization of the European One Health/Ecohealth workshop in Brussels (see below). This is also an example of how the COPBH tries to enhance international contacts for Belgian experts and practitioners.

The COPBH tries to inspire research programs in relation to health and biodiversity topics, both at the Belgian and international level. An example is an overview of research needs and gaps which was produced before the start of a BELSPO research funding program called BRAIN, in order to inspire research calls regarding biodiversity & health; this overview was included as an addendum in the first BRAIN call where biodiversity & health issues were addressed. Further the COPBH works on mainstreaming & awareness raising by giving on demand introductory presentations, such as in 2017 in the Flemish Parliament, and support with state of the art overviews of scientific knowledge and practice projects. Finally, the COPBH also contributes to Belgian delegations to international processes such as Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystem Services (MAES), IPBES and CBD, focusing mainly on health-related issues.

Many species provide invaluable information for human medicine. By losing species, we lose the anatomical, physiological, behavioural information's they contain.

Plants and microbes have long been, and remain today, an important basis for the development of medicines such as quinine, morphine, penicillin, etc. (approximately a quarter of all prescriptions are taken directly from plants or are chemically modified versions of plant substances and more than half of them are modelled on natural compounds). More recently, great attention has been paid to the potential development of important drugs from animals, some of which are often threatened by extinction.

By ensuring the sustainable productivity of soils and providing genetic resources for crops, livestock and marine species harvested for food, biodiversity also plays a crucial role in world food production and ensures a balanced diet (diversified agricultural agents maintain adequate food supply and prevent malnutrition). Furthermore, genetically diversified agricultural surfaces present a better resistance to environmental stresses, thus providing populations with greater nutritional safety.

Finally, accelerated biodiversity perturbations can have very negative impacts on the propagation of pre-existing transmissible diseases or even on the emergence of new ones, through modifications in vectors and/or target populations and in host-pathogen relationships. Studies of such relationships between biodiversity perturbation and increase in disease diffusion are starting to produce convincing results, as can be seen in the cases of malaria, schistosomiasis and also Lyme disease epidemiology.

There is a need to improve our understanding of the very strong existing link between human health and biodiversity, and consequently development. There should be particular support given to interdisciplinary research around these connected issues. The awareness of this link should be raised through educational programmes. Furthermore, collaboration between health and environment organisations and ministries should be improved to ensure that these issues are considered together when planning and implementing policies.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 14 - By 2020, ecosystems that provide essential services, including services related to water, and contribute to health, livelihoods and well-being, are restored and safeguarded, taking into account the needs of women, indigenous and local communities, and the poor and vulnerable.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 5.9 - Encourage the implementation of CITES with the aim of supporting conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity.

Rationale for the national target

The aim of the CITES Convention is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. Species that are, or in the future might be, endangered by trade, are listed in one of the three CITES annexes. If a species is placed on these lists, the trade in that particular species is subject to strict regulations. By continuous follow-up of the status of the population, trade in specific species-country combinations may be prohibited.

Belgium, as a Member State of the European Community, implements the CITES legislation through two EC Regulations together with the Belgian CITES Act of 1981. Different goals will be prioritised, with the goal of improving the implementation of CITES in Belgium in the short to medium term. In this way, Belgium has and will continue to explore innovative means of increasing capacity and improving enforcement for example by assisting in the exchange of knowledge and expertise at national and EU level.

Belgium has developed an online database system which allows clients to apply for CITES documents via the CITES portal website (www.citesinbelgium.be). This system is up and running since 2015 and facilitates the application for the clients as well as the handling of applications for the CITES Management Authority. A dedicated website is also developed which provides detailed information on the implementation of CITES in Belgium.

On the enforcement site a special unit has been set up that can undertake CITES investigations for the internal trade. This team comprised of 8 people not only covers the CITES controls but also those for the Invasive Alien Species Act as the European Timber Regulation, thus working in an efficient manner on linked legislations.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 4 - By 2020, at the latest, Governments, business and stakeholders at all levels have taken steps to achieve or have implemented plans for sustainable production and consumption and have kept the impacts of use of natural resources well within safe ecological limits.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 5.10 - Maintain and reinforce the social function of biodiversity.

Rationale for the national target

Human beings are dependent on fundamental biological systems and processes for their well-being and enjoyment of life. Until now, there is insufficient recognition (and understanding) of the important connection between biodiversity and social well-being (health, educational attainment, procurement of goods demanded by society, job creation and preservation, relaxation, etc.). The aesthetic values of natural ecosystems and landscapes often contribute to the inspirational, emotional and spiritual well-being of a highly urbanised population.

For all these reasons it is necessary to maintain and learn more about the social benefits of biodiversity and the benefits arising from social variety with a view to reinforcing synergies and reducing social inequalities and the avoidable pressures and negative impacts they exert on biodiversity.

In connection with Objectives 5.8 and 7.5, the social and cultural diversity in Belgium will be duly taken into account when elaborating and implementing biodiversity policies with a view to mobilising in an efficient and equitable way the various publics and actors in society.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 5.11 - Integrate biodiversity values into national (federal and regional) policies, programmes, planning processes and reporting systems, and develop an approach to support incorporation into national accounting if needed.

Rationale for the national target

Decision-making in spatial planning and development projects takes the values of biodiversity into account. Where appropriate, payments for ecosystem services are considered a useful policy tool, notably when it promotes measures that go beyond the scope of the sustainable management of natural resources or in the framework of restoration.

As far as national accounts are concerned, the UN System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) already provides a methodology for some aspects of natural capital accounting. But much work remains to be done, especially on accounting for regulating ecosystem services. Belgium contributes to the related international endeavours. Work on adequate means to integrate natural capital considerations into private sector accounting is stimulated.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 2 - By 2020, at the latest, biodiversity values have been integrated into national and local development and poverty reduction strategies and planning processes and are being incorporated into national accounting, as appropriate, and reporting systems.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 6 - Promote and contribute to an equitable access to and sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources - ABS

Rationale for the national target

The fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of genetic resources forms the third objective of the CBD and is as important as the other two for the purpose of achieving the goal of halting biodiversity loss by 2020.

As access to GRs usually only involves taking small samples of material, its impact on biodiversity as such is relatively limited. However, respect for the ABS dispositions of the CBD and the provisions of the Nagoya Protocol once it comes into force, is of paramount importance to biodiversity as it could provide a direct incentive for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, in particular in the world's biologically richer (but often economically poorer) countries.

Between 2004 and 2010, Belgium actively took part in the negotiations and development of a transparent International Regime on Access and Benefit-Sharing according to the mandate adopted at the 7th Conference of the Parties to the CBD. The adoption of the ABS Protocol in Nagoya at the 10th Conference of the Parties to the CBD on 30 October 2010, under the Belgian Presidency of the EU, was an essential part of the package that made this Conference a success (together with the adoption of an ambitious Strategic Plan until 2020 and of a Resource Mobilization Strategy) but it is also just the first step.

The Nagoya Protocol

In 2010, the Parties to the CBD adopted the Nagoya Protocol on access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing arising from their utilization.

In the meantime, other instruments dealing with Access and Benefit-Sharing were also negotiated and / or entered into force, and are mutually supportive, as stated in the recitals and Article 4 of the Nagoya Protocol. Some of these are directly relevant to Belgium. For instance, Belgium ratified the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in 2007.

Belgium is bound by the relevant ABS provisions of the CBD, which provides the general framework for the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol, and has already taken several initiatives to implement the ABS dispositions of the CBD. This is done through its patent legislation and by developing a voluntary code of conduct to help countries comply with the requirements on Access and Benefit-Sharing for transferring microbial genetic resources ('Micro-organisms Sustainable Use and Access Regulation International Code of Conduct, MOSAICC'). Furthermore, the Royal Botanic Garden of Belgium is a member of the International Plant Exchange Network (IPEN) programme of various EU botanic gardens for the exchange of plant material. IPEN allows participating gardens to exchange material for non-commercial purposes in accordance with the objectives of the CBD.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets:

Target 16 - By 2015, the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization is in force and operational, consistent with national legislation.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

The stakeholders involved in the implementation of this objective are: the federal, regional and municipal authorities and institutions, the regional nature agencies, various sectors active in Research and Development (including healthcare, biotechnology...), universities, professional federations involved in the sectors concerned, the general public, TK holders, the CBD Secretariat, users of GRs, and any association working towards the same goal as the NBS.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 6.1 - By 2014, raise awareness about the concept of ABS in the context of the CBD and the Nagoya Protocol, and widely disseminate information on ABS.

Rationale for the national target

It is important to raise the level of awareness of users and providers of genetic resources on the CBD and related ABS provisions, including the Nagoya Protocol, as well as on 'best practices'. As the ABS provisions of the CBD and the Nagoya Protocol are insufficiently known and can be ambiguous and difficult to understand for practitioners, it is important that more efforts are made to promote their understanding, explain their relevance and implications, and build capacities.

A first step towards an information campaign on ABS issues has been taken by Belgium by launching an analysis of Belgian stakeholders' awareness of the ABS provisions, and the impact of these provisions on their policy towards the implementation of ABS principles. Following this assessment, Belgium has included several awareness-raising and capacity building activities in the Federal Plan for the integration of biodiversity in four key sectors (2009-2013).

Within the context of the national study on the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol, two stakeholder workshops took place in 2012. These stakeholder workshops had a dual purpose: raising awareness among stakeholders about the provisions of the Nagoya Protocol; and providing stakeholders with an opportunity to comment on the study and feed these back into the process of implementation.

An important supporting tool to exchange information on the CBD and its related Protocols is the Belgian Clearing-House Mechanism of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD CHM) which is part of an international network of CBD CHMs. It was set up to illustrate what Belgium is doing within the framework and the implementation of the CBD (Belgian CBD CHM: <http://www.biodiv.be/>).

In the Belgian development cooperation programmes related to biodiversity, which are implemented in the southern partner countries, support for the implementation of the national CBD clearing houses is a priority.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 16 - By 2015, the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization is in force and operational, consistent with national legislation.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 6.2 - By 2014, ratify and implement the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization.

Rationale for the national target

Belgium signed the Nagoya Protocol on 20 September 2011. On 27 October 2011, the Inter-ministerial Conference on the Environment confirmed that the “speedy ratification of the ABS protocol is a high priority for Belgium”. By 2015, the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization was to be in force and operational, consistent with national legislation (Aichi Target 16). However in 2014, the first meeting of the Parties to the NP was expected to take place concurrently with CBD COP12. Given the long-term involvement of Belgium in the development of the Protocol, and its role as EU representative (2010-2014), it was politically important for Belgium to be able to participate as a Party to the first COP/MOP. It was therefore necessary to ratify the NP by 2014 and to start the process towards implementing it.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 16 - By 2015, the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization is in force and operational, consistent with national legislation.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 6.3 - By 2020, have mechanisms in place to enhance national and global cooperation on ABS issues.

Rationale for the national target

Access and benefit-sharing is a major CBD issue, but the issue of access, exchange and use of genetic resources is also of concern for other forums.

Some of the most important international forums addressing ABS issues are:

- The Food and Agriculture Organisation (International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, Phytosanitary agreements)
- The World Trade Organisation (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights – TRIPS – agreement)
- The World Intellectual Property Organisation and in particular its Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore.
- The World Health Organization and more specifically, the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework for the sharing of influenza viruses and access to vaccines and other benefits

Better cooperation between CBD and these forums is necessary to improve effective implementation and ensure coherent and consistent positions in these forums.

There might also be a link between CBD and CITES on ABS issues where it could be relevant for CITES implementation authorities and CBD-related authorities to have a full understanding of ABS issues and how they might be affected by CITES implementation and vice versa. A better understanding of ABS issues could ensure that decisions taken under CITES and CBD are coherent so as to avoid misunderstandings or misinterpretations.

At Belgian level, coordination mechanisms under the Coordination Committee for the International Environment Policy should be further refined to ensure cooperation between focal points for the coherent national implementation of ABS related provisions under the different relevant processes.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 16 - By 2015, the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization is in force and operational, consistent with national legislation.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 6.4 - By 2020, create operational mechanisms to protect the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Rationale for the national target

Indigenous and local communities are closely linked with biodiversity and contribute to its protection. Traditional knowledge possessed by indigenous and local communities on the possible uses of the biodiversity that surrounds them forms an important basis for the conservation of biodiversity and its sustainable use. It is an important resource, particularly in the search for genetic resources of potential value. This age-old knowledge needs to be preserved and maintained.

Holders of traditional knowledge are key stakeholders in ABS agreements and initiatives. Article 8j of the CBD addresses specifically the respect, preservation and maintenance of the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. It also encourages the wider application of this knowledge, with the approval and involvement of those holding it, on the understanding that any benefits that arise from the use of such traditional knowledge associated with GRs will be shared.

Moreover, the Nagoya Protocol reinforces Article 8j of the CBD by requiring Parties to take measures, as appropriate, in order that the benefits arising from the utilization of traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources and of genetic resources that are held by indigenous and local communities (in accordance with domestic legislation regarding the established rights of these indigenous and local communities over these genetic resources) are shared in a fair and equitable way with indigenous and local communities (ILCs) holding such knowledge or such genetic resources (Article 5). Similarly, Articles 6 and 7 of the Nagoya Protocol require that Parties shall take measures with the aim of ensuring that Prior Informed Consent or approval and involvement of ILC is obtained (in accordance with domestic law) to access to genetic resources and traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources held by those ILCs.

Article 15.1 of ILO Convention 169 specifically recognizes the rights of indigenous and local communities to the natural resources on their territories, including the right to participate in the use, management and conservation of these resources.

Belgium participates in relevant international discussions and has subscribed to several processes concerning traditional knowledge. Traditional knowledge, innovations and practices should be recognised in access and benefit-sharing arrangements. The participation of representatives of indigenous and local communities in appropriate forums should be supported. Furthermore, the preservation and sharing of traditional knowledge will be integrated into those Belgian development cooperation or scientific cooperation projects that target indigenous and local communities as primary stakeholders.

Considering GMOs in agriculture covered by patents owned by multinationals, special care should be taken to avoid that their use would alter or eliminate traditional agricultural practices, leading to biodiversity as well as to social threats (cf. obj. 4c.7; 4d.3 and 4f.4). Moreover, transgenes being sometimes possibly issued from living organisms traditionally known for their interesting properties, equitable sharing of benefits arising from those genes should be promoted.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 18 - By 2020, the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and their customary use of biological resources, are respected, subject to national legislation and relevant international obligations, and fully integrated and reflected in the implementation of the Convention with the full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities, at all relevant levels.

Other related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is indirectly related.)

Target 16 - By 2015, the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization is in force and operational, consistent with national legislation.

Relevant websites, web links, and files (Please use this field to indicate any relevant websites, web links or documents where additional information related to this national target can be found.)

<Add link> <Add file>

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 6.5 - By 2015, have a functional Access and Benefit Sharing Clearing House in place.

Rationale for the national target

The Nagoya Protocol in particular establishes an Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing House (ABS-CH) as part of the CBD CHM. The ABS CH should serve as a means for sharing information related to access and benefit sharing (art.14 of the Protocol). Moreover it has a role to play in awareness-raising including about the importance of genetic resources and traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources and is seen

as an important tool to promote and enhance legal certainty, clarity and transparency in the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol. In this respect, one of the main goals of the CH should be to support compliance by contributing to clearness, transparency and certainty.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 16 - By 2015, the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization is in force and operational, consistent with national legislation.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 7 - Improve and communicate scientific knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem services

Rationale for the national target

Effective conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity requires the correct identification and spatio-temporal monitoring of all its components at all its levels of organisation, i.e. from genes to ecosystems. Adequate knowledge of the status and trends of biodiversity and of the services it provides is a prerequisite for an adaptive management of the ecosystems. Yet we are faced with many gaps in our knowledge on biodiversity primary data and on the role of taxa in ecosystem functioning.

The consequences of present and future biodiversity loss, both for ecosystem health and for human well-being, are poorly understood, while the effectiveness of policy responses remains largely undocumented. Impacts of alien invasive species have been insufficiently addressed. Creating synergy between policy responses and research depends largely on our ability to improve and communicate our existing knowledge as well as the necessary additional knowledge on biodiversity.

Addressing the gaps will require (i) more investment and capacity-building in key biological disciplines such as taxonomy and ecology, (ii) easy and open access to biodiversity data and research information [78], and (iii) improvement of the coordination and communication between policy and research.

The aforementioned gaps are particularly prevalent in developing countries. The Belgian Government provides increasing support and funding to research and training, with the aim of improving knowledge of and capacity-building for biodiversity in these countries. These efforts will in turn contribute to improve the implementation of the multilateral environmental agreements ratified by these countries.

The operational objectives in this National Biodiversity Strategy draw on the research objectives in the Message from Malahide (Duke, 2005), in particular on Objective 16, the Killarney Declaration and Recommendations, and on the European Action Plan for Biodiversity Research (www.epbrs.org).

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets:

Target 19 - By 2020, knowledge, the science base and technologies relating to biodiversity, its values, functioning, status and trends, and the consequences of its loss, are improved, widely shared and transferred, and applied.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

The stakeholders involved in the implementation of this objective are: the federal authority and regional authorities for environment and agriculture, educational establishments, national networks of scientific and policy experts in support of the IPBES, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform (focusing on knowledge brokerage, topical knowledge incubation, and mobilizing/publishing biodiversity data), universities, Federal Research Institutes, NGOs, sectors, The National Biosafety Council, researchers, the Belgian Development Agency, the general public and any association working towards the same goal as the NBS.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 7.1 - Compile and synthesise existing data and information and disseminate this knowledge to a wider audience.

Rationale for the national target

The book 'Biodiversity in Belgium, a country study' (*Peeters et al.*, 2003) presents a detailed overview of existing knowledge on Belgium's biodiversity (status, trends and threats). In addition, this country study also emphasises the urgent need to extend and deepen our understanding of all components of our biodiversity.

Further compilations and synthesis of existing data and (meta) information, making full use of electronic tools, will provide an even more solid background for detecting gaps in research needs and policy-relevant priorities, and could serve as an essential catalogue to support the access to genetic resources. The development of a web portal, in accordance with obligations in the framework of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), could serve as a basis for a national register of species.

The dissemination of scientific data and information on biodiversity should not only be aimed at the scientific community, but should reach the widest audience possible in an adapted language, including decision-makers, teachers, students and the general public. The development of databases to access ongoing and past studies and research could be a very useful tool to this end. This will require the primary scientific data and conclusions to be presented in a format and language accessible for a non-specialist audience. This will be particularly important when biodiversity themes are incorporated in educational and public awareness programmes.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 19 - By 2020, knowledge, the science base and technologies relating to biodiversity, its values, functioning, status and trends, and the consequences of its loss, are improved, widely shared and transferred, and applied.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

Mobilising and publishing biodiversity data is one of the key areas of work of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, also serving as national focal point to GBIF. The [Belgian Data Portal](#) showcases biodiversity data published by Belgium through [GBIF](#) and its scientific use by Belgian authors.

Relevant websites, web links, and files (Please use this field to indicate any relevant websites, web links or documents where additional information related to this national target can be found.)

GBIF Belgian Country report:

https://www.gbif.org/sites/default/files/gbif_analytics/country/BE/GBIF_CountryReport_BE.pdf

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 7.2 - Promote and encourage research that contributes to the knowledge and understanding of Belgium's biodiversity and ecosystem services and their values.

Rationale for the national target

Full and effective implementation of many of the actions identified in the Belgian Biodiversity Strategy requires a considerable improvement in the knowledge and understanding of Belgium's biodiversity and ecosystem services provided. Methodologies to value biodiversity and ecosystem services, including the ecological aspects related to ecosystem structure and functions, the socio-economic aspects and the monetary aspects, are being developed, notably in support of operational objective 5.11. More research is also needed on biodiversity at the genetic, species and ecosystem levels, while the peer-reviewed output of this research must be disseminated rapidly, in order to allow for adaptive management.

Obviously, several issues in the Belgian Biodiversity Strategy need immediate action, for instance to remedy imminent threats for which there is insufficient time to allow for in-depth research to underpin rescue actions. On the other hand, in the absence of extensive research data, such immediate actions risk failure or producing negative, unexpected side effects. It is therefore essential to design research projects in such a way that the expected results can guide and underpin immediate actions, and also generate data that may help to plan and achieve biodiversity conservation and management in the long term.

Major research impulses are required in the areas of taxonomy and ecology, including inventory projects, protocols for rapid biodiversity assessment, and programmes for long-term monitoring, as well as in detailed ad hoc conservation initiatives (for example in nature reserves and other protected areas). The establishment of thematic inventories (agricultural biodiversity, medicinal plants biodiversity) should be promoted as well as the establishment of a precise cartography of plants related to potentially imminent GMO cultures.

Specific research should also focus on the links between, inter alia, biodiversity and health, biodiversity and climate change, in terms of potential and opportunity to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 19 - By 2020, knowledge, the science base and technologies relating to biodiversity, its values, functioning, status and trends, and the consequences of its loss, are improved, widely shared and transferred, and applied.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 7.3 - Develop adequate monitoring methodologies and biodiversity indicators.

Rationale for the national target

Monitoring of biodiversity and remedying of the causes of threatening processes are inherent to all the objectives of Belgium's Biodiversity Strategy, and in particular to its Objectives 1 and 2. Hence more research should be carried out on monitoring methodologies and the development of biodiversity indicators. These research efforts should be conducted in agreement and, if possible, in collaboration with similar programmes carried out at a European and international level, and should take the Aichi biodiversity targets and SEBI-initiative into consideration.

The definition of national standards for biodiversity inventories and monitoring using an appropriate set of common indicators (see Objective 1) will enable the evaluation and communication of progress made by Belgium towards the 2020 target, and help fulfil reporting obligations to international bodies. It will also allow for an adaptive management of components of biodiversity (in particular with regard to climate change), and for strengthening policies related to activities and processes that threaten biodiversity.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 19 - By 2020, knowledge, the science base and technologies relating to biodiversity, its values, functioning, status and trends, and the consequences of its loss, are improved, widely shared and transferred, and applied.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 7.4 - Map and assess the state of ecosystems and their services and assess the values of such services.

Rationale for the national target

The EU "Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services" (MAES) initiative aims to improve knowledge of ecosystems and their services (EU Biodiversity Strategy target 2, action 5). This implies that Member States, with the assistance of the European Commission, map and assess the state of ecosystems and their services on their national territory (by 2014) and assess the values of such services and promote the integration of these values into accounting and reporting systems at EU and national levels (by 2020).

Research will be needed to attain these goals, and to come to a better understanding of ecosystem processes as well as of how humans use biodiversity, how these uses affect biodiversity and ecosystem services, and how this usage can be sustainable. Initiatives under the community of practice on Belgian Ecosystems and Society (BEES community [80]) of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform are being taken in this context. The Belgian MAES working group was initiated in 2012 and includes Belgian biodiversity and ecosystem services experts and stakeholders (see also operational objective 7.5 hereunder).

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 19 - By 2020, knowledge, the science base and technologies relating to biodiversity, its values, functioning, status and trends, and the consequences of its loss, are improved, widely shared and transferred, and applied.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

Other National Indicators:

* FLE111 - Flemish Region 11. Conservation status of habitats of European interest

* WAL005 - Walloon Region: Conservation status of habitats

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 7.5 - Evaluate the level of integration of biodiversity into sectoral policies and their impact on biodiversity

Rationale for the national target

Biodiversity in Belgium is mainly threatened by anthropogenic activities, often governed by sectoral policies. Specific research should be developed both to increase current knowledge on the impact of sectoral policies on biodiversity, and to assess the level of integration of biodiversity into these sectoral policies.

The integration of biodiversity management into sectoral policies implies that biodiversity-related issues will be mainstreamed into all socio-economic sectors, such as agriculture, biotechnology, energy, fishery, forestry and tourism.

More research is needed to evaluate the level of integration of biodiversity and for example gain an idea of the effects of present day agrotechnology on both agricultural biodiversity and wild flora and fauna (for example pollinators). Research should also include the study of the effects of emerging technologies (for example GMOs and nanotechnologies) on biodiversity (see Operational Objective 2.1).

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 19 - By 2020, knowledge, the science base and technologies relating to biodiversity, its values, functioning, status and trends, and the consequences of its loss, are improved, widely shared and transferred, and applied.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 7.6 - Improve our knowledge of the socio-economic benefits of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Rationale for the national target

The integration of socio-economic sciences into the field of biodiversity research is of major importance in order to slow down and halt the continuing human-mediated loss of biodiversity. This should include the analysis of public awareness and perceptions, and consumers' attitudes and preferences with regard to biodiversity, and then how both of these factors relate to behaviour and public policy.

To influence policy-making and stimulate public awareness, increased knowledge of the values of biodiversity (not limited to pure economic value) is needed, for instance by improving methods for their valuation and by conducting high-profile studies on the values of biodiversity and ecosystem services in ecosystems of topical interest. In the valuation process, the relationships between health (physical and mental well-being) and biodiversity should also be investigated. More research should be dedicated to the link between changes in biodiversity and the rise in incidence of some already existing human and animal diseases or in the emergence of new ones.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 19 - By 2020, knowledge, the science base and technologies relating to biodiversity, its values, functioning, status and trends, and the consequences of its loss, are improved, widely shared and transferred, and applied.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 7.7 - Improve the Science-Policy interface in biodiversity and promote actor participation.

Rationale for the national target

The existing interfaces between policy and research, with not enough research being policy-relevant, and insufficient application of existing knowledge in policy-making, should be strengthened. This will require efforts at different levels: not only from the scientific to the policy level, but also the other way round.

The recent establishment of an Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) creates an appropriate stage for the improvement of the science-policy interface. Belgium plays an active role in the operationalization of the Platform through its membership and through national networks of scientific and policy experts in support of the IPBES, such as the BEES Community of Practice or the Belgian Community of Practice on Biodiversity and Health (COPBH). Belgium also has a platform dedicated to science-policy interfacing (i.e. the Belgian Biodiversity Platform), hosting the national focal points for GBIF, IPBES and IUCN – and coordinating several communities of practice as the ones mentioned above.

Previous and ongoing research and science communication programmes could be valorised as useful models for bringing together different experts, generalists, and other stakeholders driven by the need to deliver a response to a complex problem. They could also contribute to translating research outcomes into policy advice, developing policy support tools, and promoting policy-relevant research.

Innovative solutions and methodologies are required to optimise the links between research and policy and promote actor's participation in the development and implementation of new policies. The fragmentation of

the institutional framework in Belgium often brings many people together in discussions on biodiversity, which does not always lead to an efficient work. Creative solutions should be proposed to install a mechanism and institutional arrangements aiming to simplify procedures and ensure participation (a.o. participation and consultation methods, effective communication models, etc.). The positive and negative impacts of socio-cultural and economic factors (a.o. recreation) must also be assessed.

An important aspect of linking research to policy is effective communication. Training courses and materials could be developed to help researchers communicate more effectively, not only the results of their research but also the process of research, in order to better highlight the way research is planned and executed. Decision-makers could also benefit from training in using and requesting scientific advice (e.g. how to ask the right questions) and in the identification of suitable sources of information.

The ability of administrations to make use of scientific information could be enhanced by encouraging secondments from universities and scientific institutions, into government. Secondments the other way – of officials taking a sabbatical in a university or in a scientific institution – might also help develop expertise and networks.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 19 - By 2020, knowledge, the science base and technologies relating to biodiversity, its values, functioning, status and trends, and the consequences of its loss, are improved, widely shared and transferred, and applied.

Relevant websites, web links, and files (Please use this field to indicate any relevant websites, web links or documents where additional information related to this national target can be found.)

Belgian Biodiversity Platform: www.biodiversity.be.
IPBES Belgian Focal Point: www.biodiversity.be/ipbes.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 7.8 - Promote research on the effects of GMOs and products of synthetic biology on biodiversity and on related socio-economic aspects, and on methodologies to assess these.

Rationale for the national target

Methods are needed to predict and prevent potential invasive behaviour of GMOs released into the environment, especially for new types of GMOs, and if already relevant, for products ensuing from synthetic biology or other new genetic modification techniques. In order to allow coexistence of different forms of culture and to avoid potential negative effects of transgenes on the wild environment, research is also needed to develop reliable methods to predict and reduce the probability of transfers of genetic material from transgenic organisms.

There is also a need to adapt and, if necessary develop methodologies in order to monitor and coordinate data on potential unforeseen effects of GMOs, not only on individual species but also on community structures of the ecosystem, after their deliberated release and commercialisation. In order to pursue objective 4c.7, case-by-case monitoring of potentially adverse effects on biodiversity as a result of the

introduction of GMO cultures in Belgium should be undertaken. If risk evaluation and monitoring methods are already suggested by the guidelines of the strongest world biosafety regulations like those of the EU, the implementation of such guidelines should be seriously and completely pursued in a professional and transparent way.

As such GMO risk evaluations need to consider different ecosystems and agro- ecosystems as well as various species, including non-targets species, and especially those that are of particular relevance such as biological indicator species, or that play a specific role in the ecosystem (earthworms, mycorrhizal fungi associated with roots, etc.). Better risk assessments on GMOs and avoidance of negative impacts on human health and the environment must be ensured to contribute to the Aichi objectives.

Furthermore, as encouraged by Article 26 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, extensive socio-economic studies on the impacts of GMO cultures introduction in Belgium and elsewhere in the world should in particular be undertaken (link with Objectives 4c.7, 4d.3, 4f.4, 5.8, and 6). Capacity building on biosecurity can and should be integrated into development plans with partner countries.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 19 - By 2020, knowledge, the science base and technologies relating to biodiversity, its values, functioning, status and trends, and the consequences of its loss, are improved, widely shared and transferred, and applied.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 8 - Involve the community through communication, education, public awareness and training

Rationale for the national target

As for many measures related to sustainable development, the success of the implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategy will depend on the understanding by civil society, private organisations and the public authorities of the importance of, and the measures required for the protection of biodiversity.

Several initiatives have already been taken, in different forms at different levels, by the different bodies involved in nature education activities. Local plans ('Plan Communaux pour le développement de la Nature', 'Gemeentelijke en provinciale milieubeleidsplannen', river contracts, etc.) have been developed to communicate and involve stakeholders. The primary and secondary education programmes have included some basic education on nature issues. Some initiatives have also been taken at the higher-education level. Volunteer associations are involved in nature and environmental education. Administrations and scientific institutions are also involved in communication activities (publication of brochures, articles, etc.). However, the work done has been fragmented and not sufficiently complementary. Furthermore, groups having a greater impact on nature are not targeted enough and should receive specialised education.

In communication, it is crucial to link biodiversity to culture and to make use of the new and traditional media to raise awareness on the problems encountered by biodiversity (a.o. games, theatre, press, radio, video, TV, internet).

Belgium can also draw on the results of existing programmes of Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) that proved to be successful in a similar context. CEPA programmes were developed by the Ramsar Convention and by the EU for Natura 2000.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets:

Target 1 - By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

The stakeholders involved in the implementation of this objective are: the federal, regional and municipal authorities, media organizations, associations of teachers and educational establishments, naturalist associations, youth organisations, educational institutions and museums, research institutions, government agencies, NGOs, the general public and any association working towards the same goal as the NBS.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 8.1 - Strive to include biodiversity and ecosystem services as well as the ecosystem approach in educational programmes.

Rationale for the national target

Many students place environmental issues, and even biodiversity protection, high on their list of concerns. Unfortunately, few are aware either of the threats to their immediate surroundings or of the opportunities for taking concrete steps in their everyday life. The education system has an essential role to play in this regard.

Teaching and training should focus on the development of skills that will enhance understanding and acceptance of the need for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. Information should be presented not simply as science, but in a social, economic and political context, so that students can better understand which complex circumstances form the background for the making of decisions on biodiversity conservation. The practical knowledge, such as the recognition of plants and animals should also be promoted. Courses addressing the values attached to biodiversity and ecosystem services, and planning programmes applying the ecosystem approach should be proposed throughout the educational system, from primary and secondary school to technical colleges and universities as well as outside the school system (youth organisations, continuous training). For example, awareness campaigns for youth organisations and particularly scouts would be very useful to explain how they can cause damages to natural areas, directly or indirectly.

There are at present several environmental and sustainable development education programmes in the formal education system in Belgium, particularly at the primary school level. Biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services must be systematically included in the executive terms* of all school programmes at the different school and higher education levels. To this end, better educational support must be provided to schools and teachers (for example, development of educative packages and publications on biodiversity aimed at the students).

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 1 - By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 8.2 - Promote understanding of the importance of biodiversity and improve knowledge of Belgium's biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Rationale for the national target

It is necessary to encourage a greater understanding and appreciation of the value of biodiversity and its functions in ecosystems for human well-being at all levels of decision-making and among enterprises, the general public, etc. The public must understand how it impacts on nature and biodiversity and what it can do to limit this. Belgian household consumption and production patterns have a significant impact on the environment and on biodiversity. It is crucial to convince people of the necessity to evolve towards sustainable production, consumption, land use and mobility patterns.

There are plentiful proposals to help make of nature and biodiversity a citizen stake. Modern technologies and expanding access to electronic communication bring innovative possibilities for promoting and encouraging understanding of the importance of, and measures required for its conservation. Nevertheless, the importance of traditional communication systems must not be neglected (public media, local press, weekly TV and radio programmes on nature and biodiversity, thematic exhibitions, round-table discussions, etc.). Besides, the meaning of biodiversity, and the ecosystem services it provides, and the consequences of its decline should be communicated in terms that are tailored to the specific audience concerned.

NGOs, naturalist associations, youth organisations, educational institutions and museums, research institutions, government agencies and the media play a key role in raising public awareness and communicating the importance of local and global biodiversity protection. They should be encouraged by Federal, Regional or municipality bodies to ensure the continued availability of accurate and persuasive information about the benefits, costs and means of biodiversity protection. Specific yearly programmes and fairs organized by these organisations (such as the International Biodiversity Day on 22 May and events related to specific sites or species) should also be supported.

Several local participatory instruments aiming, among other things, at raising public awareness (for instance Communal Plans for Nature Development, River Contracts and Natural Parks) and local initiatives providing a public service on environmental information and awareness (for instance Nature Education Centres for visitors near the main natural reserves, CRIE) must be supported and developed further. The importance and the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services, as well as the richness of our natural patrimony, should be explained to all the citizens.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 1 - By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 8.3 - Raise awareness among, and provide thematic training courses for the sectors that impact directly or indirectly on biodiversity, including the private sector, using language tailored to the specific nature of the target sector.

Rationale for the national target

Several sectors that have quite a considerable (direct or indirect) impact on biodiversity and which should integrate biodiversity consideration (conservation and sustainable use) into their practices must be the target audience for awareness-raising activities. Communication strategies and adapted training cycles must be set up to explain how the respective sectors can improve their practices to help meet the 2020 target of halting the loss of biodiversity. These sectors must be made to commit themselves to adopting and promoting good practice.

Specific communication strategies also must be developed to address the private sector as the activities of business and industry have major impacts on biodiversity. The private sector has the potential to make a significant contribution towards achieving the 2020 target by adopting and promoting good biodiversity practice, sharing relevant expertise and technologies with the public sector, and helping to mainstream biodiversity.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 1 - By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 9 - Strengthen the biodiversity-related regulatory framework and ensure the implementation of, compliance with and enforcement of biodiversity related legislations

Rationale for the national target

Legislation is an important tool that can contribute to achieving the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable use of its components.

The regulatory framework needs to be clear and precise. It must be respected by everybody and adapted where necessary.

As many people will not comply with the law unless there are clear consequences for noncompliance, enforcement is essential to ensure compliance with existing legislations aiming at protecting biodiversity. Penalties have to be proportional, deterrent and effective.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

The stakeholders involved in the implementation of this objective are: the federal and regional authorities, the judiciary, the law enforcement departments, customs, the police, and any association working towards the same goal as the NBS.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 9.1 - Ensure that the National Strategy is supported by effective legislation and improve its enforcement.

Rationale for the national target

Belgium needs to review existing legislative framework with respect to the goals of this Strategy, and take the necessary steps to improve it where necessary.

Besides, authorities must make sure that the relevant legislation is duly implemented and enforced.

The “National Security Plan 2012-2015” (Federale Politie – Police Fédérale, 2012) aims at helping police forces address security issues on a global and integrated way and enhance the cohesion of their action. It identifies ten priority criminal areas for 2012-2015, which includes the environment, restricted to waste traffic.

Within the customs and excise administration (FPS Finances), emphasis is currently put on security in the broad sense, including several areas such as the protection of the fauna and flora (CITES). In this optic, a CITES target group has been established; its purpose is to analyse risks in this field. All enforcement actors related to CITES are united in the Belgian Enforcement Group which regularly interacts with the federal CITES team to ensure adequate enforcement of CITES in Belgium.

Belgium should make sure that biodiversity is included in priority security areas. In addition, the various aspects of biodiversity must be included in legal information processing tools, such as FEEDIS (Feeding Information System) or the national databank.

The staff responsible for checking compliance with biodiversity related regulations must be strengthened, both in term of capacity and organisation, in order to make the presence of these services more effective on the ground and to be able to effectively implement prosecution policy and execute penalties related to biodiversity offences.

A proactive approach and the use of specific investigation methods could also be developed since tracking offences related to biodiversity regulations proves to be very difficult.

As a result of the division of powers in Belgium, most biodiversity-related offences are recorded by the regional authorities while the prosecution policy falls within the scope of the Federal State. Therefore, cooperation and coordination at the national level among all the actors involved (including inspection services, administrations and customs services) need to be enhanced in order to ensure coherent and compatible measures and methodologies. International information exchange mechanisms also need to be optimised (Interpol, Europol, etc.).

Finally, given the complex nature of the issue, specific training need to be set up for the actors involved in combating biodiversity-related crime (police and control services, customs, etc.). In this respect, the needs relate in particular to improving legal as well as technical and scientific knowledge.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 9.2 - Ensure full implementation and improve enforcement of biodiversity-related legislations, including the Birds and Habitats Directives, through inter alia training programmes for the relevant authorities, in particular judges, prosecutors, inspectors and custom officials.

Rationale for the national target

As foreseen by the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 (Action 3c), Belgium will facilitate enforcement of the Birds and Habitats Directives by providing specific training programmes on Natura 2000 for judges and public prosecutors, and by developing better compliance promotion capacities.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 4 - By 2020, at the latest, Governments, business and stakeholders at all levels have taken steps to achieve or have implemented plans for sustainable production and consumption and have kept the impacts of use of natural resources well within safe ecological limits.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 9.3 - Ensure full compliance with and enforcement of the environmental liability regime (i.e. Directive 2004/35 CE on environmental liability) towards biodiversity offences.

Rationale for the national target

Environmental liability aims at making the person or organization that caused the environmental damage (the polluter) pay for remedying the damage that he has caused (the "polluter pays" principle).

Directive 2004/35/CE of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 April 2004 establish a framework of environmental liability based on the 'polluter-pays' principle, to prevent and remedy environmental damage. The fundamental principle of this Directive is that an operator whose activity has caused environmental damages or imminent threat of such damage is to be held financially liable for preventing or remedying this damage. It is expected this regulation will induce operators to adopt measures and develop

practices to minimize the risks of environmental damage so that their exposure to financial liabilities is reduced.

The Directive puts in place a comprehensive liability regime for damage to the environment. In particular, it introduces a comprehensive regime for damage to valuable elements of biodiversity - protected species and natural habitats, to water and land, and to services provided by these natural resources.

A permanent working group gathering regional and federal authorities has been established to ensure, to a certain extent and in respect of the share of competences between the different authorities, adequate and coherent implementation of the Directive.

National laws on liability for damage caused by activities that are hazardous to the environment will be thus different from the common civil liability regime as they will not concern the classical range of damages (human health or property) but will cover biodiversity and ecosystem services damage as well as land damage or water damage. This will encourage parties concerned to take more precautions towards biodiversity.

Nevertheless, one of the major difficulties when implementing the directive concerns the evaluation of damage caused to biodiversity and this has to be done taking account of the cost of restoration or the cost of alternative solutions if restoration is not possible.

This should be taken into account when transposing the EU directive into national legislations.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 4 - By 2020, at the latest, Governments, business and stakeholders at all levels have taken steps to achieve or have implemented plans for sustainable production and consumption and have kept the impacts of use of natural resources well within safe ecological limits.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 10 - Ensure a coherent implementation of / and between biodiversity-related commitments and agreements

Rationale for the national target

There are five global “biodiversity-related conventions”: the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar), and the World Heritage Convention (WHC). The two other Rio conventions (the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) are also relevant to biodiversity.

All these conventions overlap in regard to requirements for the Parties in the field of research, reporting, education and public awareness, the need for capacity-building, synthesising scientific data, the involvement of stakeholders, etc.

Furthermore, some specific biodiversity-related issues are dealt with under several conventions (for example, invasive alien species are tackled by the CBD, CITES, CMS, Ramsar and UNFCCC).

Besides these international commitments and agreements, several regional conventions and agreements relevant to biodiversity also have to be implemented (Bern Convention, Birds and Habitats Directives, AEWA, EUROBATS, etc.).

This underlines the strong need for synergies in the national implementation of these commitments to guarantee complementary and mutual reinforcement. Stronger synergies at national level will decrease duplication of effort, avoid contradiction and mean more efficient use of the available resources.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

The stakeholders involved in the implementation of this objective are: the national focal points of biodiversity-related conventions, steering groups within the CCIEP, the Belgian Development Agency, universities, and any association working towards the same goal as the NBS.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 10.1 - Ensure a coherent implementation of biodiversity-related agreements to which Belgium is a Party.

Rationale for the national target

Belgium is a Party to most major international and regional agreements related to biodiversity. It is necessary for Belgium to ensure its continued involvement with these agreements. To this end, Belgium needs to review the status of implementation of all international agreements relevant to the protection of biodiversity and take the necessary steps to ensure their full implementation where needed. Belgium will also continue to adopt other relevant agreements when appropriate.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 10.2 - Reduce overlaps, duplications or contradictions in the implementation of different biodiversity-related conventions.

Rationale for the national target

The decisions of biodiversity-related conventions must be implemented in a coherent and harmonised way. To this end, Belgium needs in the first place a global view of the package of decisions related to issues crosscutting different biodiversity-related conventions (such as deforestation, sustainable use of natural resources, inland waters, climate change, etc.) in order to use and distribute its resources in an optimal fashion. This overview will also help to identify mutual obligatory actions (projects can be designed jointly) and possible conflicting actions between the different biodiversity-related conventions.

One issue particularly relevant in this context is the issue of national reporting. National reports are useful tools to evaluate the degree of implementation of international agreements and to improve implementation. However, reports rarely meet these objectives.

As the national reporting exercises for several conventions are mainly based on similar environmental data, it is important to streamline and harmonise reporting processes across different biodiversity-related conventions to allow countries to meet their reporting requirements and avoid duplication of work.

Furthermore, more communication is needed between the national focal points of biodiversity-related conventions to ensure a more coherent implementation of biodiversity-related commitments and optimise opportunities for synergies. This can be facilitated within existing institutional structures (such as steering groups within the CCIEP) but implies also the development of means at national level to enhance coordination and collaboration between biodiversity-related conventions' focal points on planning, capacity-building, research, reporting, information systems, etc., i.e. through more sharing of information and experiences.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 10.3 - All climate change, biodiversity and desertification cooperation projects funded by Belgium should be assessed to ensure that they are mutually supportive of the objectives of the three Rio conventions.

Rationale for the national target

The three Rio conventions address a number of common substantive and procedural issues. For example, measures to reduce negative impacts from deforestation are relevant to the implementation of the three conventions. Each of these conventions calls for capacity-building, scientific and technical cooperation, the development of specific national plans and strategies, periodic reporting, etc.

The rising impact of climate change on biodiversity as well as the effects of some actions to combat climate change may be relevant to the objectives of the CBD. On the other hand, protection of biodiversity can contribute to climate change mitigation (healthy forests, peat lands and other habitats can limit atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations by storing carbon) and can protect against natural hazards aggravated by climate change.

Desertification has significant impacts on biodiversity. It leads to decreasing soil productivity, has an impact on the hydrological cycle, has the potential to cause local extinction of wild species, etc.

It is important to check that projects initiated by Belgium are in line with the objectives and recommendations of the three Rio conventions. Indeed, numerous climate change, biodiversity or desertification projects face challenges beyond those of a single sector project.

For example, initiatives such as reforestation, adaptation and Clean Development Mechanism projects, as foreseen in the Kyoto Protocol in the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, may have significant impacts on biodiversity and should be designed to enhance biodiversity or, at least, avoid negative impacts on biodiversity (for example by planting multiple species of native trees rather than monospecific plantations of exotic species). Supporting biodiversity to adapt to climate change is fundamental as well as enhancing positive effects of climate change mitigation measures to strengthen biodiversity's resilience. But preventing and minimising potential negative impacts from certain climate change mitigation measures are as important, such as promotion and development of bio fuels and other

forms of renewable energy sources. The external dimension of the relation between climate change and biodiversity should therefore be emphasised.

Therefore, Belgium will develop mechanisms to assess that projects initiated in the framework of one of the Rio conventions are in line with the requirements of the other two.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 11 - Ensure continued and effective international cooperation for the protection of biodiversity.

Rationale for the national target

The protection of biodiversity is a global issue and is best tackled through multilateral cooperation. This is underlined by the CBD stressing the need for countries to cooperate in order to ensure the protection of Earth's biodiversity.

The Millennium Development Goals provide the framework for the entire United Nations system to combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. Biodiversity plays an important role in ensuring that the targets of the Millennium Development Goals (and in goal 1 'Combating poverty and hunger', Goal 6 'Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases', and goal 7 'Ensuring environmental sustainability') for sustainable development are successfully achieved.

The Clearing-House Mechanism is an important tool for the exchange of information and for promoting and facilitating scientific and technical cooperation.

Belgium has developed interregional and bilateral cooperation with countries in its immediate vicinity for an integrated management of transboundary ecosystems.

Also through its development cooperation, Belgium promotes the sustainability of the environment as a crosscutting issue, in which biodiversity is considered.

Biodiversity loss has direct effects on economic development and especially on the livelihood of people in developing countries. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Report (2006) has shown that negative impacts of biodiversity loss and diminution of the benefits arising out of ecosystem services will mainly harm the world's poorest people, who are the least able to adjust to these changes. Intact ecosystems in protected areas provide clean water, food security, and medicine and help prevent natural disasters.

Tackling the loss of biodiversity in those countries will be essential to achieving poverty reduction and sustainable development. Furthermore most developing countries play a crucial role in the conservation of global biodiversity, as they still possess areas with a natural environment and a high biodiversity. All partner countries of Belgian Development Cooperation have also signed the Convention on Biological Diversity as well as many other biodiversity-related agreements. Belgium needs to continue supporting their efforts to respect and implement their commitments under these conventions.

Belgium has already taken some initiatives through its development cooperation policy to improve synergies between MEAs in general and for their synergetic implementation in partner countries.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

The stakeholders involved in the implementation of this objective are: the federal and regional authorities, universities, NGOs, institutions, etc. involved in research, environment and/or development cooperation, CHM national focal point, and any association working towards the same goal as the NBS.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 11.1 - Gain a comprehensive view of all cooperation and interregional projects supported by Belgium.

Rationale for the national target

Belgium is cooperating with developing countries in a broad range of activities and is also involved in several interregional projects. For the moment, no instrument can give an overview of all the projects supported by Belgium. As some of these projects can and will have an impact on biodiversity, it would be helpful to develop a mechanism where information about these initiatives is collected. This would enable the various authorities to have an overview of all the initiatives supported by the different authorities in Belgium and their potential impact on biodiversity. Furthermore, there is need to evaluate whether environment criteria have effectively been taken into account in cooperation projects.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 11.2 - All programmes and projects funded in partner countries have an ex ante environmental assessment procedure, ranging, as appropriate, from environmental screening to full environmental impact assessment or strategic environmental assessment.

Rationale for the national target

All Belgium's development cooperation projects will be more systematically assessed prior to the decision to allocate funds so that potential negative impacts on the biodiversity of recipient countries can be identified at an early stage and be avoided or mitigated. A screening procedure should be systematically applied and, when it proves necessary, a full Environmental Impact Assessment* (EIA) carried out.

Broader strategic approaches, such as "Indicative Cooperation Programmes, "Country Strategic Papers" or "Sector-Wide Approaches" (SWAP), etc., should be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment* (SEA) that includes biodiversity considerations.

Both EIAs and SEAs should be performed by using the existing assessment systems of the recipient country as much as possible. Joint EIAs or SEAs by several donors will be encouraged whenever possible.

Furthermore, ex post evaluations of development cooperation programmes or projects should also integrate biodiversity considerations, even in projects/programmes that are not related to natural resources.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 3 - By 2020, at the latest, incentives, including subsidies, harmful to biodiversity are eliminated, phased out or reformed in order to minimize or avoid negative impacts, and positive incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity are developed and applied, consistent and in harmony with the Convention and other relevant international obligations, taking into account national socio economic conditions.

Other related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is indirectly related.)

Target 4 - By 2020, at the latest, Governments, business and stakeholders at all levels have taken steps to achieve or have implemented plans for sustainable production and consumption and have kept the impacts of use of natural resources well within safe ecological limits.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 11.3 - Make best use of Belgian expertise to support implementation of the Convention in developing countries.

Rationale for the national target

A stronger commitment of developing countries to the Convention will not only contribute to a more successful sustainable development at the global level, but will also allow them to meet the ultimate challenge posed by the 2020 Aichi targets.

Through its multilateral and bilateral activities with developing countries, Belgium will offer its expertise to support institutional and individual capacity-building for the development of effective policies towards the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, including for the identification and monitoring of biodiversity and the development of appropriate science-based policy tools. Scientific and technical cooperation will be promoted, including by facilitating access to biodiversity data stored in Belgian repositories, by transferring relevant technologies, by promoting the further development and use of the CBD Clearing House Mechanism at national level and by supporting the development of ABS relevant legislation. Belgian actors are further encouraged to support this objective through adequate educational and public awareness programmes both in Belgium and in the developing country.

Enhancing and streamlining capacity-building for biodiversity management is a prerequisite for developing countries to improve their scientific capacity in key areas of the Convention, and thus to achieve a better implementation of the obligations imposed by the Convention. Belgium should make full use of its scientific expertise, in universities, institutes and NGOs, to assist developing countries, which are often rich in biodiversity but poor in resources, to make further progress in their implementation of the objectives of the Convention.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 11.4 - Promote integration of biodiversity and biosafety into the development plans of partner countries.

Rationale for the national target

The loss of biodiversity threatens the livelihood of the poorest people in the world, as they depend the most on biodiversity for their subsistence. It has previously been the case that there has been little interest in the integration of biodiversity screening mechanisms into partner countries' own development plans. Such plans tend to set out broad goals and include projects and activities to improve the direct economic development of the country. However, in order to achieve lasting poverty reduction and sustainable development, the environmental dimension and biodiversity in particular should be fully taken into account in these plans. Therefore, Belgium (for example, through the EU or other multi-donor partnerships) will encourage partner countries to integrate biodiversity and biosafety into their Poverty Reduction Strategies and/or National Strategies for Sustainable Development, as well as in their Health programmes and any other of their development initiatives they undertake.

Direct budget support, whether general or sectoral, is an emerging trend in development cooperation. Attention will be focused on this new form of aid, so that policy dialogues leading to budget support decisions are used as opportunities to promote such integration.

Awareness of the concept of the ecological footprint should also be raised.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 11.5 - Enhance international coordination and effective exchange of information between ex situ conservation centres (zoos, botanic gardens).

Rationale for the national target

Gene banks, zoos, plant nurseries, botanic gardens, aquariums, etc. contribute to the ex situ conservation of wild plant and animal species of foreign origin by securing the long-term conservation of species outside their natural habitat (ex situ).

For species and varieties of crops and for domesticated animal races, ex situ conservation centres allow a broad genetic pool to be maintained to ensure the viability and the improvement of quality in the future. On the basis of scientific knowledge, ex situ conservation centres will be encouraged to keep species, varieties and domesticated animal races in a manner that guarantees their conservation. Due to the wide diversity of collections, there is a need to reinforce coordination between ex situ conservation centres, for instance through information-sharing and facilitated access to data of foreign origin for the countries of origin, in order to ensure long-term conservation and facilitated access to information and collections.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 11.6 - Contribute to the creation of an enabling environment for biodiversity in partner countries, based on national priorities, in particular in support of the development of National Protected Area programmes, National Forest Programmes, integrated coastal and marine programmes, or other equivalent instruments, as well as their integration into relevant policy instruments.

Rationale for the national target

Belgium, through its development cooperation policy, will promote and support participatory income-generating activities that are based on the sustainable use of biodiversity and that benefit local populations. In particular the role of farmers as actors for biodiversity protection through implementation of good farming practices and technologies should be encouraged and supported by Belgian development cooperation.

The Belgian DC will also support, on a sustainable way, other biodiversity-based income-generating activities or mechanisms with a potential of local benefits, such as ecotourism, community-managed hunting, fishing and gathering, and maintenance of ecosystem services with collective benefits.

Biosafety capacity building projects, aimed at helping in various ways developing countries to avoid potential negative impacts of GMOs on biodiversity and health, will also be undertaken by Belgian development cooperation policy.

Through policy dialogues with partner countries and other donors, Belgium will also seek to enhance the promotion of access rights, property rights and shared responsibility of indigenous and local communities on biodiversity assets. This policy dialogue will be carried out in accordance with existing international agreements and processes.

The creation of an enabling environment for biodiversity in partner countries needs to be based on their national priorities. However, with due regard for the global Aichi Targets, it is also important that key areas for biodiversity are supported. In particular protected areas, forests and the marine environment have been frequently highlighted as priorities by partner countries during bilateral and multilateral discussions.

Specific attention needs also to be given in development cooperation policy to the establishment of a worldwide representative network of protected areas. National Protected area programmes are the base for achieving numerous Aichi targets in a sustainable way. Protected areas have been in place for many decades; however, their management has not always been as optimal as it might in terms of stopping the loss of biodiversity by 2020. To ensure that the existing and additional to be created protected areas support the implementation of the CBD, Belgium will, based on demands of the partner countries and their national priorities, in its bilateral and multilateral efforts, actively promote the development of National Protected area programmes and the integration of different policy instruments to enhance coordination and coherence of policies aimed at the national protected areas and their biodiversity.

Biodiversity in forests is the richest of all terrestrial ecosystems. Along with the protection of forest areas of high conservation value, Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) will play a crucial role in stopping the loss of biodiversity by 2020. There is an urgent need to enhance the conservation of forest biodiversity by improving forest management and planning practices that incorporate socio-economic and cultural values.

Many wood-producing countries need financial, technical and legislative assistance to prepare and implement national forest programmes for the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests, develop good governance practices, review and implement forest related regulations, tenure and planning systems, promote transparency, combat corruption and strengthen civil society involvement, to provide a basis for sustainable use of forest biodiversity.

National Forest Programmes (NFPs) for the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests are understood as country-led, broadly participative processes to formulate and implement policies and instruments that effectively promote the development of the sector in the context of broader policies and strategies for sustainable development. The goal of NFPs is to promote the conservation and sustainable use of forest resources to meet local, national and global needs, through fostering national and international partnerships to manage, protect and restore forest resources and land, for the benefit of present and future generations. The main objectives are to:

- ✓ introduce intersectoral planning approaches involving all relevant partners, in order to resolve conflicts and generate effective policies and programmes to address problems;
- ✓ raise awareness and mobilise commitments at all levels in order to address the issues related to sustainable forestry development;
- ✓ increase the efficiency and effectiveness of both public and private actions for sustainable forestry development;
- ✓ foster local, national, regional and international partnerships;
- ✓ mobilise and organise national and (if necessary) international resources and catalyse action to implement programmes/plans in a coordinated manner;
- ✓ plan and implement how forests and the forestry sector could contribute to national and global initiatives, for example the Environmental Action Plans and the actions agreed upon to implement the Forest Principles, Chapter 11 of Agenda 21, the Conventions on Biodiversity, on Climate Change and on Desertification.

In its bilateral and multilateral efforts, Belgium will actively promote the development of national forestry programmes and the integration of different policy instruments to enhance coordination and coherence of policies aimed at the promotion of sustainable forest management and the conservation and sustainable use of forest biological diversity.

Today, integrated coastal management (ICM), also known as integrated coastal zone management (ICZM), has become the preferred approach to sustainable development and resource use of coastal areas. Given the dependence of many developing countries on the marine environment for food security, supporting integrated coastal and marine programmes will largely benefit both the partner countries and biodiversity. It will be important to support the partner country to develop the necessary knowledge and capacity (including of the relevant institutions) in order to create the enabling environment to integrate concerns for marine and coastal biodiversity into the relevant sectoral plans.

In its bilateral and multilateral efforts, Belgium will, based on demands of the partner countries and their national priorities, actively promote the development of ICZM to support the partner countries in enhancing coordination and coherence of policies aimed at the conservation and sustainable use of coastal and marine biodiversity.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 12 - Influence the international agenda within biodiversity-related conventions

Rationale for the national target

The protection of biodiversity is a common task that cannot be tackled by one country. In the international and European forums where Belgium is represented, Belgium will actively emphasise the paramount role of biodiversity and promote international involvement.

Belgium can also enhance its contribution to the protection of global biodiversity through the promotion of better coherence and cooperation between biodiversity-related conventions. The promotion of synergies must not result in diluting the content of biodiversity-related conventions. On the contrary, it will ensure their mutual supportiveness while respecting their different characters. Strengthening of synergies and cooperation will make it possible to use the existing resources in a more efficient way and will make the pressures of implementation and reporting more manageable.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

The stakeholders involved in the implementation of this objective are: the regional and federal authorities, biodiversity-related conventions national focal points.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 12.1 - Enhance Belgium's contribution to the protection of global biodiversity.

Rationale for the national target

Through active participation in international meetings and, when relevant, in the various bureaus and task forces, Belgium will strive for ambitious multilateral goals, targets and actions. Belgium will also contribute better to financial and technical support for their implementation.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 3 - By 2020, at the latest, incentives, including subsidies, harmful to biodiversity are eliminated, phased out or reformed in order to minimize or avoid negative impacts, and positive incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity are developed and applied, consistent and in harmony with the Convention and other relevant international obligations, taking into account national socio economic conditions.

Other related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is indirectly related.)

Target 17 - By 2015 each Party has developed, adopted as a policy instrument, and has commenced implementing an effective, participatory and updated national biodiversity strategy and action plan.

Target 4 - By 2020, at the latest, Governments, business and stakeholders at all levels have taken steps to achieve or have implemented plans for sustainable production and consumption and have kept the impacts of use of natural resources well within safe ecological limits.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 12.2 - Keep up our leading role in different international and EU forums to strengthen and ensure coherence, within the framework of the CBD Strategic Plan 2011-2020 and its Aichi Targets, between biodiversity related conventions.

Rationale for the national target

When participating in international agreements, Belgium will continue its efforts to ensure the coherence of the provisions of biodiversity-related conventions in order to promote policy consistency, enhance synergies and increase the efficiency of implementing measures. In particular, Belgium will support the establishment of a global partnership on biodiversity in order to enhance implementation through improved cooperation between all the conventions, organisations and bodies, and continue to cooperate in the process of harmonisation and streamlining of reporting on biodiversity.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 12.3 - Enhance synergies between CBD and the bodies of the Antarctic Treaty System and UNCLOS.

Rationale for the national target

Biodiversity is a key issue in the Antarctic region. The Antarctic's biodiversity is of unique value due to its relatively pristine state, with its high rate of endemic species with a highly adapted character. The Antarctic Treaty area is of particular interest due to the high level of scientific cooperation between countries.

Biodiversity in the high seas and Antarctica needs to be protected through the establishment of marine protected areas beyond national jurisdiction, which should become key elements of a global representative network of MPAs [87]. Furthermore, climate change, increased tourism and unregulated bioprospection [88] activities in the marine and terrestrial parts of Antarctica are creating rising concern.

Those issues need to be addressed in a coherent and coordinated way within the CBD, UNCLOS and the bodies of the Antarctic Treaty System (Committee for Environmental Protection, Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources - CCAMLR), in particular regarding marine protected areas and ABS. Particular attention will also be devoted to human impacts on cetacean populations in the Antarctic region and to, in this regard, the work of the International Whaling Commission.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 13 - Enhance Belgium's efforts to integrate biodiversity concerns into relevant international organisations and programmes

Rationale for the national target

Specific CBD issues are undoubtedly linked with discussions within other organisations and programmes such as FAO, UNDP, WTO, WHO, WIPO, ITTO, etc. whose mandates cover issues relevant to the implementation of the CBD. However, links between agreements directly relevant to biodiversity and the other relevant international organisations remain weak. It is therefore important to enhance synergies and coherence both at national and international level given the positive impacts that the protection of biodiversity can have on the implementation of several of those programmes.

An interesting tool to achieve this objective is the Green Diplomacy Network (GDN) [89], an initiative aimed at promoting the integration of environment into external relations of EU-25 through the creation of an informal network of experts as an information exchange mechanism between the designated environmental focal points of the Member State Ministries of Foreign Affairs.

Special efforts should for example ensure greater coherence and consistency between trade and economic agreements and the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity. This is of the utmost importance given the major impact that other institutions and programmes can have on the implementation of the CBD.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

The stakeholders involved in the implementation of this objective are: the federal and regional authorities, the judiciary, the law enforcement departments, the ministry of foreign affairs, the Belgian CITES service, the private sector.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 13.1 - Integrate biodiversity concerns into all international organisations and programmes that are relevant to biodiversity.

Rationale for the national target

Belgium will continue and strengthen its participation in international and European conventions, agreements and programmes relevant to biodiversity, and will ensure that positions taken are in line with and supportive of the three objectives of the CBD. This will promote compatibility and mutual supportiveness between institutions and programmes. This implies improved coordination and sharing of information at national level to ensure that Belgian delegations to meetings of different but related bodies present consistent and mutually reinforcing positions.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 13.2 - Support efforts of developing countries to combat illegal logging and associated illegal trade as well as their efforts to Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and the enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (REDD+).

Rationale for the national target

A first step in contributing to SFM is to help developing countries restrict and impede illegal logging activities.

Illegal logging and its associated trade not only threaten biodiversity in timber-producing countries (through overexploitation, depletion of scarce natural resources, destruction of ecosystems, etc.) but also have serious economic and social consequences (loss of revenue for local governments, corruption, impoverishment of rural communities that depend on forest products, etc.).

In 2003, the EU adopted an Action Plan for Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT Action Plan) to combat illegal logging and associated illegal trade. On the one hand this plan emphasises governance reform and capacity-building in producer countries to control illegal logging and that primarily through the development of Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPA's) between the EU and timber-producing countries. The final aim of these agreements is to set up a licensing scheme in partner countries in order to ensure that only legally produced timber (identified by means of licenses issued in those producer countries) is exported to the EU. The framework has been set up by means of the FLEGT Regulations [91].

Indonesia is the first country to have fully implemented its licensing scheme and has been issuing licenses for the export of timber and timber products to the EU since 15 November 2016. Belgium has set up a control system to check whether the licensing obligation is being complied with by importers, using the European Commission online management tool TRACES. Belgium will continuously evaluate the national control system, contribute to the evaluation at EU level, make adjustments where necessary and will proactively anticipate the arrival of additional producer countries issuing FLEGT licenses.

Belgium should continue to support this initiative on the ground by initiating projects in timber-producing countries to prepare for the establishment of voluntary partnership agreements, as has been the case in the DRC.

On the other hand the plan also underlines demand-side measures to reduce the consumption of illegal timber within the EU.

In this context, the EU adopted "Regulation (EU) No 995/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2010 laying down the obligations of operators who place timber and timber products on the market" in 2010. This Regulation, together with its Implementing Regulation [92], Delegated Act [93] and Guidelines [94], prohibits the placing on the EU market of illegal timber and timber products from any origin as of 3 March 2013.

Belgium will continue to focus on the appropriate enforcement of this Regulation and actively participate in its evaluation. In this context, additional staff were recruited in 2017.

Belgium will continue to focus on the development of public procurement policies to promote sustainable management of forests. Belgium, for example, concluded a sectoral agreement in 2011 to increase the share of primary timber products from sustainably managed forests on the Belgian market. That sectoral agreement will be renewed in 2019 and the scope will be extended to more secondary timber products such as paper and packaging, furniture, pallets, etc.

For CITES-listed wood, Belgium will work closely with the countries of origin to ensure that CITES permits are only issued when a clear non-detriment-finding has been carried out and the legality and sustainability of the tropical wood is proven. In case of seizures of large quantities of CITES-listed wood, and, where possible, the subsequent public sale of this timber, revenue will be invested in local projects to enhance local sustainable use of forests.

Agricultural production, one-third of which is internationally traded, is the main driver of deforestation in the world. Conversion of forest to agricultural land itself is responsible for an estimated 80 % of forest loss in

tropical and subtropical regions. Therefor Belgium will support and actively contribute to upcoming initiatives on the elimination of deforestation from the production of agricultural commodities such as soy, cacao, palm oil and beef.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 5 - By 2020, the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced.

Other related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is indirectly related.)

Target 7 - By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 14 - Promote the commitment of cities, provinces and other local authorities in the implementation of the Biodiversity Strategy 2020

Rationale for the national target

See below

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

The stakeholders involved in the implementation of this objective are: the regional and local authorities (including the provinces and municipalities), the nature conservation agencies, actors involved in local Agenda 21 programmes and other local programmes and plans, professional federations active in the sector, the general public and any association working towards the same goal as the NBS.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 14.1 - Encourage local authorities to develop and implement local biodiversity strategies and related action plans.

Rationale for the national target

The commitment of cities, provinces and other local authorities is crucial to the achievement of the objectives of the National Biodiversity Strategy at all levels. Local action could be facilitated through the enhancement and dissemination of appropriate policy tools and guidelines, and the diffusion of best practices supporting the multifunctional use of natural spaces. In particular, biodiversity concerns should be integrated into existing local action plans, like the Local Agendas 21, communal plans for rural development, as well as

in plans that are being developed. Capacity-building programmes and exchange platforms can provide appropriate technical assistance and/or guidance. Awareness-raising campaigns for local residents on the importance of biodiversity and ecosystem services, and appropriate subsidies for local authorities should be put in place to stimulate and support local commitment to biodiversity. The importance of a bottom-up information flow is crucial as residents are good reporters of their environment. This can be promoted for example through the organization of events or above-mentioned exchange platforms to collect observations on specific themes related to biodiversity. Cities and local authorities are encouraged to monitor and report on their progress by means of standardized biodiversity indices, such as the city biodiversity index (CBI).

Biodiversity must keep or regain its place in the urban space as it performs important natural functions while contributing to physical and mental health, recreation, education and public awareness. To this end, it is important to better preserve and connect green spaces and open spaces around and within urbanized areas by developing a green infrastructure. Most importantly, their quality needs to be improved to facilitate their multifunctional use. Historically, we note that, despite heavy land use and dense urbanization, urban areas often host an important natural heritage for the same historical reasons that led to the human presence and economic development in this location. This is notably the case in the Brussels-Capital Region.

National target has no corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Target.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 15 - Ensure the provision of adequate resources for biodiversity

Rationale for the national target

Belgium has committed itself at international and European level to the implementation of the Convention on Biodiversity and its Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (SP). This includes financial support both with regard to adequately financing our own national efforts as well as supporting developing countries to implement the CBD.

Objectives 15.1-15.4 of the updated NSB express this national and global engagement and need to be seen in light of CBD Article 20 (§1-4) as well as several subsequent COP decisions (COP9/11-COP10/2-COP11/4). Furthermore UNGA resolutions 65/161 and 67/212 also expressed political commitment to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity. Finally, this was internalized at EU level through several Council Conclusions (in particular December 2010 and June 2011) and in the EU Biodiversity Strategy.

Resource mobilization under the CBD relates to increasing funding for biodiversity-related activities, both nationally and globally to reach the Aichi Targets in line with CBD Article 20. However, the overall picture must be kept in mind when addressing SNB Objective 15, since this is not just about 'flows' of funding but also about engaging the private sector, reducing costs, increasing sectoral integration, enhancing effectiveness of funding (both nationally & in developing countries), etc. Therefore many actions have already been taken by and remain still available to the relevant administrations and other actors to contribute to Objectives 15.1 – 15.4 in line with their own capacities and/or competences and are not limited to increasing net funding flows towards third countries.

The set of 4 objectives 15.1-15.4 covers a whole range of ways to mobilize biodiversity resources which are mutually supportive. Several of these are directly related to other SNB Objectives, in particular Objectives 5-11-12 and 13. Just like Aichi Target 20 will contribute to and also benefit from the proper implementation of the other Aichi Targets, this Objective 15 will both contribute to and benefit from progress under the other NSB Objectives, depending on how those are implemented.

To carry out the present National Biodiversity Strategy, there is a need to carry out further actions in key areas. Investments in coherent and integrated biodiversity activities should be substantially increased. Financing will be supported by Regional and Federal environmental administrations, other relevant administrations and funding bodies, including the private sector.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 20 - By 2020, at the latest, the mobilization of financial resources for effectively implementing the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 from all sources, and in accordance with the consolidated and agreed process in the Strategy for Resource Mobilization, should increase substantially from the current levels. This target will be subject to changes contingent to resource needs assessments to be developed and reported by Parties.

Other relevant information (Please use this field to provide any other relevant information, such as the process of developing and adopting the national target, the stakeholders involved or the strategies and plans in which this national target has been included.)

The stakeholders involved in the implementation of this objective are: the federal and regional finance, economy, development cooperation and environment authorities, the provincial and municipal authorities, the private sector and markets, NGOs, and any association working towards the same goal as the NBS.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 15.1 - By 2020 at the latest, the mobilization of financial resources for biodiversity from all sources (including possible innovative financial mechanisms) should increase substantially compared to the average annual biodiversity funding for the years 2006-2010.

Rationale for the national target

This objective covers both national and global financing for biodiversity and is based on Articles 20.1 – 20.4 of the CBD. It is close to the wording of Aichi Target 20 which was based on Article 20 and which is globally the politically most recognized commitment. The implementation of the Strategic Plan with its Aichi Targets is guiding all biodiversity efforts during the UN Decade, as decided by the United Nations General Assembly in resolutions 65/161 and 67/212. Target 20 was confirmed at EU level through the Council Conclusions of December 2010 (§9) and of June 2011 (§16) and also referred to the need to deliver on the CBD Strategy for Resource Mobilisation. The Strategic Plan and Aichi Targets became the basis for the EU Biodiversity Strategy and in particular Targets 1 (Act. 2 - financing Natura 2000) and 6 (Act. 18 - link to CBD COP-11) directly support Operational Objective 15.1.

Belgium needs to ensure, adequate financing of biodiversity from all sources. Therefore it is important to investigate financing possibilities at national level such as the establishment of specific funds for biodiversity, the integration of biodiversity in sectoral budgets and programmes (in particular in Research and Development plans and programs), the establishment of partnerships with the finance and business sectors, etc. Other innovative financial mechanisms should be investigated, such as partnerships with the private sector.

In Flanders, a specific funds (Minafonds) has been established to deals with financial aspects of investments in the field of environment.

The federal level should investigate possibilities to use the Raw Material Funds for biodiversity.

Belgium will investigate and mobilise additional financial resources from all sources to effectively implement the NBS and to contribute to averting global biodiversity loss. In accordance with the CBD Strategy for Resource Mobilization, it should substantially increase from the levels of 2010. In CBD Decision XI/4, it is agreed to use the average annual biodiversity funding between 2006 and 2010 as a baseline.

The existing financial institutions will be strengthened and, the replication and scaling-up of successful financial mechanisms and instruments will be promoted (Resource Mobilization Strategy Goal 3). Enabling conditions will be established to encourage private sector involvement in supporting the Convention's three objectives, including the financial sector.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 20 - By 2020, at the latest, the mobilization of financial resources for effectively implementing the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 from all sources, and in accordance with the consolidated and agreed process in the Strategy for Resource Mobilization, should increase substantially from the current levels. This target will be subject to changes contingent to resource needs assessments to be developed and reported by Parties.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 15.2 - Fully use existing EU financing instruments to promote biodiversity.

Rationale for the national target

This objective supports Aichi Targets 2, 3 and 20. At EU level, again Targets 1 (Act. 2) and 6 (Act 18) are directly linked. The EU CCs of June 2011 (§13) stressed the need to mobilise additional resources from all possible sources and ensure adequate funding through, inter alia, the future EU financial framework, national sources and innovative financial mechanisms, as appropriate, for the effective implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy, including predictable, adequate and regular financing for the Natura 2000 network.

This objective in itself contributes to Objectives 15.1 and 15.4 and at EU and national level, several initiatives are already ongoing. For example Belgium is already engaged in several efforts to use existing EU financial mechanisms to promote support for biodiversity (cf. EU Council Conclusions of December 2010 (§5, §13, §19) regarding rural development, CAP, CFP, etc.).

Co-financing opportunities through European financing programmes will be promoted, for instance through specific programmes of the forthcoming EU Multiannual Financial framework 2014-2020 including LIFE+, the European Fisheries Fund (EFF), the Cohesion Fund, the Structural Funds (the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund), and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

Belgium will support financing biodiversity in European Financing Funds.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 2 - By 2020, at the latest, biodiversity values have been integrated into national and local development and poverty reduction strategies and planning processes and are being incorporated into national accounting, as appropriate, and reporting systems.

Other related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is indirectly related.)

Target 3 - By 2020, at the latest, incentives, including subsidies, harmful to biodiversity are eliminated, phased out or reformed in order to minimize or avoid negative impacts, and positive incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity are developed and applied, consistent and in harmony with the Convention and other relevant international obligations, taking into account national socio economic conditions.

Target 20 - By 2020, at the latest, the mobilization of financial resources for effectively implementing the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 from all sources, and in accordance with the consolidated and agreed process in the Strategy for Resource Mobilization, should increase substantially from the current levels. This target will be subject to changes contingent to resource needs assessments to be developed and reported by Parties.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 15.3 - By 2015, contribute towards the doubling of the total biodiversity-related financial resource flows to developing countries and at least maintain this level until 2020, including through a country-driven prioritization of biodiversity within development plans in recipient countries, using as preliminary baseline the average annual biodiversity funding to developing countries for the years 2006–2010.

Rationale for the national target

The justification for this kind of target is in CBD Article 20, paragraphs 1 to 4. At COP-11 (Hyderabad, October 2012), the Parties decided to add this specific target to implement their commitments under CBD Article 20, the Resource Mobilization Strategy and Aichi Target 20 (COP-11/4, §7).

International flows of financial resources originate from several sources (see figure 7). Official development assistance (ODA) is one of these sources. ODA can be either bilateral (directly from a donor country to a recipient country) or multilateral (resources channelled through international financial institutions and the United Nations organization, funds and programmes). International financial flows can also include non-ODA public funding such as economic cooperation, through private companies and through international not-for-profit organizations. This can be both North-South and South-South cooperation.

Belgium will adopt a methodology and calculate its baseline of international financial flow to developing countries devoted to CBD implementation and biodiversity activities. The baseline will be the annual biodiversity funding for the years 2006–2010. This will contribute to the implementation of the provisions of the Monterrey Consensus on mobilizing international and domestic funding as related to biodiversity

A strategy to double this baseline will be developed and implemented by 2015 with the actors involved (the federal and regional authorities, the private sector, NGOs, foundations and academia). In the context of this process, the term “biodiversity activity” refers to all activities that have a positive impact on biodiversity regardless of whether they take the form of direct benefits or indirect benefits. A proposed categorization of biodiversity resources is provided for in the CBD reporting framework to assist Parties in accounting for the various types of information which should be considered.

In the context of this objective, Belgium will provide support to strengthen existing financial institutions and promote replication and scaling-up of successful financial mechanisms and instruments. This may take the form of enhanced efforts to mobilize co-financing and other modes of project financing for biological diversity or the promotion of biological diversity in debt relief and conversion initiatives, including debt-for-nature swaps. The development and implementation of economic incentives that are supportive of the Convention's three objectives at local and national level and consistent and in harmony with the other relevant international obligations could be considered.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 20 - By 2020, at the latest, the mobilization of financial resources for effectively implementing the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 from all sources, and in accordance with the consolidated and agreed process in the Strategy for Resource Mobilization, should increase substantially from the current levels. This target will be subject to changes contingent to resource needs assessments to be developed and reported by Parties.

National Target (Please use the official title, if available)

Objective 15.4 - By 2020, support, as appropriate, developing countries to enhance institutional, national, administrative and managerial capacities, in order to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of international and national financial flows for biodiversity.

Rationale for the national target

This objective was already included in the CBD Resource Mobilisation Strategy COP9/11 (§6) and repeated in paragraph 14 of decision COP-11/4 in order to create the enabling environment to mobilize private and public-sector investments in biological diversity and its associated ecosystem services.

This objective is essential in terms of reaching the objectives to implement the CBD as not only the amount of funding but also its management and the absorption capacity of the recipient countries are key. In particular Operational Objectives 11.3 and 11.6 directly support Operational Objective 15.4.

In its bilateral and multilateral interactions with partner countries, Belgium will provide support, inter alia:

- ✓ to strengthen institutional capacities for effective resource mobilization and utilization, including strengthening the capacities of the relevant ministries and agencies to make a case for including biodiversity and its associated ecosystem services in discussions with donors and relevant financial institutions;

- ✓ to strengthen the capacity for the integration of biodiversity issues and associated ecosystem services into national and sectoral planning, and promote budgetary allocations for biological diversity and its associated ecosystem services in national and relevant sectoral budgets.
- ✓ to strive to increase official development assistance associated with biological diversity, where biodiversity is identified as a priority by developing country Parties in poverty reduction strategies, national development strategies, United Nations development assistance frameworks and other development assistance strategies and in accordance with priorities identified in national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

Relevance of the national targets to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Links between national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.)

Main related Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Please select one or more Aichi Biodiversity Target to which the national target is wholly or partially related. Parties can select an entire target or a target component (not shown below))

Target 20 - By 2020, at the latest, the mobilization of financial resources for effectively implementing the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 from all sources, and in accordance with the consolidated and agreed process in the Strategy for Resource Mobilization, should increase substantially from the current levels. This target will be subject to changes contingent to resource needs assessments to be developed and reported by Parties.