



# PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

First Belgian National Voluntary  
Review on the Implementation  
of the 2030 Agenda

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# Introduction



The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a global road map of unprecedented scope and significance. It is a universal agenda for people, planet, prosperity and peace, to be realized in a collaborative partnership, whereby all countries, stakeholders, private sector and citizens at large have a role to play.

Yet, there is often a gap between the world we live in and the world we want. It is our responsibility to ensure that the 2030 Agenda lives up to its expectations, and that it truly becomes a user's manual rather than some philosophical treatise.

That is why, on the occasion of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda two years ago, my country – in its various institutional dimensions – pledged to spare no effort in working towards realizing the SDGs. Sharing our experiences with the rest of the UN Membership is part of that commitment, and I am delighted to do so with this national voluntary review report, which provides a first comprehensive overview of our actions undertaken so far on the SDGs and their targets. In the course of this exercise, scores of people in Belgium – civil servants and their political masters, researchers, civil society and business organizations – have put their minds around how the actions they oversee or carry out are relevant to reaching these globally set aspirations. They have bundled their diverse, recent experiences and plans in this common narrative written in the SDG alphabet.

For each one of the 17 goals, this report offers a short Belgian state of affairs, continuing with plans and initiatives aimed at reaching the goalpost within the territorial confines of our country, then expanding into how we take up our global responsibilities and support other countries in their efforts to bring the expected results about beyond our own national borders. Cross-references between targets across different goals are abundantly made, further exemplifying the integration-oriented nature of many of our actions. A subsequent chapter deals with those initiatives that could impossibly be pinned down to one single goal: overarching strategies and initiatives as well as transversal advocacy efforts that have sprung up over the last few years and months.

Right away, the report explains how in the context of a federal country the various governments have organized themselves and are working individually and collectively to implement the SDGs. An annex, finally, offers a statistical stock-taking – with two indicators per sustainable development goal that were selected by our statisticians for the purpose of this report because of their availability, insightfulness and relevance to our country's situation.

I wish you a fulfilling glance into our first mapping of Belgian pathways to sustainable development.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Charles Michel." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles Michel,  
Prime Minister

# Chapter 1:

## Anchoring SDGs institutionally: translation mechanisms in the Belgian context

### 1.1 Institutions and overarching strategies

Belgium has a long tradition in committing to sustainable development, both at the federal and the federated levels, and has a strong institutional set-up in this respect. This Belgian commitment was reinforced in 2007 by the inclusion of sustainable development in the Belgian Constitution. Article 7a states that *“in the exercise of their respective competences, the federal State, communities and regions pursue the objectives of sustainable development in its social, economic and environmental dimensions, taking into account intergenerational solidarity”*. Sustainable development is thus anchored in the Belgian institutional context and recognized as a general policy objective to which the federal state, the communities and the regions must contribute.

The various governments have therefore each developed their own policy in the field of sustainable development:

- At the federal level, the law on the coordination of the federal sustainable development policy<sup>1</sup> includes since 1997 a federal strategy implemented through five-year policy learning cycle ('report-plan-do-check-act') consisting of a periodic planning and reporting mechanism and a consultative process: the federal Sustainable Development Plan and the federal Sustainable Development Report. Three institutions are key in the preparation, adoption, implementation and improvement of the policies: the Interdepartmental Commission for Sustainable Development (ICSD) which is in charge of the planning

and monitoring part of the process, a task force within the Federal Planning Bureau which reports on the current situation and makes policy evaluations and forecasts, and the Federal Council for Sustainable Development, an advisory stakeholders' council (cfr. infra).

- In 2013 the Walloon Parliament adopted a decree which provides, *inter alia*, for the adoption of one new sustainable development strategy per parliamentary term. Such strategies are defined as documents containing “guidance and actions to encourage initiatives and coherence in the field of sustainable development in the public policies of the Walloon Region”<sup>2</sup>.

- Since 2004, the Brussels urban planning code<sup>3</sup> requires for the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region to adopt a regional development plan. Firmly anchored within the framework of sustainable development, it is the plan that must oversee all sectoral or specific regional strategies and plans, such as the Regional Program on Circular Economy, the 2025 Strategy, the Good Food Strategy and sectoral environmental plans such as the Air-Climate-Energy Plan, the Nature Plan or the Water Management Plan.

- A 2008 Flemish decree<sup>4</sup> stipulates sustainable development policy to be inclusive, coordinated and participatory. Each parliamentary term comes with a strategy which evaluates the implementation of the previous Flemish strategy paper, an analysis of the current situation, the

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<sup>1</sup> *Wet op de coördinatie van het federale beleid inzake duurzame ontwikkeling/Loi relative à la coordination de la politique fédérale sur le développement durable.*

<sup>2</sup> *Décret relatif à la stratégie wallonne de développement durable, Art. 2 §2.*

<sup>3</sup> *Code bruxellois de l'Aménagement du Territoire/Brussels Wetboek van de Ruimtelijke Ordening.*

<sup>4</sup> *Decreet ter bevordering van de duurzame ontwikkeling.*

expected social developments, trends and risks related to sustainable development, long-term vision and objectives for sustainable development policy, and operational short-term goals and priority policy options and actions for the government's term.

- In the German-speaking Community, the regional development plan<sup>5</sup> incorporates the sustainability aspect in all its thematic chapters. For the second phase of implementation of the plan, spanning the 2014-2019 period, 24 "projects for the future" and 3 cross-cutting projects were identified, reflecting all the German-speaking Community's competences.

Sustainable development with its very large scope requires cooperation, consultation and increased coordination – both between various administrations at the same level and between different levels of power. In this sense, Belgium has always advocated putting in place sustainable development strategies (or equivalents) that offer added value in terms of coherence and a transversal and participatory nature.

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Belgium therefore relies first and foremost on the different strategies in relation to sustainable development which were adopted by the respective levels of power:

- At the federal level: *the Long-term Vision for Sustainable Development* (2013) with 55 long term objectives, 2050 as its horizon and a proposed set of indicators, and the federal sustainable development plans;
- Flanders: *Vision 2050 - A long-term strategy for Flanders*, which constitutes the third Flemish strategy for sustainable development;
- Wallonia: the second Walloon strategy for sustainable development;

- The Brussels-Capital Region: the regional sustainable development plan;
- The German-speaking Community: the second regional development plan.

In addition, a first National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) was approved in Spring 2017 after consultation with the stakeholders. It focuses on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Belgium and aims to create the basis for a coherent approach to sustainable development policies. It is composed of a comprehensive framework text – with a common vision describing the desired future situation for Belgium translating the SDGs in the Belgian context – and of a selection of priority themes for which the public authorities will jointly implement concrete actions and where enhanced coordination is particularly necessary since insufficiently ensured through the existing mechanisms of cooperation and consultation<sup>6</sup>. An important new feature of this NSDS is the commitment of all the authorities involved to jointly establish a report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda twice per government term and to, in this context, engage in a broad dialogue with the most prominent stakeholders including civil society, private sector and parliaments. The aim of this report will be to highlight together the progress made in achieving the SDGs and to identify gaps, and to consecutively develop recommendations for adaptation and/or prioritization in dialogue with the stakeholders.

## **1.2 An architecture for transversal work and participation**

Belgium has also set up an institutional framework to promote transversal work and participation. The Inter-Ministerial Conference for Sustainable Development (IMCSD) – composed of federal, regional and community ministers responsible for sustainable development and development cooperation – is the central coordination mechanism for dialogue between the various

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<sup>5</sup> *Regionales Entwicklungskonzept*.

<sup>6</sup> The areas thus covered include awareness-raising on SDGs, sustainable housing and construction, food and public procurement.

federal and federated authorities implementing the 2030 Agenda in Belgium. The task of developing the earlier mentioned National Sustainable Development Strategy was assigned to the IMCSD.

There are also different mechanisms for coordination and consultation within each level of power:

- At the federal level, a 'co-piloting' division of tasks was established between the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Development Cooperation, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs, and the Minister of Sustainable Development. The Minister of Sustainable Development will follow the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Belgium, while European and international action will be monitored by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Development Cooperation and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and European Affairs. In addition, the college of Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Ministers plays the important political role of checking the sustainability dimension of new federal laws. Finally, the Interdepartmental Commission for Sustainable Development (ICSD) provides for coordination between federal administrations. The federal government and parliament moreover annually receive an ICSD report on public services' initiatives that contribute to sustainable development. Since 2002, ICSD is supported by a dedicated sustainable development administration (FISD), which is in charge of preparation, implementation, coordination and delivery of expertise to private and public organizations.
- In Flanders, the Minister-President coordinates sustainable development policy whereas the other ministers are responsible for the inclusion of sustainable development in their policy areas. Within the administration a cross-cutting sustainable development working group<sup>7</sup> which represents all policy areas within the Flemish com-

petences is responsible for coordinated policy preparation and implementation. Alignment is also sought with a strategic consultation group on international affairs<sup>8</sup>.

- In Wallonia, the Minister in charge of sustainable development is working in collaboration with other ministers on the implementation of 2030 Agenda and is responsible for monitoring this process. He relies on a sustainable development department which was created within the administration in 2012, and which is responsible for supporting regional sustainable development policy measures and for mobilizing the regional ministries about sustainable development.
- In the Brussels-Capital Region, it is the Minister for Environment and Energy who, historically, and in the absence of a regional coordinating body for sustainable development, follows the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and represents the region in the IMCSD.
- For the German-speaking Community, the Minister-President is responsible for the sustainability theme. Through the implementation of the regional development plan, it is operationalized in a cross-cutting way.

The Inter-Federal Statistical Institute is responsible for the systematic monitoring of the progress made in achieving the SDGs, and has set up a specific working group to that end. Its review of the official list of SDG indicators<sup>9</sup> found that roughly half of them are currently available for Belgium. These will be progressively incorporated into a comprehensive inter-federal SDG follow-up and review mechanism. As a first contribution to providing an overview of Belgium's implementation of the 2030 Agenda, two indicators per SDG have been selected for the purposes of this report, taking into account existing indicators used at subnational, national and regional levels (EUROSTAT and OECD) as well as the availability of baseline data (see the annex to this report).

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<sup>7</sup> *Werkgroep Duurzame Ontwikkeling.*

<sup>8</sup> *Strategisch Overleg Internationale Aangelegenheden.*

<sup>9</sup> Developed by the Interagency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) and agreed upon at the 48th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission.

### 1.3 Anchoring civil society participation

Alongside these purely governmental processes, there is a long tradition of involvement and consultation with civil society in Belgium. First, there is intense interaction with advisory councils. These structures<sup>10</sup> bring together different societal groups, including social partners (trade unions and employers' organizations) as well as environmental, development cooperation related, consumers, women, youth and academic organizations. The advisory councils are often created by law and are responsible for:

- Advising public authorities on various sustainable development policy measures and taking part in political dialogues with members of the government;
- Establishing a forum for the exchange of views on sustainable development, including the organization of stakeholder dialogues in preparation for sessions of statutory bodies, working groups and fora;
- Informing and raising awareness with citizens, private sector and public bodies on the subject of sustainable development;
- Proposing research activities in all fields related to sustainable development.

Close collaboration with civil society also exists in terms of raising public awareness of SDGs. These include the SDG Voices campaign through which eight organizations (*inter alia* civil society organizations, private sector, local authorities) are promoting the SDGs as role models through various activities throughout 2017, or the SDG Charter for International Development, demonstrating the commitment of the Belgian private sector, civil society and public sector to deepen knowledge of and partner-

ship on the sustainable development agenda within their international activities.

Finally, local governments – cities, municipalities and provinces – make a notable contribution to SDG achievement by Belgium as well. As front-line authorities rooted in local practice, they embody a bottom-up approach in the search for solutions to global problems, and they endeavor to offer adequate public services accessible to all citizens. In this effort, they are supported by specialized associations such as the *Union des Villes et Communes de Wallonie*, *Brulocalis* and the *Vereniging voor Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten*.

### 1.4. Methodology and preparation process for the National Voluntary Review

In order to prepare this first National Voluntary Review (NVR) report, a political steering committee was set up which is chaired by the Prime Minister and which receives support from representatives of the various federal and federated entities directly involved in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Through this political steering committee, a clear division of tasks was established, conferring on the Inter-Ministerial Conference for Sustainable Development the responsibility of collecting data relating to the implementation within Belgium, on the federal Foreign Ministry<sup>11</sup> to collect data regarding external action, and finally on the Inter-Federal Statistical Institute to collect statistical data.

Two pen holders within the federal Foreign Ministry<sup>12</sup> were assisted by a close-knit network of focal points, ensuring the smooth gathering of additional inputs for the report text and easy contacts with the administrations and policy units within all respective federal and federated government bodies. At various points in time, the contributing adminis-

<sup>10</sup> such as the Federal Council for Sustainable Development, the Socio-Economic Council of Flanders, the Flemish Environment and Nature Council, the Walloon Environment Council for Sustainable Development, the Socio-Economic Council of Wallonia, the Environment Council of the Brussels-Capital Region, the Economic and Social Council of the Brussels-Capital Region, the Economic and Social Council of the German-speaking Community and its Consumer Protection Association, the Council for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women, the Gender and Development Council and the Federal Advisory Council on Policy Coherence for Development.

<sup>11</sup> Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation

<sup>12</sup> Based within the Sustainable Development Direction with the Multilateral Affairs DG, and within the Thematic and Multilateral Direction of the Development Cooperation DG, respectively.

trations as well as the political steering committee were invited to share their insights about the successive drafts of the report. The Belgian NVR report was also discussed in the federal parliament during a joint session of its Committees on Foreign Relations, Environment and Health.

Civil society involvement was ensured at different stages throughout the NVR preparation process. Early on in the process and in two successive rounds, civil society organizations at large were invited to provide their own inputs (on their own actions in furtherance of the 2030 Agenda as well as on points of attention raised from their side) for the report text to the authors. A draft version of this report has subsequently been shared with the civil society advisory councils such as the Federal Council for Sustainable

Development or the Advisory Council on Policy Coherence for Development for a one-month consultation process with their respective member organizations. The resulting general opinion on the draft NVR has been presented to the authors of the report prior to its finalization, in order to allow for the comments made to be taken on board. It also formed the basis for a dialogue and exchange of views between stakeholders and representatives of the political steering committee, prior to the HLPF itself. Additionally, given the long-standing tradition of collaboration with CSOs in various strands of government work, most administrations also made sure their contributions for the report from the very initial stages onwards included CSO initiatives and best practices, in particular those which are carried out with public funds.



# Chapter 2:

## Goals and targets

### SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere



*This goal goes to the core of the 2030 Agenda and its central premise of leaving no-one behind. It is of key importance to Belgium. A specific Inter-Ministerial Conference on "Societal Integration" en-*

*sure the necessary cooperation and coordination on poverty eradication between the federal government, regions and communities.*

*Overall the situation in Belgium has remained relatively stable over the last few years. Child poverty is below the EU average (12.4% in 2014) and the risk of poverty has also fallen among older people. Yet challenges remain, notably related to a growing divide between groups in society whereby low-skilled people, single parent households, persons living in very low work intensity households as well as persons with a migration background run the risk of falling behind. With 21% of households at risk of poverty or social exclusion, further attention is needed towards reaching the target set in the EU's 2020 Strategy for Growth and Jobs. The increasing number of people in collective debt settlement (almost 100,000, illustrated by indicator 2 in the annex) is another area of concern.*

Overarching poverty eradication strategies (1.2) are the instrument of choice at all levels of government. In the design and implementation of the various poverty eradication policies, specific attention is given to ensure the active participation of people experiencing poverty<sup>1</sup>. The third federal action plan to fight poverty (2016-2019) aims to

ensure a holistic approach across different fields and competences and has identified six axes for specific actions: ensuring social protection, reducing child poverty, improving access to employment through social and professional activation, stepping up the fight against homelessness and poor housing, guaranteeing the right to health, and making government services accessible to all.

Partnering with relevant actors in the sector, Wallonia has worked out a government-wide plan<sup>2</sup> in view of using all regional levers that can reduce poverty: housing, food and nutrition, energy, water, health, family policies, mobility, leisure and the digital realm. It provides concrete and efficient answers to specific difficulties encountered by people living in or at risk of precariousness or poverty. Across the board, particular attention is being paid to youths and single parent households (for instance, through a reformed family allowances system). Since the plan's adoption, major achievements have included the creation of a regional fund for rental guarantees, the improvement of the use of the Social Fund for Water and the adoption of a structural policy on guaranteed holidays for all.

On the Flemish side, an action plan<sup>3</sup> focuses on full and inclusive participation, accessible services, energy poverty and the prevention and combating of poverty in families with young children. A separate government policy on children's and youth rights<sup>3</sup> strives for equal opportunities, chances and space to develop and increased formal and informal engagement for all children and young people. The government of Flanders also finances a Brussels-

<sup>1</sup> Steunpunt tot bestrijding van Armoede, Bestaansonzekerheid en Sociale Uitsluiting; Vlaams Netwerk Armoede.

<sup>2</sup> Plan Wallon de lutte contre la pauvreté (2015-2019).

<sup>3</sup> Vlaams Actieplan Armoedebestrijding (2015-2019).

<sup>4</sup> Vlaams Jeugd- en Kinderrechtenbeleidplan.



based organization<sup>5</sup> with *Exit Child Poverty* as its core goal, through neighborhood initiatives involving dialogue between youth workers, children's monitors, youngsters and their families living in poverty (1.b).

Article 23 of the Belgian Constitution guarantees the right to social security. There are mainly three social security regimes in Belgium: one for workers, one for independent professionals and one for civil servants. A few differences between the three remain, but all of them cover the risks listed in the ILO's Convention No. 102 on Social Security (Minimum Standards), as ratified by Belgium. The country has moreover ratified the Council of Europe's Code of Social Security, as modified by its Protocol (which sets higher standards). The social security system is completed by social assistance services free of charge for disadvantaged and marginalized families which are not covered by the contributions-based regimes (integration benefits, allowances for people with disabilities, guaranteed benefits for families and for the elderly). The high quality, exhaustiveness and quasi-universal scope of the Belgian social protection systems was recognized by many international expert groups, such as the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Recently Belgium further strengthened social protection levels for the poor and the vulnerable, for instance by increasing minimum pensions and allowances for people with disabilities. Over the last few years, the federal government also strengthened the social security protection in order to lift certain population segments out of the informal economy: certain independent professionals, charity workers, home workers and artists. Fighting social fraud and illegal work, practices to which workers are the first victims, is another priority for the government as a whole (1.3), while a Brussels-based platform of trade unions and associations fights abusive housing rents, thereby engaging local administrators and welfare center<sup>6</sup>.

As for the external dimension of actions in support of the implementation of social protection systems worldwide

(1.3), Belgium was one of the countries actively advocating the inclusion of social protection in the 2030 Agenda, *inter alia* through the organization – together with ILO and UNDP – of a High-Level Seminar on Social Protection in 2015 and a large scale civil society driven “Social Protection for All” awareness-raising and action-oriented campaign (2015-2016), as well as through our active support of the ILO-World Bank Universal Social Protection Initiative. Belgium's continued strong attachment to the social protection component in the poverty eradication mix can be seen throughout the actions of many Belgian development actors. In LDCs, for example, actions aimed at formalizing the informal economy are part of our common endeavors with partner countries. Belgian CSOs, including mutual health insurance bodies, are developing concrete initiatives by virtue of which, through capacity-building and the sharing of expertise, social protection systems can be established or strengthened in scope and in number of eligible sections of the population, including in Central and Western African countries.

Fighting poverty and working towards economic empowerment of marginalized groups by increasing income opportunities (1.4, 1.a) is another area of attention, for example through support for improving the quality of indigenous products. Focusing on local tea varieties, a technical training project facilitated by the Belgian development agency<sup>7</sup> in the northern highlands of Vietnam focused on the application of social and product-related standards of biological agriculture and fair trade and resulted in an income rise with levels between 87 and 140 percent over a two-year period for the 57 farmers' communities and the 2530 households involved. As part of the 10 million EUR Support Programme to the Refugee Resettlements and Host Communities in Northern Uganda, the Belgian development agency manages the skills development and entrepreneurship training component aimed at improving food security, nutrition and livelihoods. The percentage change in poverty rates in targeted settlements will be one of the indicators of success.

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<sup>5</sup> *De Ambrassade*.

<sup>6</sup> *Plateforme Logement Bruxelles*.

<sup>7</sup> Currently: *Coopération technique belge/Belgische technische coöperatie (CTB/BTC)*, from 2018 onwards: *Enabel*.



The many city alliances for poverty reduction and social action – for example between Flemish municipalities and their counterparts in Guatemala and Nicaragua, or between the Brussels and Walloon municipalities and their counterparts in Benin, Senegal, the DRC or Morocco – show the active and direct contribution our local authorities are making towards poverty eradication, *inter alia* when it comes to issues related to land registration, local administration or microcredit schemes.

Inclusive and sustainable economic growth and a rights-based approach are the two axes through which Belgium intends to fight poverty everywhere and in all its forms. As a member of the core group on extreme poverty, Belgium actively supports the mandate and work of the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights and is one of the main sponsors of a recurring resolution on the same topic in the UN Human Rights Council (1.1).

Underscoring our commitment to achieving the priorities of the Sendai Framework (2015-2030), a specific focus on disaster risk reduction (DRR) and preparedness has been integrated into the Belgian Humanitarian Aid Strategy. 11.5 million EUR have hereby been made available for DRR related projects in the Great Lakes and Sahel regions, to be implemented over the next 2 year (1.5, 11.5, 11.b).

Through the World Bank, a Belgian Poverty Reduction Partnership has for many years financed the work of “poverty economists” (1.b) in ten Sub-Saharan African partner countries of the Belgian development cooperation, which will be wrapped-up and evaluated in 2017. Remaining study work by these economists on poverty in slums of Bujumbura, Bamako, Niamey, Kampala and Kinshasa is currently still ongoing.



# SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture



*Belgium focuses on integrated solutions, innovative value chains and systemic innovations in the food system. At stake here is the relationship between diet, health and ecosystem sustainability.*

*The aim is to arrive at a smaller footprint in food production, a reduced dependence of raw materials, the use and intake of alternative forms of proteins (algae, plants, insects), higher efficiency throughout the various links of the food supply chain, correct prices and safe and decent working conditions for the actors in the food chain – both domestically and in the world.*

*Like in many other countries in the European region, prevalence of overweight and obesity is an issue of concern in Belgium. About 13.7% of the adult population is overweight or obese, largely due to unhealthy diets and physical inactivity. People with low income and/or education levels tend to be more obese. At the same time, the number of people in Belgium unable to afford a quality meal per day is increasing, with over 140,000 persons – over 1% of the population – assisted through food banks in 2016.*

*High population density as well as the governments' spatial planning policies have resulted in a strong competition for open space. The evolution of farming types has been influenced by the relative scarcity of land and some farming methods have had adverse environmental impacts on soil (degradation), water quality (depletion of nitrate and phosphorus) and climate (release of greenhouse gases). On the other hand, Belgium has put in place several biodiversity-friendly measures on agricultural lands and has in recent years enlarged its percentage of agricultural land used for organic farming to just over 5%*

*- which is slightly below the EU average of 6.4% (indicator 4 in annex).*

The current Federal Action Plan on Nutrition and Health runs until 2020 and aims to positively influence the dietary habits of the population, in order to reduce preventable diseases, such as cardiovascular ones, as well as their risk factors. In consultation with the food operators (food industry, retailers, caterers and restaurants), the improvement of products' nutritional quality receives special attention. Actions will focus *inter alia* on more comprehensive food labelling and stricter regulations when it comes to marketing towards children. Ongoing consultations with sector organizations aim at reducing the amount of salt, added sugars, saturated fat and portion sizes.

Given the number of people in Belgium unable to afford a quality meal per day, Wallonia embedded a series of food related measures (social groceries, distribution of unsold food) in its earlier mentioned poverty eradication plan, and made it permanent through legislative action taken by the regional parliament on food aid to people in precarious situations. Belgian food banks<sup>1</sup> provide food assistance to people in need, paying particular attention to the nutritional quality of the products distributed, as well as to their suitability for consumption (2.1).

The Brussels-Capital Region agreed in 2015 on a series of "from farm to fork" measures<sup>2</sup> for the next five years, including targets for the development of new urban farming projects with an objective of producing 30% of fruit and vegetables locally by 2035 and bringing about a 30% reduction in food waste by 2020 (2.1).

<sup>1</sup> Supported through the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD).

<sup>2</sup> Good Food Strategy towards a Sustainable Food System.



By 2019 Wallonia aims to make consumption and production more sustainable across food supply chains, including by shortening the latter<sup>3</sup>. The region has put in place in 2014 an online platform to facilitate the purchase in short circuit of local and seasonal products at the community level<sup>4</sup>. It proposes a public procurement interface, linking suppliers of products of agricultural origin to canteens, restaurants and other regional and local public administrations and institutions wishing to acquire food products and ornamental horticulture in short circuit<sup>5</sup>. A first strategic plan for the development, processing and consumption of biological agriculture produce runs until 2020<sup>6</sup>; it aims at doubling the usable acreage by 14% (using a 2012 baseline) and involving almost 1700 officially certified biological exploitations (2.3, 2.4, 6.3).

'Action labs' are set up by the private sector in the region of Flanders in order to spur the innovation potential of the agro-food industry in making the food chain more sustainable. Examples include local soy culture, involving catering services, the use of biological bread-making cereals and added value poultry, systematic and safe transfers of fresh and processed food waste, processing by-catch in fisheries, and producing antibiotics-free pork. Food chain-wide consultations are taking place among the various chain links on a voluntary basis, striving for better collaboration, information sharing, good partnership relations and up-scaled joint solutions, while preserving contractual freedom. Consultations are taking place *inter alia* about adopting and complying with sustainability criteria in the food industry and distribution's order books. Flemish strategies on local food aim at restoring the link between consumers and producers, and cities with the countryside, following growing consumer demand to trace back their food. Various initiatives on farm products and urban gardening allotments thus receive support. Rural development planning in the same region<sup>7</sup> focuses on young farmers, innovation and education, increasing resili-

ence as well as economic and ecological sustainability, and strengthening the countryside's vitality by firmly embedding a swiftly evolving agricultural sector. Cross-cutting goals are innovation, environment and climate adaptation and mitigation, and demonstration projects for the benefit of farmers and horticulturists receive regional funding (2.4).

Between 2013 and 2015, Belgium dedicated almost 15 percent of its ODA (around 220 to 240 million EUR annually) to actions aimed at ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture abroad. In a deliberate effort to better structure its actions conceptually and to adapt them to the new international agenda, the Belgian development cooperation in May 2017 launched a new strategy on agriculture and food security. This strategy revolves around two axes (inclusive economic growth and a rights based approach) and three overarching priorities (nutrition, gender equality and sustainability), puts the farmer center stage as a social entrepreneur and strives to enhance agricultural productivity within stable and efficient food systems on the one hand and to ban hunger and malnutrition on the other. Beyond goal 2, mainly SDGs 1, 3, 5, 13, 14, 15 and 16 are referenced in the strategy.

Our main multilateral partners in this field are the CGIAR System Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Program (WFP). One third of the FAO's un-earmarked voluntary contributions originate in Belgium, which has contributed in no small way to the elaboration of the Committee on World Food Security's voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests in the context of national food security (VGGT). Together with Italy, Belgium is the only developed country in the world which also applies these guidelines at home to address domestic issues of land tenure. Belgium actively supports

<sup>3</sup> *Deuxième Stratégie wallonne de Développement Durable, Plan d'Actions à l'Horizon 2019.*

<sup>4</sup> [www.cliclocal.be](http://www.cliclocal.be)

<sup>5</sup> Similar efforts are undertaken by civil society actor networks such as RAWAD and RABAD.

<sup>6</sup> *Premier Plan Stratégique pour le Développement de l'Agriculture Biologique en Wallonie (2013-2020).*

<sup>7</sup> *Derde Vlaamse Plattelandsontwikkelingsplan.*



the mandate and work of the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food<sup>8</sup>, reflecting our rights-based approach to food security. Many of the Belgian development actors have been focusing on increasing smallholders' agricultural productivity and income (2.3) as well as on investing in rural infrastructure, research and technology (2.a). The Government of Flanders has dedicated its entire country strategy paper for Malawi to food security and agriculture, committed an annual investment of 5 million EUR in this regard and is working with the WFP and the Agricultural Commodity Exchange for Africa (ACE) on the "Strengthening Farmer Organizations and Rural Structured Trade Mechanisms in Malawi" project, aiming to strengthen the economic situation of some 50,000 smallholder farmers (among whom 40% are women) by improving their access to agricultural markets. The Belgian development agency has set up Farmer Field Schools for smallholders in Rwanda (50% or more productivity increases for 73% of the involved farmers), supporting the establishment of homegrown and up-scaled solutions for extension services to increase farm yields and foster solidarity; provides institutional and operational support to that end in Burundi; and focuses its efforts in Benin also on the promotion of environmentally sustainable practices in production. The Belgian Royal Museum for Central Africa contributes with various partners in combating damage to harvests caused by the African fruit fly in countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, South Africa and Kenya (2.3).

Indirect cooperation, implemented through Belgian civil society organizations, supports livelihoods development by smallholder farmers and attaches particular interest to the development of value chains. Concrete examples include the roll out in Senegal of a business skills and entrepreneurial development program for local farmers

in terms of product quality, production and marketing. This unique partnership, involving also one of the biggest Belgian retail groups<sup>9</sup> aims to reach more than 100,000 rice, sesame and organic banana producers (including a sizeable proportion of women and youngsters). Other examples are the AgriCongo Alliance whereby 17 Belgian NGOs collaborate in strengthening the capacity of farmer organizations in the DRC in terms of land rights, rural infrastructure and rural financing; and the Farmers Fighting Poverty program with the Tanzania Horticultural Association whereby negotiated market linkages enabled an estimated 8000 farmers in Zanzibar to increase the price they received by 10 percent and paved the way for adopting more sustainable energy solutions in the fruit and vegetable value chain. The Belgian Investment Company for Developing Countries (BIO) has developed a large portfolio in terms of rural investment (2.a), through its Agricultural and Rural Impulse Fund (7,5 million USD equity investment in 2015) and through freshly provided loans to local banks and farming businesses in Paraguay, Mongolia and Senegal.

Belgium houses the Bioversity International Musa Germplasm Transit Centre, which is considered the world's largest banana gene bank. It helps securing biodiversity while promoting better nutrition through food rich in key micronutrients (2.5), including by introducing and testing banana varieties from Asia and the Pacific in East Africa. The Belgian Federal Science Policy Office participated in LEAP-Agri, the long-term EU-Africa research and innovation partnership on food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture (2.4, 2.a), which has just rolled out a new five-year program with a joint call on research, mobility and capacity building activities.

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<sup>8</sup> During the 2008-2014 period, in the immediate run-up to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, this position was held by a renowned Belgian academic, prof Olivier De Schutter.

<sup>9</sup> Which happens to be also one of the SDG Voices, selected for SDG advocacy purposes in Belgium.



# SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages



According to the OECD Better Life index, Belgium ranks above average in work-life balance as well as in subjective well-being and health status. The 2017 World Happiness Report

ranked Belgium 17<sup>th</sup>, one place up compared to the previous edition. When asked to rate their general satisfaction with life on a scale from 0 to 10, Belgians gave it a 6.9 grade, higher than the OECD average of 6.5. In terms of health, life expectancy at birth in Belgium is 81 years (for women it is 83 years, compared to 78 for men). A large part (78%) of the Belgian population reports to be in good health, which is a better result than the EU-15 average. Belgians also report to be satisfied with the health care system. Infants receiving the 8 WHO vaccines rate at 96%. In Belgium, over one in four people over the age of 15 indicate that they suffer from at least one chronic illness. Compared to other EU member states, the country has a relatively high depression rate. The figures concerning suicide are decreasing, but remain high. The combination of chronic care, ageing and the up-take in new technologies challenges the guaranteed sustainable financing base of the welfare and health care system, where clear arrangements on basic financing mechanisms and solidarity exist.

Government priorities relate to addressing non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes and mental illness – which are the leading causes of mortality. Efforts to prevent these focus on tackling four major risk behaviors – smoking (18.1% daily smokers<sup>10</sup>, indicator 6 in the annex), alcohol abuse (9% of the adult population consumes too much alcohol)<sup>11</sup>, unhealthy diets and sedentary lifestyles – and are based

on an integrated horizontal approach targeted at health promotion, prevention and early detection, involving all relevant policy makers and stakeholders.

Reducing deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents is a focus area of specific importance. In 2015, Belgium registered 65 such deaths per 1 million. This is already a significant improvement compared with the 1994 figure of 167. According to the latest assessment in 2016, there were 13% less traffic related deaths in comparison to 2015. The number of injuries dropped with 1.4%. These figures have never been better, but work remains to be done in order to achieve the objective of an absolute number of maximum 420 deaths from traffic accidents by 2020. As 70% of all traffic victims are male, specific attention also needs to go to this category.

When it comes to addressing the health related issues in the Belgian international development efforts<sup>12</sup>, a rights-based approach is the point of departure. Preference is given to strengthening health systems and to integrating health services within an effective system that enhances the quality and the resilience of these services. Major policy priorities in this context are the fight against communicable and non-communicable diseases as well as the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

A joint plan concluded between all Belgian governments aims at improving chronically ill persons' quality of life<sup>13</sup> in their own environments (family, school, workplace) and in their communities, so they can actively manage their care trajectory. Further tweaks to the health care system are foreseen and indeed necessary in order to improve the general population's state of health and the chronically ill's specifically. They are also needed to improve the quality of the care provided, in terms of accessibility

<sup>10</sup> A steady and firm decrease from 23,5 in 2000 to 18,1 % in 2015, with significant difference between men (22%) and women (16%).

<sup>11</sup> Significant gender differences exist, with about 15% of the male population consuming too much alcohol against 6% of the female population.

<sup>12</sup> The sector represented 146.7 million EUR, or over 7% of our ODA commitments in 2016 (est.).

<sup>13</sup> Integrated Care for Better Health.



and evidence base, and to obtain efficiency gains within the assigned means (better care and its financial sustainability). In addition, several other plans focus on specific diseases such as Alzheimer and autism <sup>14</sup>. The Walloon Health Observatory, through the analysis of socio-sanitary data, currently studies (2015-2019) mental and primary health care, population ageing, the quality of hospital care and health promotion. Gender and social health-related inequalities are cross-cutting points of attention in these efforts. Wallonia also works on a future Health and Prevention 2030 Plan <sup>15</sup> with five priority areas: promotion of safety measures and of healthy life styles (*inter alia* through food, physical exercise and combating excessive alcohol and tobacco consumption), promotion of mental health and general well-being, and prevention of chronic illnesses, of infectious diseases and of non-intentional traumas (3.4). Measures against HIV and aids, Hepatitis C or TB are furthermore coordinated within specific plans. The one on HIV (2014-2019) contains 58 actions to curb the number of new HIV infections, to further improve access to HIV-specialized prevention, detection, care and quality assistance services and programs, and to bring down all forms of stigma and discrimination, especially when they are based on serological or health status (3.3).

In the field of mental health care Belgium has shifted from traditional, large psychiatric institutions to a modern, inclusive care system with increased focus on the community, establishing *inter alia* multidisciplinary outreach teams that provide to people with mental health conditions, who traditionally would have been hospitalized, the opportunity to choose where they wish to receive treatment and care. The treatment and care provided by these teams have shown to prevent long-term hospitalization. Through the recently approved Federal Masterplan on internment (2016) Belgium is also stepping up its action on forensic psychiatric treatment and care, increasing the capacity of specialized centers as well as facilitating access for internees to conventional and regular care in view of optimizing re-integration into society (3.4).

As sports have a beneficial effect on physical and mental health alike, Flemish policies attach importance to this notion <sup>16</sup> through a series of sports after school and sports at work related actions. A campaign <sup>17</sup> inciting less active citizens to develop more active life styles is part and parcel of the same effort. By integrating sport as a tool in the fight against obesity and inactivity, the French-speaking Community promotes health enhancing physical activity (HEPA) policies across sectors and as a partner in regional health promotion plans (3.4).

In terms of alcohol policies, measures taken by the various Belgian governments include stricter oversight on advertisements for alcohol containing products, higher fines for trampling with advertising rules, awareness-raising campaigns and training programs for care deliverers regarding alcohol use by pregnant women, and an excise increase on alcoholic drinks. Meanwhile, a pilot project focuses on detection of and intervention upon alcohol problems among emergency warden patients in eight hospitals. A series of initiatives particularly targets young persons (16-18 age range), including clarifying legal provisions, strengthening and intensifying control measures on vending machines with alcoholic beverages, and launching discussions between alcohol producers and retail sellers in order to obtain an agreement on voluntary labelling of minimum age. When it comes to smoking, governments are taking several steps: awareness raising, labels and warnings, regulating the sale and advertising of tobacco products, and a smoking ban in publicly accessible places. New measures to discourage and decrease tobacco use as from 2016 include a ban on internet sales, a legal framework on e-cigarettes and even more visible health warnings (3.5).

Road traffic safety policies are being developed among various actors and stakeholders. At the federal level, the so-called *States General on Road Traffic Safety* in 2015 spelled out 20 recommendations, which were an inspiration for many actions taken since then, such as efforts to simplify traffic rules, to better execute traffic fines, to make an

<sup>14</sup> Plan Autisme 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Plan Prévention Santé Horizon 2030.

<sup>16</sup> "Bewegen op Verwijzing" ("Exercise per Medical Certificate").

<sup>17</sup> #sportersbelevenmeer.





alcohol mandatory in passenger vehicles and for repeat offenders, to increase objective and subjective probability of detection through the use of a reliable and continuously updated database, and to improve the quality of alcohol and drugs screenings. At the Flemish level<sup>18</sup>, policy recommendations are centered around the 4E's: Education & Awareness, Engineering, Enforcement, Evaluation. These recommendations have been taken on board when a road safety plan (2015)<sup>19</sup> and a cycling policy plan (2016)<sup>20</sup> were developed, with a focus on awareness-raising, information and sensitization on safe traffic behavior. A specific program<sup>21</sup> confronts 17 year olds with the testimonies by road traffic victims on their lives before and after the accident. The Walloon Government promotes safe road behavior through awareness-raising campaigns for the wider audience as well as specific categories of road users. Parents associations of children who were victims of traffic accidents lobby the political world in order to impact both road safety and the environment through imposing certain basic limits in terms of motor vehicle features (3.6).

Access to quality health care services in Flanders is being ensured through a wide range of measures such as making primary care services more accessible<sup>22</sup>, enlarging the scope of the Flemish Social Protection in order to better insure people against long-term care needs, paying special attention to persons with disabilities, adopting an action plan on youth assistance, and creating 'Houses of the Child'. *Flanders Care* acts as a catalyzer for system innovation in the organization of care services, putting the patient central stage and adapting the services offered to society's needs. This also answers to the (youth, elderly) population's changing needs in terms of care. Accessibility is also one of the principal objectives of a *Patients' Future Pact*<sup>23</sup> agreed between the federal government

and the pharmaceutical industry. Other measures aim to improve access to care for a series of particularly vulnerable groups (such as detainees, low income households, homeless people, newly-arrived immigrants, sex workers, drug users, people with mental disorders) which tend to have only weak links with standard medical care, guided by the operational recommendations which were formulated by the National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance<sup>24</sup>. Focusing specifically on high quality child care and well-being, the Office for Birth and Childhood<sup>25</sup> of the French-speaking Community provides prenatal and childhood consultations, mobile clinics, vaccination programs, free medical consultations and home visits, thus supporting both children and their parents, medically as well as socially (3.8).

Regarding the health and environment nexus, a coherent approach is ensured through the Joint Inter-Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (JICEH), bringing together the responsible ministers from the three levels of government. The National Health and Environment Action Plan (2009-2017) focuses *inter alia* on human biomonitoring (in the context of EU research on actual exposure of citizens to chemicals and the possible health effects), training for environmental health professionals, ozone and particulate matter, presence of exotic mosquitos, and persistent organic pollutants (POPs) in human milk. A new Flemish air quality plan is being prepared, based on the evaluation of the previous one (2012-2015). Wallonia has set up its own environment and health policy cell that has been working out several plans that should improve the Walloons' environment and hence their health and well-being – on air, climate and energy<sup>26</sup>, radon<sup>27</sup>, on decreasing the use of pesticides<sup>28</sup>, POPs<sup>29</sup>, heat waves and

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<sup>18</sup> *Vlaams Huis van de Verkeersveiligheid (Flemish House for Road Safety)*.

<sup>19</sup> *Verkeersveiligheidsplan*.

<sup>20</sup> *Vlaams Fietsbeleidsplan*.

<sup>21</sup> *Verkeersgetuigen/Getuigen onderweg*.

<sup>22</sup> *"Breed Onthaal"*.

<sup>23</sup> *Pacte d'Avenir pour le Patient*.

<sup>24</sup> RIZIV/INAMI White paper on Access to Care in Belgium (2014).

<sup>25</sup> *Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance*.

<sup>26</sup> *Plan Air Climat Energie 2016-2022*.

<sup>27</sup> *Plan d'actions régional en matière de Radon (2013)*.

<sup>28</sup> *Programme wallon de réduction des pesticides (2013-2017)*.

<sup>29</sup> *Plan POP*.



ozone peaks<sup>30</sup>, and on regional actions that link health and environment<sup>31</sup> (3.9).

Belgium has been at the very cutting-edge of pharmaceutical innovation for over 150 years. It has developed five of the global top-100 drugs, the world's highest number per capita, and its pharmaceutical companies also tend to perform well in their efforts to improve access to medicines for people living in low- and middle-income countries. With medicines taking up around a tenth in its total exports, Belgium is also the largest provider of vaccines and medicines to the UN system. More generally speaking, within the 14% of funds allocated by the Belgian development cooperation to the health sector, 22% are constituted by the provision of medicines, which is an especially interesting figure given that Belgium also has one of the most stringent legislations on the quality of vaccines and medicines destined for exports. A new initiative, rolled out in 2017, seeks to ensure the quality of all pharmaceutical products purchased, stored and/or distributed by Belgian actors, governmental and non-governmental alike, through Belgian ODA financing. Moreover, Belgium has acceded to the recently created Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), a global alliance which intends to step up the fight against fatal infectious diseases in the coming years by making vaccines for emerging infectious diseases available more quickly (3.b).

Belgium is strongly committed to strengthening health systems through its international cooperation, following a rights-based, sector-wide approach that ensures integration within local systems. The World Health Organization (WHO), UNAIDS, the Global Fund to fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) are institutional partners of our development cooperation. When it comes to capacity building (3.c, 3.d), the internationally renowned Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) is a partner of choice for federal and subnational authorities alike: it twins with southern counterparts in order to introduce evidence-

based medicine models, it applies a Switching the Poles demand-driven assistance methodology in its training programs for southern physicians, and it organizes crash courses for southern medical experts preparing them for multilateral negotiations in their field.

On early warning (3.d), Belgian development actors are working with various research partners on dynamic predictive mapping in the field of communicable diseases, notably through a demonstration project for the malaria vector habitat in South East Asia, and through efforts to adapt this approach to other vector-borne diseases than malaria (such as dengue fever). Belgian health experts participate in countries' external evaluations in the framework of the 2005 International Health Regulation, and our own Belgian system and procedures in that regard will be critically assessed in the course of 2017. Belgium recently awarded new state-to-state loans, soft loans, mixed credits and grants to projects in Kenya (bacteriological decontamination of hospital waste, and clinical laboratory and radiology services improvement), Vietnam and Egypt (supplying nuclear medicine machinery), Ghana (supplying diagnostic radiology related material) and Mongolia (medical equipment to a diagnostic and medical center). In terms of management of global health risks, our country - through development cooperation as well as initiatives by civil society, the ITM and the private sector - took a forefront role in helping to contain the most recent global ebola outbreaks and in assisting the directly affected countries<sup>32</sup>, putting emphasis on innovation and on the association of strategies strengthening mutual trust between communities and health services.

Belgium is equally dedicated to the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights (3.7), *inter alia* in the context of the relevant UN fora such as the Human Rights Council, the Commission on the Status of Women or the Commission on Population and Development. We hosted a highly successful international conference for the *Global Fundraising Initiative She Decides* in March 2017

<sup>30</sup> *Plan vagues de chaleur et pics d'ozone* (2008).

<sup>31</sup> *Programme d'actions régionales environnement santé (PARES)* (2008).

<sup>32</sup> Guinea, for example, became a new partner country for our bilateral development cooperation in 2015.



(see SDG 5 for discussion in more detail). The Belgian multi-stakeholder platform for international health (Be-cause Health)<sup>33</sup> and the ITM developed a freely accessible e-tutorial covering a wide range of topics in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights such as safe motherhood, sexual violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation, HIV, sexually transmitted infections, family planning and sexual rights. The Flemish government is dedicating a large part of its development cooperation in Mozambique to this particular subsector and provides support to the UNDP/UNFPA/UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Special Programme for Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction (HRP)<sup>34</sup>.

The Belgian commitment in terms of fighting maternal mortality (3.1) plays out mainly in sub-Saharan African partner countries of our bilateral development cooperation. Focal areas include the skilling of medical personnel in emergency obstetric care, decentralization of blood transfusion, and capacity building for rural health centers both in terms of surgery competences (including caesarian section skills) as well as in upgrading ambulance services. In countries such as Senegal, there has been a significant uptake in the 2012-2015 period in the intervention areas of Belgian projects, in terms of coverage (new ailments treated, +49%) and of professionally assisted deliveries (+37%).

Ending communicable and neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) (3.3) was and is high on Belgium's priority list. Belgium joined the international coalition to control, eliminate and eradicate 10 NTDs. Building on its widely rec-

ognized expertise in fighting sleeping disease in the DRC, through a decentralized approach integrating sleeping disease surveillance activities within our support to local health systems Belgium will allocate 25,3 million EUR over the next nine years, in a decisive push to eliminate sleeping sickness by 2025. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has committed to match Belgium's contribution. Other Initiatives range from general support for UNAIDS (its first executive director was Belgian) and CSOs that are assisting in setting up HIV positive patient groups in Southern African countries, to sustained action campaigns against tuberculosis and leprosy.

At the multilateral level, Belgium supports the mandate and work of the UN Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (3.4, 3.5). Mental health is a special focus area of HM Queen Mathilde, one of the 17 SDG Advocates, and is also taken at heart in our efforts abroad. In Rwanda, Belgium has been the principal donor to fight mental health problems including substance abuse nationwide for nearly a decade and we helped establishing a national policy on the matter.

Belgian development actors consider mutual health insurance schemes as a key component of achieving universal health coverage (3.8) given their role as important mechanisms to improve governance issues in the health sector, access and quality care as well as patients' rights and equity. Facilitating better sharing of expertise and experiences in order to overcome purely sectoral approaches, actions in this area are supported in Uganda, Benin, Burundi, Rwanda, Senegal and Niger.

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.be-causehealth.be/en/who-are-we/>

<sup>34</sup> Currently, the Flemish representative is also Chair of HRP's Executive Board.



# SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all



*According to the OECD Better Life Index, Belgium ranks above average in terms of education and skills. A solid baseline exists, with high quality education, committed teachers, renowned re-*

*search institutions and talented researchers. According to the European Commission's Education and Training Monitor 2015 and 2016, the Belgian education system is performing well on average and the rate of public expenditure on education is among the highest in the EU. Beyond compulsory education from age 6 to 18, there is an almost universal participation to free pre-primary education. The higher education attainment rate is above the EU average, and specific measures are taken to address the low proportion of students and graduates in areas of science and technology.*

*Nevertheless, challenges remain, in particular in relation to lifelong learning and the inclusion of specific vulnerable groups given the high educational inequality related to socio-economic and migration status and wide gaps in performance between those enrolled in general secondary school programs compared to vocational secondary tracks. The number of early school leavers is decreasing over the years and the percentage now lies well below 10%, slightly below the EU-28 figures (indicator 7 in the annex).*

Fully committed to UNESCO's Education 2030 Framework of Action, which will also guide its actions and policies on SDG4, Belgian educational policies are geared at social inclusiveness, global citizenship, development cooperation and striking a balance between efficiency and equity. The responsible authorities in all three language commu-

nities<sup>1</sup> are currently conducting major school reforms to stay abreast of new evolutions such as rapid technological progress which demands the development of new skills sets, as well as to the need to foster intercultural understanding, tolerance and mutual respect in a society that is becoming increasingly multicultural and multiethnic.

Focusing on inclusive education, an essential chain link towards an equally inclusive labor market and society, all layers of the population need to be involved in social innovation and lifelong learning, and access to education for all should become self-evident. Education gaps varying along socio-economic status and migration backgrounds need to be closed, and the transition from and to training needs further elaboration. This vision finds its concrete application in, *inter alia*, a major reform of the educational system in French-speaking Belgium<sup>2</sup>, which aims to significantly increase the quality, effectiveness, equity and efficiency of education for all pupils at all levels. This pact, the result of a highly participative process, is organized around five strategic axes and aims to ensure accessibility, to provide pupils with the skills and knowledge needed to address current-day challenges, to reinforce the vocational training curriculum and opportunities for alternating education, to promote diversity and inclusiveness, and to increase the empowerment of schools (4.1, 4.2).

On the Flemish side, specific support initiatives<sup>3</sup> aim at ensuring equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities and children in vulnerable situations (4.5). The Flemish government has launched several initiatives aimed at integrating sustainable development and environment related topics into the regular school curricula at all

<sup>1</sup> Education in Belgium belongs to the exclusive competences of the three communities.

<sup>2</sup> *Pacte pour un enseignement d'excellence (2016).*

<sup>3</sup> *Steunpunt Inclusie.*



levels (higher education<sup>4</sup>, primary and secondary education<sup>5</sup>), and the governments of the French-speaking Community, the Brussels Capital Region and Wallonia have concluded a cooperation agreement with a similar objective (4.7).

Adult education is flexible and low-threshold in what it has on offer and has unique assets that can be strengthened further, aiming at sustainable qualifications and directed towards the most vulnerable target groups. A separate pact<sup>6</sup> aims to increase the participation rate of adults into lifelong learning activities and has been developed jointly with the social partners (employers' and workers' organizations) (4.4).

Specific actions<sup>7</sup> are being undertaken to reduce the number of early school dropouts (4.1). Other plans strategize on ensuring that all youth and adults achieve relevant and recognized functional literacy and numeracy proficiency levels and acquire life skill<sup>8</sup>, and provide for actions in order to maximize pre-primary education enrollment<sup>9</sup> among hard to reach groups in society, *inter alia* through tailored outreach with local communities and involvement of parents (4.2).

Starting from each one's respective competences, Wallonia and the French-speaking Community in Belgium join forces in order to link education and training with access and return to the labor market<sup>10</sup>. Actions involve alternating education, strengthening the link between the jobs of the future (new, evolving or growth enabling professions) and the training offer, informing citizens about jobs and professions in order to orient their training and professional trajectories, facilitating access to higher education, to lifelong learning and to foreign language learning, and strengthening the training offer in the digital, energy and

circular economy sectors. The Federation of Enterprises in Belgium equally wants to build a bridge between youngsters (17-27 years old) and the corporate world, attempting to involve them in reflections about the functioning of the labor market<sup>11</sup> (4.4).

Since a number of years, Belgium is one of the biggest spenders on sustainable development education among OECD members. Topics such as sustainable life styles, human rights, gender equality and global citizenship are at the heart of it. In 2016, nearly 28 million EUR were dedicated to global citizenship education through, *inter alia*, NGOs, teacher training programs and the co-financing of films and television series. UNESCO's Education 2030 program, through which sustainable development is connected to respecting human rights, democracy and rule of law, receives our support. Twelve of our schools take part in the Associated Schools Project Network, which aims to mobilize schools worldwide in order to strengthen the role of education in promoting a culture of peace and tolerance, and can call themselves 'UNESCO School'. SDGs are introduced in these schools' programs. The Flemish program for nature and environment education<sup>12</sup> also aligns itself to the 2030 Agenda, while the French-speaking Community organizes specific citizenship courses<sup>13</sup>.

In April 2016 we organized the Council of Europe's 25<sup>th</sup> Standing Conference of Ministers of Education, which discussed the role of education and training in the fight against radicalization and violent extremism. The Brussels-Capital Region on an annual basis organizes intercultural exchanges between Brussels secondary school pupils and teachers on the one hand and their counterparts in the Moroccan partner region of Rabat-Salé-Kénitra. Similarly, exchanges between university students from Brussels, the DRC and China are supported.

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<sup>4</sup> *Ecocampus program.*

<sup>5</sup> *MOS project.*

<sup>6</sup> *Opleidings- en vormingspact (2016).*

<sup>7</sup> *Samen tegen Schooluitval.*

<sup>8</sup> *Strategisch Plan Geletterdheid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Actieplan Elke Dag Kleuteronderwijs Telt.*

<sup>10</sup> *Plan Marshall 4.0.*

<sup>11</sup> *Young Talents in Action Program.*

<sup>12</sup> *Vlaams programma Natuur- en Milieueducatie (NME).*

<sup>13</sup> *Éducation à la citoyenneté ; Vivre Ensemble.*



Other initiatives, specifically directed to involving young persons in reflections on citizenship and global challenges such as climate change or sustainable development, abound. They include youth parliaments<sup>14</sup>, associations of 'young change makers'<sup>15</sup>, training programs<sup>16</sup> and platforms connecting government, civil society and youth<sup>17</sup> in the endeavor to build a sustainable, solidary and participatory society (4.7).

As our institutional partners in this area, UNICEF and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) are provided with multi-year un-earmarked federal funding in support of their missions, while the Flanders region partners with UNESCO. This reflects the importance Belgium attaches to the global efforts to deliver high quality education to all girls and boys<sup>18</sup>, while prioritizing the poorest, most vulnerable and those living in fragile and conflict-affected countries (4.1, 4.2, 4.5).

Support for teacher training in developing countries (4.c) is an important focus area in the activities of the Belgian development actors at different levels. Various bilateral cooperation initiatives aim at skills development and vocational training in the educational sector, including by focusing specifically on gender issues, on people in vulnerable situations or marginalized ethnic groups, on quality early childhood education as well as education for sustainable development. In addition, reference can be made to support provided by the Walloon government to the activities undertaken in this area by the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* and its subsidiary bodies, support by the Flemish government to UNESCO, as well as to initiatives implemented through Belgian associations<sup>19</sup> in countries like Vietnam or Morocco.

The distribution of scholarships to Southern scholars (4.b) is another often reported strand of activity among Belgian development actors. Each year, Belgian academic institutes

and universities – often through partnerships between interuniversity councils such as VLIR-UOS or ARES and academic partners in the Global South – offer a wide range of scholarships for higher education programs ranging from undergraduate, master degree, PhD to research level as well as short term trainings for professionals and study visits for thesis directors and scholars. Nationals from least-developed African countries and SIDS are very well represented among the several thousands of annual beneficiaries, with countries such as Ethiopia, Cuba, Tanzania, Uganda and DRC topping the list. Roughly one third of the successful applicants are women. A further substantial expansion of the number of available scholarships may be somewhat challenging, given that the total numbers of scholarships handed out has remained fairly stable over the past few years<sup>20</sup>. The Royal Museum for Central Africa also trains some one hundred African scientists a year, in collaboration with African partner organizations, either in African biotopes or within the museum's premises. Within its main focus on subjects of geology, food security and biodiversity, it strives to ensure equal access for women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education.

Fully aware of the potential of technology development and digital solutions in education, Belgium supported a World Bank initiative in the DRC in 2016 whereby digital technology is used to improve educational standards and management through enhanced communication between schools and the authorities. Equally in 2016, Belgium committed 5 million euro over two years to the UNRWA Education in Emergencies program. Through innovative approaches and attention for digital solutions it aims to create safe learning environments for Palestinian refugee children, to control quality of education, to foster engagement and participation, and to manage data – with attention for digital solutions within each of these components.

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<sup>14</sup> KRAS *Scholierenparlement (Globelink)*; *Parlement Jeunesse Développement durable en Wallonie*.

<sup>15</sup> Generation-T (The Shift); *Programme soutiens aux Projets Jeunes*.

<sup>16</sup> *Education relative à l'Environnement et au Développement Durable*.

<sup>17</sup> *De Ambrassade*.

<sup>18</sup> Total ODA in the education sector is at 117.3 million EUR or 5.63% of total ODA in 2016 (est.).

<sup>19</sup> VVOB (*Vlaamse Vereniging voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking en Technische Bijstand*) and APEFE (*Association pour la Promotion de l'Éducation et de la Formation à l'Étranger*).

<sup>20</sup> 82.5 million EUR or just below 4% of total Belgian ODA in 2016 (est.); compare: 90 million (2013); 86.3 million (2014); 79.6 million (2015).



# SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls



*Belgium has established a solid legal and policy framework for combating gender-based discrimination and is working towards gender equality in the different spheres of economic, social,*

*cultural and political life. Belgium occupied the 5th place out of the 28 EU Member States in the 2015 Gender Equality Index<sup>1</sup>, the gender pay gap (indicator 9 in annex) has been decreasing over the years and is well below the EU-28 figure of 16.3% and OECD figures<sup>2</sup> even make Belgium an absolute European champion in this regard. On average, 41.7% of members of the various Belgian parliaments are female (indicator 10 of the annex), which is 10 percentage points higher than the average in the other EU Member States. At the same time, more work remains to be done, and traditional gender roles, for example, continue with women spending 8.5 hours a week more on non-paid occupations such as taking care of the household and children, confirming the continuation of traditional gender roles.*

*Special attention goes to complex themes which can only be tackled in a comprehensive cross-policy manner. These include the gender career gap or the dynamics proper to multiple discrimination risk situations, such as with gender and disability. Belgium therefore looks into further possibilities to better align the various policy plans for specific target groups.*

*Gender mainstreaming – the integration of a gender perspective into each policy area and each phase of the policy-making process – remains another cross-cutting priority. As such, the federal plan on poverty eradication (SDG1), a new law on workable and flexible work (SDG8), the mental health care*

*sector reform and the care for prisoners detained for reasons of mental illness (SDG3) and actions on road traffic victims (SDG3) all contain a specific gender dimension.*

Ever since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995), gender mainstreaming has been part of our policies on gender equality. Gradually, the various Belgian policy levels have adopted specific legislation making this approach mandatory and have elaborated plans on gender mainstreaming to stimulate implementation of these laws. In the context of the most recent federal plan on the subject<sup>3</sup> members of the federal government are required to incorporate the gender equality perspective into all aspects of their policies. Several initiatives have been taken in this regard, such as in the integration of the gender perspective in awareness-raising campaigns concerning the prevention of psychosocial risks at work and in the context of preparations for the modernization of labour conditions; in the support for local communities in combating radicalization and in countering violent extremism; in the new gender strategy for the Belgian development cooperation; in the accommodations in refugee centres and the support for migrants; and in the federal plan to fight poverty and its template used for progress reporting. The members of the federal government also have to ensure that the gender aspect is strengthened in their respective administrations (5.1).

The Flemish government has included a specific gender dimension in its government-wide equal opportunities plan<sup>4</sup>, and also makes available an assistance package to school boards and teachers in order to create an education system that is more gender-aware and LGBTI-friendly.

<sup>1</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality.

<sup>2</sup> Based on median rather than average income levels.

<sup>3</sup> Federal plan for the execution of gender mainstreaming (2015-2019).

<sup>4</sup> Vlaams Horizontaal Gelijkekansenbeleidsplan.



The assistance provided has both theoretical underpinnings and practical applicability, and is made to measure for each individual school. Moreover, it helps the education sector to implement a statement of commitment on gender and sexual diversity that was endorsed a few years ago by representatives of all main actors: from the minister over the various school networks, teachers' unions and advisory boards to parents', pupils' and students' associations. Another initiative was taken by a number of organizations<sup>5</sup> on awareness-raising against gender segregation in toys, involving consultations with the sector in order to take corrective action. In 2016, the French-speaking Community launched a campaign and a teacher training module focusing on gender equality at school (5.1).

Wallonia established its first gender mainstreaming plan in 2014, and developed various measures to fight inequality between women and men. Legal provisions<sup>6</sup> were adopted to fight gender-based and similar (e.g., pregnancy or maternity based) types of discrimination, including within administrations<sup>7</sup> (5.1).

Moreover, the various governments in Belgium all stimulate the equal participation of women and men in political and economic life through a series of measures such as parity laws dealing with electoral lists or board membership in government institutions, publicly listed companies or state-owned enterprises (5.5).

Another crucial element is combating gender-based violence. To guarantee continuous improvement of our policies National Action Plans (NAP) on this topic exist since 2001, the most recent one being the 2015-2019 NAP which compiles 235 commitments from the various Belgian policy levels. It focuses on intimate partner violence, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, honour-based violence, and sexual violence. Some concrete actions that have been undertaken are the launch of

a website on sexual violence, a feasibility study/pilot project on sexual assault referral centres and the development of a risk assessment tool concerning partner violence. Certain forms of gender-based violence are equally dealt with in other NAPs, such as the one on women, peace and security (2013-2016) or the one to fight human trafficking (2015-2019). All French-speaking subnational governments jointly adopted a plan<sup>8</sup> containing 176 measures focusing on six thematic areas: partner violence and violence against children, forced marriages, female genital mutilation, honour-based violence, sexual violence and gender-based violence (5.2, 5.3).

The paramount importance Belgium attaches to gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is also reflected in our multilateral, bilateral as well as indirect development cooperation<sup>9</sup>. The new gender strategy and action plan for the Belgian Development Cooperation, agreed in 2016, highlights four priorities: (i) education and decision-making, (ii) sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), (iii) food security, access to natural resources and economic empowerment, and (iv) protection of the rights and fight against gender-based violence (in all its forms), with special attention to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) people. Our bilateral cooperation programs contain important sectoral programs dedicated to the protection and promotion of women's and children's rights (5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.c). The recently concluded Belgian-Moroccan bilateral cooperation program (2016-2020) serves as an example in this regard. In Mali, Belgium has partnered with the Malian Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and Family in supporting an analysis of the 2015 Peace and Reconciliation Agreement from a gender and women's rights perspective (5.c).

Global action on these issues is supported through multi-annual and non-earmarked voluntary contributions to

<sup>5</sup> "Vrij spel, kinderen kiezen wel", by Furia, de Nederlandstalige Vrouwenraad, Femma, ella, Viva-SVV, RoSa vzw, çavaria and Gezinsbond.

<sup>6</sup> Décret anti-discrimination (2008).

<sup>7</sup> Plan Global Egalité (2011).

<sup>8</sup> Plan intra-francophone de lutte contre les violences sexistes et intra-familiales (2015-2019).

<sup>9</sup> Implemented through Belgian CSOs.





UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO and UN-Women. We are also partnering with them in specific development programs of our bilateral partner countries, such as Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Morocco. Furthermore, the promotion and protection of the human rights of women is an overall priority of the Belgian foreign policy. In this context, Belgium promotes for example the ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol, as well as the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

Belgium is a staunch defender of women's access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights (SRHR) (5.6) and of including the woman's and the girl child's rights perspective in family planning matters. The international conference for the *Global Fundraising Initiative She Decides* held in Brussels in March 2017, co-organized with the governments of the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark further underscored this long-standing engagement. The Conference managed to muster 181 million USD in terms of new commitments – as well as additional financing through an adjacent crowd-funding initiative. The Flemish government supports the International Partnership for Microbicides in its mission to prevent HIV transmission by accelerating the development and availability of safe and effective microbicides for use by women in developing countries, focusing on royalty-free licensing and the facilitation of clinical trials in southern African countries. Support for local women's rights fora, for example in Mozambique, is another track through which the Flemish government seeks to contribute to the fight to end violence against women and to furthering the rights of women and girls (3.3, 5.c).

Ending violence against women and girls (5.2) is an important focus area. Projects in this regard include both humanitarian initiatives (strengthening prevention of and medical and psycho-social response after sexual vio-

lence in the DRC, the Central-African Republic and Mali through the ICRC) and interventions in the judicial sphere in collaboration with the international NGO TRIAL (Track Impunity Always). A mobile app, Eye Witness, allows to gather evidence and safely store it in the 'cloud', by way of steps in the fight against impunity following sexual violence in the eastern DRC (5.2, 5.b). In Morocco, support is given to associations fighting such violence, and offering shelter and support to the victims of such violence while systematically identifying and targeting the most vulnerable population segments. Next to monitoring global trends in this sensitive area, HRP<sup>10</sup>, supported by the government of Flanders, also provides technical support towards and monitors the implementation of the WHO Global Plan of Action to address violence against women and children.

The elimination of female genital mutilation (5.3) is another priority theme in our bilateral cooperation. During the last decade, significant legislative and political progress was made in this regard in several partner countries of the Belgian development cooperation: in Benin, we partnered in a successful 'zero tolerance' campaign; in Niger it is part and parcel of the UNFPA's SRHR programs funded by Belgium on early and forced marriage.

Empowering women's cooperatives is another privileged track, given the potential for win-win solutions contributing to several SDGs at once. In Morocco, for example, support for women's cooperatives producing argan oil has enhanced entrepreneurial and marketing skills (4.4, 8.3), facilitated access to international markets as the producers of the first ever 'fair trade' certified argan oil (2.3, 2.c), enhanced the beneficiaries' social status (5.1), allowed for an increase in their daughters' school enrollment (4.1, 4.5), and built a natural buffer against ongoing desertification (15.3). Several Belgian NGOs equally work on giving women equal rights to economic resources (5.a), be it in the agricultural (e.g. Mozambique) or in the artisanal (e.g. Ecuador) sectors.

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<sup>10</sup> the UNDP/UNFPA/UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction.



The region of Flanders partners with ILO in the promotion of decent work in the care economy (5.4). Based on experimental research in eight countries on three different continents, this work aims to recognize and redistribute care tasks better among men and women and is part of the “Women at Work” ILO Centenary Initiative.

Belgian municipalities, finally, are also incorporating a gender dimension in their international meetings and

cooperation projects with other municipalities. A recently started international municipal cooperation program (2017-2021) between French-speaking Belgian and Moroccan towns specifically targets women in their quest for participation, emancipation and empowerment at the local level (5.5); SDG5 has been a focus area at international meetings involving Flemish municipalities since 2015 as well.



# SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all



Access to safe drinking water is considered a basic right and Belgium delivers on it through a variety of local and regional actors, at home and abroad. Most of Belgian policy and action in implementing

SDG 6 is guided by EU Directives, and the three Belgian regions (Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels-Capital) have exclusive competences in regard to water policy.

Water is not a scarce resource in Belgium, generally speaking. In terms of water use efficiency (indicator 12 in the annex), Belgium is relatively efficient compared to its neighbours, with a water consumption ratio per inhabitant that is lower or close to that of its immediate neighbors. However, due to the intensity of habitat, industry and agriculture, most water systems are heavily used and face multiple pressures including a risk of future water shortages. Only 38% of natural surface water bodies achieve a good or better ecological status, while 45% of groundwater bodies achieved good chemical status and 81% of groundwater bodies are in good quantitative status. The quality of river water remains a concern, as the concentration of nitrates in river water (indicator 11 in the annex) remains almost twice as high as the EU-28 average.

The main pressure on the Belgian surface waters occurs through diffuse pollution, flow regulation and morphological alterations. Agricultural pressures on water remain high with eutrophication and pesticides affecting most surface waters in Flanders and several in Wallonia. Historical pollution, including mercury pollution, is also an important factor. Belgium reaches very high compliance rates of 99-100 % for the set

of parameters identified in the EU Drinking Water Directive. The treatment of urban waste water has however lagged behind and there is still work to do in smaller agglomerations. Overall, more than 95% of the Belgian waste water is collected and subjected to secondary treatment, while 82% is subject to more stringent treatment.

A rising number of people in Belgium have trouble accessing drinking water due to rising costs. As such, access to water is one of the focus areas in the third Federal Plan to Fight Poverty (2016-2019). The equivalents at the regional level<sup>1</sup> include a number of water related measures, too, such as interventions in water bills of consumers with payment difficulties in Wallonia<sup>2</sup> and an evaluation of water pricing policies in the Brussels-Capital Region (6.1).

Each river basin district in Wallonia is managed via a management plan, the second version of which covers the 2016-2021 period. The latter aims to protect, improve and restore surface water bodies, groundwater bodies and protected areas. In addition, a public water management corporation<sup>3</sup> is responsible for the collection and treatment of wastewater and the protection of water resources, including catchments and bathing areas. This allows distribution companies to ensure a supply of drinking water of sufficient quality and quantity for all (6.1, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6). The Brussels-Capital Region aims at integrated water management<sup>4</sup>, taking into account the specific challenges connected to its implementation in a highly urbanized environment. It focuses *inter alia* on rational water use and watershed protection. And the Flemish region implements its objectives towards integrated water management through a series of decrees<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> e.g., Plan wallon de lutte contre la pauvreté (2015-2019).

<sup>2</sup> Fonds social pour l'eau.

<sup>3</sup> Société Publique de Gestion de l'Eau.

<sup>4</sup> Plan de Gestion de l'Eau.

<sup>5</sup> Watertoets; Coördinatiecommissie Integraal Waterbeleid.



In its territorially focused river basin management plans, the region also integrates the flooding response – a unique feature in the European context. By joining efforts in areas that enjoy special protection, both in terms of drinking water supply and conservation of nature, win-win situations in the different policy areas are created (6.5).

A development plan concluded between the Flemish and Dutch governments ensures the implementation of various projects that contribute to the development of a sustainable and vital estuary of the river Scheldt<sup>6</sup>. It offers a sound balance between security, accessibility and nature, with more opportunities for the latter dimension than before. New natural reserves<sup>7</sup> will be created, and existing ones<sup>8</sup> will be extended, taking into account issues related to flood risk management, as well as viability of agricultural and other economic activities in the area. The creation of 4,000 hectares of estuarine nature and flood tolerant habitats on the one hand and a green-blue ribbon of nature stretching over more than 100 kilometers will result in increasing biodiversity, improving water quality and enabling bird nesting (6.5, 6.6).

The local implementation of river contracts in Wallonia – 16 to date – contributes to participatory river basin management. These gather all the actors in the valley (e.g., political, administrative, socio-economic, NGO, scientific) around the same table, with a view to agreeing on a program of action for the restoration of water courses and their immediate surroundings and for the management of basin water resources. Developing this type of contract enabled a strong mobilization of the population, which in turn helped establishing a climate of trust between actors and allowed regaining social ownership over the river (6.5, 6.b).

Our external actions in this area are part of a broader rights-based approach to the enjoyment of a healthy environment. As competing demands for water resources – for households, manufacturing, energy, agriculture and

food production – compounded by the impacts of climate change are increasingly affecting the balance between water demand and water availability, Belgium's international work in support of sustainable management of water and sanitation emphasizes both demand-side (policies for water-use efficiency, institutional capacity building for transboundary water management) as well as supply-side (access to drinking water and sanitary provisions for everyone, improved water quality) issues.

Belgium supports the mandate and work of the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation. The Flemish region takes up a significant part of the current project financing for UNESCO's International Hydrologic Programme in the realm of water security, focusing in particular on strengthening regional, national and local knowledge of water systems in light of climate change.

In 2016, an estimated 3.42% of Belgian ODA<sup>9</sup> was dedicated to water and sanitation, a slightly upward trend compared to previous years, but still below the OECD average which hovers around 6%. Generally speaking, the provision of climate financing by the regional and federal level is considered by all actors involved as a necessary complement to efforts confined to the water sector, if the latter are to be successful in the longer term.

Belgium is supporting its partner countries through a wide range of actions. In Vietnam, for example, a partnership with WWF Belgium, WWF Vietnam, the Vietnam Rivers Network and the People's Aid Coordinating Committee strengthened sustainable water management of the Mekong river delta whereby the strong civil society component enhanced the involvement of the local population and contributed to responsive inclusive, participatory decision-making at all levels (6.b, 6.3, 6.4, 6.6). In Sub-Saharan Africa, we partner with NGOs such as Protos towards increasing access to drinking water and adequate sanitation equipment for all, thus also promoting sustainable hygiene

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<sup>6</sup> *Ontwikkelingsschets 2010 voor het Schelde-estuarium.*

<sup>7</sup> Tidal areas in the Western Scheldt and the Sea Scheldt Basin.

<sup>8</sup> *Het Zwin* natural reserve.

<sup>9</sup> Or 71.4 million EUR.



attitude and practices (6.a). In Niger, work through village level water committees (6.b) combined water and sanitation activities with governance-related work, through strengthening administrative capacities at central and local levels (6.a). In Vietnam, Algeria, Morocco and Senegal the Belgian development agency supports the development of integrated water resource management approaches, aiming at efficiently managing sustainable withdrawals among the different users of specific river basins (6.4, 6.5). In Burundi, drainage networks were enlarged with 33 km, and 40% of all municipal solid waste is now collected in three northern districts of the capital Bujumbura through the agency's efforts, reducing the prevalence of water related diseases (6.a, 6.3).

In terms of state-to-state loans, soft loans, mixed credits and grants in the water sector, no less than five interventions with a total value of around 50 million EUR were recently started on drinking water distribution in Kenya alone. Other such examples included the renovation of a pumping station, the construction of a northern bound transmission pipeline plus substitution of asbestos pipelines and again drinking water supply in Ghana (involving almost 30 million EUR); the construction and upgrading of 25 water supply stations in Cameroon; the provision of water pumps (including solar powered ones) in Sudan; drinking water supply in Niger and the provision of engi-

neering, technical assistance and building materials for waste water treatment plants in four different locations in Vietnam (more than 30 million EUR in contracts) (6.a).

The Flemish Water for Development Partnership – involving over 90 members, ranging from NGOs, public water companies, private firms over local authorities and regional administrations to academic and research institutions active in the water sector - implements sustainable water and sanitation projects in the global South, also fostering the transfer of expertise to southern partners (6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.5, 6.a, 6.b). To date, these projects benefited over one million southern citizens in terms of access to water, and over 800,000 in terms of meeting their sanitation needs.

The local drinking water distribution company of the Brussels-Capital Region levies 0.005 EUR per cubic meter of water used by citizens and companies on the Brussels territory and invests the total proceeds through a Fund for International Solidarity in global projects on access to drinking water (6.a). More than 120,000 direct beneficiaries in the DRC, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Palestine, Ethiopia and Madagascar have thus been identified, through 9 selected projects executed with the involvement of either Brussels municipalities, associations or NGOs headquartered in Brussels.



# SDG 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all



*Energy use is relatively high in Belgium, due to a poorly insulated housing park and well-developed intermediary industries (inter alia chemicals) which are heavy energy users. Energy intensity (indi-*

*cator 14 in the Annex), though decreasing, remains above the EU-28 average. Renewable energy types (indicator 13 in the Annex) are on the rise, though the share of renewables, also because of Belgian geography, remains relatively low compared to many other EU countries.*

*Belgium actively participates in the European Energy Union, which is the EU's major vector and contribution to a global and comprehensive transition towards a low carbon economy as committed to in the Paris climate agreement. Fighting climate change requires net global greenhouse emissions to approach zero in the second half of this century and decarbonizing our energy system is an important piece in that puzzle, mainly through more efficient energy production and through the use of renewable energy sources. This important societal transition requires changes in energy supply and demand, the network infrastructure, the energy system management, market models, the regulatory and policy environment and governance more generally.*

*Belgium's 2020 energy efficiency target as set in 2011 and confirmed in binding EU legislation in 2013 sets a target of 18% in energy efficiency gains by 2020. The 2005-2014 primary energy consumption trend is more or less on track to reach the primary energy target, but the trend in final energy consumption still requires an increased effort to reach the ambitious 2020 target. Primary energy intensity in Belgium has decreased since 2005, although it remains slightly above the EU average. A strong energy intensity reduction is recorded in the industrial sector, i.e. about 16,1% between 2005 and 2013, significantly more than the average energy intensity*

*reduction in the EU28. Starting with an older building stock than the average in Europe, final energy intensity in the residential sector in Belgium is still above the EU average, but decreased by more than 20% between 2005 and 2013. With an average annual decrease of 0.7% between 2005 and 2014, Belgium reached the largest improvement within the EU, showing the efficiency of the policy package dedicated to buildings. Transport is the most challenging sector: while the specific energy intensity of passenger cars remained stable, the specific energy intensity for freight transport increased consistently between 2000-2010 (by 34%), showing a deteriorating trend. Located at the heart of Europe, with a very dense highway network, Belgium is a very important logistic platform indeed.*

*Belgium made good progress in renewables development and has a target of reaching a 13% renewables share by 2020. The renewables share in final energy consumption reached 8% in 2013, so Belgium had already exceeded its 2013/14 interim targets as set out in the Renewable Energy Directive. However, additional progress is still needed to reach the 2020 target.*

*The 2030 framework dedicated to Clean Energy for All Europeans is currently being negotiated with the legislative proposition pursuing three main goals: putting energy efficiency first, achieving global leadership in renewable energy and providing a fair deal for consumers. In the framework of the Energy Union governance, Belgium is preparing its National Energy and Climate Plan, which will set the Belgian targets and policies contributing to this European 2030 climate and energy framework.*

*In order to allow for the necessary economic, social and environmental transformations with a 20 to 25 year horizon at least, the federal coalition agreement envisages the creation of an inter-federal energy pact, preceded by an energy vision and reflecting the climate and energy targets which were set at the European and international levels. Work on the development of this pact has started, and the*



federal and regional governments are currently weighing options in terms of production, interconnections, flexibility and governance issues. The goal is to establish a common vision for the energy targets by 2030 and 2050, also taking into account the international obligations of Belgium in the framework of the UNFCCC's Paris Agreement. The involvement of all levels is essential given the multitude of administrative powers and policy areas involved in the energy transition. Stakeholders will also be involved in the process, since achieving a shared vision is essential to robustly support the proposed transition<sup>1</sup>, which should in turn enable Belgium to generate reliable, sustainable and modern energy at an affordable price in the long term and which must simultaneously help meet the climate commitments made by our country (7.2, 7.3).

In addition to these overarching plans, there are also numerous regional initiatives which complement them. The Air-Climate-Energy Plan<sup>2</sup> of the Brussels-Capital Region contains 64 measures, translated into 144 actions that will enable the Region to move closer to its goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 30% in 2025, as compared to 1990, doubling the share of renewables in final energy consumption and reducing its energy consumption by around 10% by 2020. A similarly named plan by the Walloon government<sup>3</sup> aims to reduce and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollutants by, *inter alia*, improving energy efficiency, promoting the use of more environmentally neutral fuels and renewable energy sources, and acting upon energy consumption behaviors. The second Walloon Sustainable Development Strategy's action plan includes energy-targeted actions to promote renewables and to encourage the pursuit of consumption saving efforts, including through the fostering of technological innovations in the sector. The Flemish energy policy focuses on the transition to an energy system that is affordable, reliable and sustainable. Achieving maximum energy efficiency is a priority, while at the same time families and businesses should remain provided with energy at

a cost that is affordable and socio-economically responsible. At least 280 additional wind turbines are scheduled by 2020 (wind power energy +700 mW); a solar energy plan calls for 6.4 million additional solar panels by 2020; and a heating plan will further develop the potential for green heating from waste heat and ambient heat (7.1, 7.2, 7.3).

Zoning policies also focus on renewable energy, e.g. through regulation on the implantation of small and medium size wind turbines, pilot projects on energy landscapes and fast lanes for wind energy. With the development of a Modular Offshore Grid any future park for the production of offshore wind power will gradually be connected to the Belgian grid. It benefits the country's supply, *inter alia* because in due course offshore connections with other grids can be established. Moreover, this development contributes to the diversification of energy supply and promotes the use of renewable energy sources. On March 24, 2017 the federal Council of Ministers approved the draft law on the 'socket at sea' for offshore wind farms (7.2).

Particular attention is paid to the renovation and the energy efficiency of buildings. Wallonia's Employment-Environment Alliance on sustainable construction aims to turn the improvement of the environment into a source of economic opportunities and job creation. Its ambition is to improve the energy performance of the Walloon housing stock, mainly in the residential sector, by mobilizing the construction sector and all stakeholders. A second multi-year plan of 36 measures has been approved by the government at the end of 2016. This new and refocused action plan is intended to address four major challenges: climate, energy transition, employment and ageing. The investment program for the renovation of the public housing stock<sup>4</sup> aims to improve energy efficiency in housing. The number of homes to be renovated is estimated at 10,000. The program receives exceptional funding of 400 million EUR and is expected to be reinforced by an envelope of 80 million EUR in 2018.

<sup>1</sup> e.g. *Energy Saving Pioneers*, a coalition of 33 vanguard advocates for an ambitious Flemish and European energy saving policy, which informs policy makers, highlights best practice and feeds public debate.

<sup>2</sup> *Plan Air-Climat-Energie/Lucht-Klimaat-Energieplan (2016)*.

<sup>3</sup> *Plan Air-Climat-Energie (2016-2022)*.

<sup>4</sup> *Programme d'Investissements de Rénovations du Parc de Logements Publics dans le cadre de l'Alliance Emploi-Environnement (PIVERT - Wallon)*.



A partnership between 32 organizations<sup>5</sup> should lead to significantly improving the energy performance and renovation degree of the Flemish housing stock by 2050, through instruments such as the Energy Performance Certificate+<sup>6</sup> (carrying out measures and cost estimation), a roadmap for renovation<sup>7</sup>, and the digital passport for houses<sup>8</sup>. In the Brussels-Capital Region, adopted measures include financing for the installation of photovoltaic panels on the roofs of local and regional public authorities, the creation of a regional energy service company for local and regional authorities in Brussels to support energy efficiency, and the setting up of a mechanism for financing energy retrofit and renewable energy production projects (7.3).

A Flemish program tackles energy poverty by further protecting vulnerable families against the disconnection of energy supply and by structurally reducing vulnerable citizens' energy consumption through cheap energy loans and roof insulation. Suitable financing mechanisms are also provided to them. A series of measures to combat energy poverty is also taken on the Walloon side<sup>9</sup> (7.1).

Belgian actions abroad mostly focus on increasing the share of renewables (7.2) and on ensuring universal access to energy (7.1), addressing also energy infrastructure development and tackling poor regulation and/or governance<sup>10</sup>. Belgium intends to contribute to the goal of 50% renewable energy in the global energy mix by 2040, through our membership of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) as well as through a wide range of other actions. Belgian civil society actors are equally strong advocates for the energy transition – for example through the first “Walk your Talk” report – arguing firmly against continued investment by international financial institutions in fossil fuels (7.a).

BIO has made renewable energy-related projects a sizeable part of its portfolio. It recently approved an equity

investment of 10 million USD to the Renewable Energy Asia Fund II, a multi-country fund with a focus on India, the Philippines and Indonesia which invests in a balanced technology mix of wind, geothermal, hydro and solar energy and stranded gas and aims to invest in the development of ten projects. It also signed a 16 million EUR loan to the third photovoltaic power plant in Senegal, a project which aims to both increase the share of renewable energy and the reliability of the net, and invested a 12 million USD senior debt loan for a hydropower plant of 42 mW in Uganda. A Belgian state-to-state loan of 11.5 million EUR will help finalize the construction of an 11.9 mW wind farm near Nairobi, Kenya.

International cooperation initiatives also include the Belgian development agency's role in increasing access to energy through strengthening the grid and extending it by 1000 km to some 20,000 families in Rwanda (7.b), and the creation of mini-grids at village level in Mozambique, further building upon the earlier installation of autonomous solar panel systems, solar pumps and hydro-energy components. Belgium equally provides around 5 million EUR (2017-2021) to the WWF ECOMakala project around Virunga National Park in Eastern DRC. This project develops sustainable charcoal value chains as an alternative source of energy to the local populations in combination with efforts promoting energy-efficient cooking stoves, thereby reducing not only the demand for illegally logged fuelwood, but the need for wood altogether, with a resulting reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and contribution to REDD+ (7.3, 13.3, 13.b, 15.2).

Belgium, in collaboration with the Belgian Royal Ship owners' Association and in the context of the IMO's technical cooperation program, is involved in training activities in Morocco for academic, navy and port authorities' staff as well as the maritime transport and energy administrations, focusing on increasing the energy efficiency of ships (7.a, 7.3).

<sup>5</sup> *Vlaams Renovatiepact*.

<sup>6</sup> *Energieprestatiecertificaat+*.

<sup>7</sup> *Renovatie-advies*.

<sup>8</sup> *Woningpas*.

<sup>9</sup> *Plan Wallon de Lutte Contre la Pauvreté (2015-2019)*, cfr. supra.

<sup>10</sup> Overall ODA expenditure in the energy sector totaled 34.5 million EUR, or a 1.66% share of total Belgian ODA in 2016 (est.).





The Affordable Renewable Energy for All (AREA) multi-stakeholder network, created under the umbrella of the Belgian SDG Charter for International Development, has brought together about 35 Belgian actors to bridge the gap between existing innovations and regular financing tools and stimulate the proliferation of concrete pilot projects. In this context, trade credit insurers, mainstream banks and microcredit providers, energy corporations, foundations, CSOs as well as semi-public and public institutions are in the process of establishing an investment fund for

renewable energy solutions that would complement existing initiatives.

The Belgian petroleum sector has established a social fund, financed with quarterly contributions from the oil companies. It invests in projects focusing on the fight against desertification (e.g. in Burkina Faso) and on access to sustainable energy (e.g. solar energy projects in Mali and Bolivia) (7.b).



# SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all



According to the OECD Better Life Index, Belgium ranks above the average in work-life balance, income and wealth, jobs and earnings. In terms of income, average GDP per inhabitant is increasing – it is

now above its pre-crisis level of 2007 – and 28% higher than the EU-28 average. Forecasts expect economic growth figures of 1.4% in 2017. This would further increase to 1.5% in 2018 and 1.6% in 2019.

The overall employment rate in Belgium remains at 67.7% and about 7.8% of the active population is currently unemployed (indicator 15 in the annex). Despite considerable regional differences – unemployment in Flanders is currently at 4.8% of the active population and its overall employment rate of 72.0% is well above the EU average – unemployment remains a general area of concern, notably with regards to the younger generation as well as people with low educational attainment. Thanks to structural reforms and measures taken to alleviate the labor cost, the number of jobs in 2016 grew with 55,000 and an additional number of some 120,000 jobs are expected to be created during the 2017-2019 period.

In recent years, some progress in the overall functioning of the labor market has been made. The incentives to work have been strengthened and progress has been made regarding the employment rate for older workers. Nevertheless, specific population segments are still faced with barriers to entry or return to employment. Issues such as work quality, well-being at work and work sustainability remain high in the priority list of the various Belgian policy makers. Furthermore, in-depth analysis by the 2015 European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) shows that, while the overall prevalence of precarious

work in Belgium is low, it is distributed unevenly, with specific categories such as women, younger workers and less educated or qualified workers ending up being much more vulnerable.

Belgium is among the top-ten of ILO Member States in terms of the number of ratified labor standards. It was identified as a country which, through its collective bargaining system, managed to prevent the rise of low paying jobs, job insecurity and rising inequalities. The existence of a minimum wage has contributed to reduce pressures on low salaries while collective bargaining at all levels contributed to limit the general strewing of wages.

Generally speaking, Belgium scores well in terms of access to finance for SMEs. One reason is that the government supports credit availability through guarantees on loans. Micro-enterprises and start-ups however keep facing difficulties in obtaining bank loans for the launch of their activities.

The transformation of the industrial production system to an automated and digital type of industry, as well as the transition to a low-carbon, circular, sharing, bio-economy are major challenges. These can be very disruptive, and it is important to address the consequences – including in terms of labor relations, employment and required skills, location policy, logistics and trade. Equally at stake is the creation of new and more flexible forms of work that will still provide adequate job security. It is therefore important, both in education and in the labor market, to anticipate these shifts. In this context, the OECD study “Boosting Skills for Greener Jobs in Flanders” points to a specific challenge. It recommends inter alia to mainstream environmental and sustainability principles in all education curricula; to address technical skills shortages; to further improve the transition from school to work through practical training and skills development; to develop training opportunities for



green investors, managers and business leaders in support of green entrepreneurship; to better link education, innovation and SME support instruments; and to map local initiatives and facilitate the dissemination of lessons from both local and international projects.

Several instruments to support small and medium size enterprises have been developed over the past years in view of the importance of the matter, with over 1 million SMEs registered in Belgium in 2014. The government of Flanders has developed, *inter alia*, an SME portfolio<sup>1</sup> which provides for subsidies for substantial benefit in terms of specialized advice or training, an SME growth subsidy<sup>2</sup> which supports SME expansion projects, among other instruments including feasibility studies and innovation project support<sup>3</sup>. The federal government also supports SMEs, with a green action plan and with initiatives focused on social standards and entrepreneurship. The Walloon government places SMEs at the heart of its policies. Since 2011, Wallonia has adopted a specific mechanism to boost SMEs by applying the EU Small Business Act to its sub-national level<sup>4</sup>. It pursues four priority axes: entrepreneurship, financing, innovation and internationalization, with administrative simplification as a *leitmotiv* (8.3).

The Brussels Regional Program for a Circular Economy is an integrated strategy adopted in 2016 and encompassing 111 measures covering cross-cutting, governance related, territorial and sectoral issues in order to deliver circular patterns at city level. It is the first bottom-up initiative of this size engaging three regional ministries, 15 administrations, an advisory committee and about 60 public and private stakeholders. It has three main objectives: to transform environmental objectives into economic opportunities, to anchor economic activities within Brussels' boundaries and this in order to maximize resources circularity while boosting entrepreneurship, and to create new

employment opportunities. The *Be Circular – Be Brussels* portfolio makes available 1.5 million EUR annually in support of specific projects in this area (8.3).

Wallonia focuses on five priority axes for the economic re-deployment and structuring of a genuine industrial policy, namely: training and orientation, innovation and growth, territorial development, circular economy and digital innovation, and energy<sup>5</sup>. *Creative Wallonia*, a framework program on creativity and innovation, is there to allow all citizens to discover their own and Wallonia's creative potential through activities on the ground, to think outside the box, to make creativity an essential ingredient of all sectors of activity and to give impetus to the Walloon economy (8.3).

The twentieth anniversary of the Belgian law on well-being at work in 2016 created the opportunity to design a new national strategy providing answers to a series of new challenges. Four strategic goals have been identified for the period 2016-2020: safe and healthy work, strengthened labor market participation, increased occupational health and safety related prevention, and an enhanced prevention culture (8.5). The *Flexible and Workable Work Act* of the Belgian federal government, which entered into force in February 2017, aims at providing a more flexible legal framework in terms of working time, whilst ensuring a balanced working environment, *inter alia* through the encouragement of permanent training, the introduction of a so-called "career savings" system and the extension of time credit and care leave entitlements.

With a youth unemployment rate of 22.1%, Belgium is performing worse than the European average of 20.3%. Access to sustainable and quality jobs for young people is a particular concern, especially for low-skilled ones. The Flemish government through various campaigns supports youths in charting their path through the labor market<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> KMO-Portefeuille (renewed, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> KMO-Groei subsidie.

<sup>3</sup> KMO-Instrument, KMO-Haalbaarheidsstudies, KMO-Innovatieprojecten.

<sup>4</sup> Small Business Act wallon 2015-2019 – Le Plan d'Action PME.

<sup>5</sup> Plan Marshall 4.0 (2015-2019) de la Région wallonne.

<sup>6</sup> #Wat Werkt, Open Forum 2016 Op Weg Naar Werk, with De Ambrassade.



A non-profit association with a focus on youth well-being moreover developed, with the same government's support, a specific methodology to accompany young people in a more integrated way towards work<sup>7</sup> (8.6).

The federal and regional governments alike are taking a series of steps to promote corporate social responsibility (12.6). In this context, they recently decided to work out a national action plan on business and human rights which will ensure the implementation of social responsibility and the anchorage of human rights within the business sector (8.7, 8.8).

A 2016 federal action plan for the fight against social fraud and social dumping includes a total of 90 concrete action points and includes, among others, flash social controls and more checks on social dumping. Another one contains 30 specific measures that have been developed in cooperation with trade unions, employers and administrations to combat fraud and unfair competition in the transport sector (8.8).

Several civil society initiatives are also worth mentioning. The umbrella organization *The Shift*<sup>8</sup> brought together more than 50 organizations around a Belgian Charter on Decent Work for All. Launched in 2016, it aims to foster the emergence of partnerships between civil society actors and the public and private sectors in order to create more decent work for fragile target groups. Implementing the ILO's Decent Work Agenda has always been a priority for the three major Belgian trade unions<sup>9</sup>. Awareness-raising among members, social dialogue with employers and governments, active participation in multi-stakeholder platforms, and forging alliances for the implementation of the SDGs are central in these efforts. *Duo for a Job* – also known as one of the eight Belgian SDG Voices – matches young job seekers from diverse backgrounds with people older than 50 who have a professional experience in related fields and who can accompany and support them in

their search for a job. Through its mentoring program it encourages an exchange of experience between generations and cultures, thus facilitating the future employment of young people while recognizing the value of our elders' experience (8.5, 8.6).

In Belgium, the employment of persons with disabilities is governed by the general rules that apply to the entire labor market. In terms of promoting equal opportunities and treatment in the workplace for persons with disabilities, the Walloon *Agency for a Quality Life*<sup>10</sup>, has put in place various mechanisms to facilitate the inclusion of people with disabilities, for example in terms of training, employment and adaptation of working conditions. In 2016 alone, 7741 persons with disabilities have been provided with employment in over 52 adapted workplaces.

The main multilateral partner of Belgium in the SDG8 area is the ILO. With Angola, Belgium launched the Group of Friends on Decent Work for Sustainable Development, to mobilize and coordinate political and technical support for the inclusion of employment, social protection and decent work for all in the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Belgium continues to co-chair the group in order to advance decent work and inclusive economic growth issues in the Agenda's implementation phase. As a member of the UN Human Rights Council (2016-2018), Belgium attaches specific attention to promoting decent work and social protection for all, respect for international labor standards and inclusive economic growth as levers to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development. Belgium takes a leadership role in promoting the Children's Rights and Business Principles, has adopted a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights with special attention to children's rights and engages and participates in the annual Geneva Forum on Business and Human Rights. Decent work is also recognized as a thematic priority in the federal law on development cooperation, around which indirect cooperation programs (implemented by Belgian CSOs)

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<sup>7</sup> *Missing Link*, with Arktos vzw.

<sup>8</sup> cfr. *infra*, chapter 3.

<sup>9</sup> ACV-CSC, ABVV-FGTB and ACLVB-CGSLB.

<sup>10</sup> *Agence pour une Vie de Qualité*.



are clustered. All new five year programs (2017-2021) in the field of decent work thus spring from one common strategic framework which holds, in financial terms, 82 million EUR in new commitments (8.5).

Belgian external action in support of SDG8 essentially revolves around two poles: decent job creation (8.3) and the protection of labor rights (8.8). BIO provided a 10 million EUR equity investment in an SME fund for job creation in 12 medium-sized companies in sub-Saharan Africa, and supported access to finance for women micro-entrepreneurs in rural areas in India through equity financing of 2 million EUR to Indian microfinance institutions (8.10, 8.5). French-speaking Belgian municipalities also do their part to increase access to micro-credit for micro-sized enterprises in Senegal (8.3).

In its efforts to stimulate entrepreneurship and youth employment, the Belgian development agency supports sustainable socio-economic development in Mali, provides technical and vocational training in the African Great Lakes Region, and offers marketing support through participative coaching for 42 producer groups in the coffee, cocoa, fruits, crafts, medical and aromatic plants, fruits and vegetables and nuts sectors in African countries and Vietnam (8.3, 8.b). The Belgian association Ex-Change Expertise sends expert volunteers to various African countries to transfer competences in finance (to microcredit structures), hospitality services, SME training, agronomy (to cooperatives) and epidemiology (8.3). The government of Flanders supports social entrepreneurship in South Africa through a multi-stakeholder partnership (including multilateral organizations like ILO and SEED South Africa, local universities, local South-African authorities) boosting enterprises and job creation opportunities for young people, for the rural excluded and for the urban poor (8.3, 8.4, 8.8).

Several Belgian initiatives have supported research work on the role of labor standards in the international trade and investment arena, ranging from a study<sup>11</sup> on the extent to which the European Investment Bank takes into account ILO Conventions in its policies, to the ILO's Assessment of Labor Provisions in Trade and Investment Arrangements<sup>12</sup> which was co-financed by the government of Flanders (8.8, 8.3, 17.10). Belgium's recently concluded bilateral investment treaties contain specific provisions on environmental and labor measures, which are also being incorporated into the new Model Bilateral Investment Treaty that is currently being negotiated. The federal parliament annually receives a progress report on trade agreements, which includes the evolution of Belgium's bilateral, plurilateral, and multilateral trade relations over the previous year and elaborates on the application of the provisions on labor and environment.

Social dialogue – as one of the four pillars of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda – is another important focus area. Belgium joined the *Global Deal: Enhanced Social Dialogue for Decent Work and Inclusive Growth* initiative<sup>13</sup> and Belgian employers and workers emphasize the importance of social dialogue in the cooperation with their counterparts in mainly EU neighborhood countries (Balkans, Maghreb), which has for example led to the conclusion of the first ever social contract in Tunisia. Belgian trade unions are also working with partners in the global South on projects focusing on equal rights in employment, with special attention for workers with precarious status in both the formal and the informal economy, including workers in free-trade zones and in transnational companies and their supply chains (8.5). A Clean Clothes Campaign focused specifically on the fundamental rights of workers in the garment sector (8.7, 8.8).

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<sup>11</sup> By a trade union and financially supported by the federal ministry for Employment.

<sup>12</sup> Labour Provisions in Trade Agreements: design, implementation and stakeholder involvement.

<sup>13</sup> Launched by Sweden and in cooperation with the ILO and the OECD at the UN Headquarters in 2016.



# SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation



Belgium has a number of cards to play in this respect. Our businesses are strong in process and product innovation and Belgian research centers are highly regarded and occupy an enviable position in the innovation landscape. There is a tradition of relatively high public and private investment in education, research, development and innovation. Expenditures in research and development as a share of GDP (indicator 18 in the annex) have been growing over the last years and reached almost 2.5% of GDP in 2015. They are above the EU-28 average of 2%, but remain short, however, of the EU 2020 objective of 3%. Further catching-up is necessary if bottlenecks are to be eliminated, such as better linking scientific strengths to economic strengths of international companies, research institutions, social enterprises, personal service providers and government. Faster uptake and breakthrough of new and sustainable technologies, insights and applications, with greater involvement of SMEs and firms in the non-profit sector, is also in order. In terms of transport, and the use of transport infrastructure in particular, the share of private cars (indicator 17 in the annex) is slowly declining but remains very high at 76%, trailing the EU-28 average.

With 82% of its population connected to the internet, Belgium scores well on availability and use of IT. While citizens' ICT skills are rapidly increasing, about a third of the population does not have the necessary skills to fully use the internet. Household income, unemployment and educational attainment are key factors influencing the digital gap in Belgium. Women with low levels of education are a particularly disadvantaged category: 33.4% of them has never used the internet, which is not only

significantly higher than among women with higher levels of education, but also compared to their male counterparts with similar low levels of education (25.5%). Digital developments will further unfold, bring many opportunities (such as peer-to-peer learning, open online courses, open source and crowdsourcing), ensure the rapid dissemination of knowledge and contribute to innovation and new forms of teaching and long-distance learning.

As one of the most congested countries in terms of hours wasted or delays in traffic – especially around economic centers like Antwerp or Brussels – realizing a modal shift in favor of public transport and cycling is a step in the right direction. Among the many measures taken and planned, reference can be made to investment in park and ride schemes, and in a regional express rail and cycling network around the capital<sup>1</sup>. Creating improved access to the port of Zeebrugge is part of the European TEN-T project, which seeks to strengthen the link between a sustainable transport network and the EU's infrastructure (9.1).

The Flemish government<sup>2</sup> provides financing in support of large projects in the generation of offshore and onshore wind energy, the production and installation of solar panels, organic photovoltaic plants, solar power plants for large residential and business areas, marine energy, energy conservation programs for government buildings, lowering financing thresholds for energy savings in SMEs, energy-efficient production and distribution of hydrogen, and plug-in systems for cogeneration to the benefit of industrial and residential clusters (9.2). Wallonia aims to support industrial development through its regional policy for innovation and business growth<sup>3</sup> with smart specialization and sustainable industrial innovation at the heart<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Joh. 20: 24-29.

<sup>2</sup> Participatiemaatschappij Vlaanderen.

<sup>3</sup> Plan Marshall 4.0 (2016).

<sup>4</sup> Stratégie de Spécialisation Intelligente (2015): Vers une politique régionale d'innovation industrielle durable.



It focuses on the growth potential of SMEs and on circular economy development (9.2).

*Digital Belgium* outlines our digital long-term vision and translates this into clear ambitions. Based upon five major priorities – digital infrastructure, digital confidence and security, digital skills and jobs, digital economy and digital government – the aim by 2020 is for 1,000 new start-ups to take root in Belgium and for the digital revolution to deliver 50,000 new jobs in a variety of sectors. The *Digital Belgium Skills Fund*, launched in May 2017, provides 18 million EUR in support of projects over the coming three years. The Digital Wallonia Platform brings together digital players and works on 5 axes: support for the digital sector itself (*inter alia* by establishing a digital fund for start-ups), roll out of digital in other economic sectors, education, public sector and services, and smart cities (9.2).

Through the use of green economy covenants, the Flemish Government supports the greening of the economy and industry. These are voluntary agreements between private partners and the Flemish government to jointly pursue a green project whereby environmental goals go hand in hand with increased competitiveness and sound business practices. Companies, NGOs, research institutions and other sector organizations are eligible for this kind of support (9.4).

Self-driving vehicles can trigger a revolution in mobility, especially given the potential for shared transport modes, for use by persons with reduced mobility, and in light of the expected decline in terms of traffic accidents and harmful emissions. Belgium closely follows technological developments in this respect and aspires to provide further support, including through the development – along with sector federations<sup>5</sup> and the Belgian Institute for Road Safety – of a code of conduct developed for the testing of automated vehicles on the road, so as to effectively enable field tests in the future (9.4).

Several strategic research centers are the result of scientific research in broad areas of science such as micro- and nano-electronics, biotechnology and broadband technology. Through marketing their knowledge and the creation of spin-offs, they form a necessary bridge between fundamental and applied research and play an important role in the transformation of the economy. Flemish research centers like *imec*, *iMinds*, *Flanders Make*, *EnergyVille* and *VITO* are zeroing in on technological developments regarding renewable energy and smart cities. Among these, *Flanders Make* is the strategic research center which aims to strengthen the product and process innovation within Flemish manufacturing companies so that they are better armed and able to cope today with tomorrow's challenges.

The Flemish Institute for technological research (VITO) has launched the "Global Science, Technology and Innovation Conference (G-STIC)" series<sup>6</sup>. Organized by a consortium of institutions – including also the African Centre for Technology Studies, the Asian Institute of Technology, The Energy and Resources Institute, or the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi – the purpose of the G-STIC series is to build knowledge bases and global expert networks underpinning the technological transitions needed for the implementation of the different SDGs and the transition to less carbon and resource-intensive and more resilient economic development models. In doing so, G-STIC will also accelerate the development, dissemination, and deployment of integrated technological solutions that are feasible, acceptable and affordable from both an economic and social point of view (17.6, 17.7, 9.5, 9.b).

*Brain-be* – Belgian Research Action through Interdisciplinary Networks – is a recurrent framework programme for research that is open to the entire Belgian scientific community: universities, public scientific institutions and non-profit research centres. Several key thematic areas were matched with the scientific potential of the federal scientific institutions and with the areas of competence of

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<sup>5</sup> *Agoria and Febiac*.

<sup>6</sup> The first conference will take place from 23 to 25 October 2017 in Brussels.



the federal departments, thus aligning research potential with societal needs. The FEB<sup>7</sup> Chair Belgian Business Champions, organized in collaboration with two universities, aims to pay more attention to companies which successfully cope with strategic and societal challenges and gives more visibility to these international success stories (9.5).

While highly diversified, Belgian action abroad in terms of infrastructure, industrialization and innovation often involves a green technology component. Through its membership of and financial contribution to multilateral development banks and funds, Belgium strives to stimulate risk capital abroad as much as it does at home. Through state-to-state loans, Belgium finances the construction of seven railroad bridges in Sri Lanka and the small bridge rehabilitation in Cameroon, while a soft loan covers the supply of steel bridges for rural development in Ghana. And in the context of the EU Trust Fund for Africa, Belgium helps fighting rural emigration by creating economic opportunities through the development of sustainable energy infrastructure (9.4, 9.a) in North-West Senegal (9.1, 9.a, 9.4).

BIO's efforts in this area range from value and knowledge creation in a Ghanaian cacao transforming company (9.2) over investment in a community medical center in the southern DRC (9.1, 9.a) and offering SMEs access to adapted financial services in Côte d'Ivoire (9.3) to providing access to telecommunication services for 3 million inhabitants in mainly rural areas of Myanmar (9.1, 9.c), through a 15 million USD loan for the build-up of 2000 telecom towers.

Access to information and communication technology is another focus area of the Belgian international development efforts. The *Digital for Development Strategy* helps to

bridge the digital divide by incorporating a digital component into every program or project of the Belgian development cooperation. Various Belgian actors – private as well as public – are also actively supporting *Close the Gap*, an international non-profit organization that aims to bridge the digital divide by offering high-quality, pre-owned computers to educational, medical and social projects in developing and emerging countries (9.c).

Favoring economically and ecologically sustainable transport modes, the Flemish government develops and enhances intermodal connectivity to the Danube estuary in Eastern Europe and invested in the inland waterways and maritime sector in Vietnam through private-public partnerships (with possible extension to other countries in the Mekong river region) (9.1, 9.5).

Belgian academic institutions support southern partners in scientific research and technological capacity building aimed at upgrading infrastructure and the adoption of environmentally sound technologies (9.1, 9.4, 9.5). Examples range from water purification in South Africa, over civil engineering standards for roads and other infrastructure as well as capacity enhancement for textile research and enhancement in Kenya, to research on the treatment of heavy metals and liquid effluents as well as on biotechnology and bio-pesticides in Vietnam. These examples of academic cooperation have been mutually beneficial, whereby Belgian universities, having traditionally operated in an academic landscape divided along historically grown ideological silos, have found new and unexpected ways to collaborate and exchange among themselves, too. They now also see scope for a less exclusively country-focused approach, which would allow for further South-South exchange dynamics and support to regional and international innovation and research networks (17.6).

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<sup>7</sup> Federation of Enterprises in Belgium (FEB/VBO).





# SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries



*Belgium can count on a long-standing and well-developed social security system (obtained through social dialogue, collective bargaining and sectoral agreements), and has one of the highest*

*European standards of redistribution. This is illustrated by a low Gini coefficient of 26.2 with a decreasing trend (indicator 19 in annex), in contrast to the EU-28 where the Gini coefficient is higher and the trend is increasing.*

*A number of challenges however remain. The percentage of people at risk of poverty (those living with an equivalized income below 60% of the national median equivalent income, indicator 20 in annex) is still lower than that of the EU-28, but increasing. Furthermore, young people, singles (especially single persons with dependent children) and families with three or more dependent children are at a higher risk of poverty.*

*Digitalization offers risks and opportunities, as not everyone has access to the latest technologies or finds them easy to use, and as digital technologies transform the nature of many jobs and the nature of social interactions. A society's success also increasingly depends on the successful integration of newcomers. In a knowledge-based economy, their rapid integration is all the more important. Ensuring that people with a migration background have equal participation opportunities in society is a major challenge. In this regard, knowledge of the national languages and participation in education and the labor market are important keys to success.*

The government of Flanders is committed to combating unequal opportunities based on gender, sexual diversity, dis-

ability and lack of accessibility<sup>1</sup>. The fight against discrimination is an explicit objective in this government-wide plan whereby alignment and cooperation with civil society are central operational features. An official Equal Opportunities Commission with representatives from all policy areas is, among other things, responsible for drawing up action plans and reporting. The current policy focuses *inter alia* on balanced participation, non-stereotypical imaging and combating gender-based violence. The latter implies a very strong link with SDG 5 (10.2).

The Flemish Integration Decree<sup>2</sup> aims at the independent and equal participation of all citizens, especially citizens of foreign origin and Travelers; the accessibility of services for all citizens, regardless of origin; an active approach to citizenship and everyone's participation; and the promotion of social cohesion. An implementation policy, along fairly similar operational lines as the one on equal opportunities, is in operation<sup>3</sup>, and an Integration Policy Commission, composed of internal and external experts, is responsible for the coordination, harmonization and reporting. The current policy focuses on eliminating the 'origin gap' in Flemish society (10.2, 10.4).

Five-year social cohesion plans<sup>4</sup> make it possible to coordinate and develop a set of initiatives within municipalities, so that each person can live with dignity and that inequalities are reduced in Wallonia. 181 in 262 Walloon local administrations have committed themselves to such plans. In 2008, Wallonia adopted a decree against discrimination<sup>5</sup>. It aims to combat certain forms of discrimination and to do so defines the criteria for discrimination. This decree applies to both the public and the private sector. The Institute for Equality between Women and

<sup>1</sup> Vlaams Horizontaal Gelijkekansenbeleidsplan.

<sup>2</sup> Vlaams Integratie- en Inburgeringsdecreet.

<sup>3</sup> Vlaams Horizontaal Integratiebeleidsplan.

<sup>4</sup> Plans de Cohésion Sociale 2009-2013, 2014-2019.

<sup>5</sup> Décret Anti-Discrimination.



Men and the Inter-Federal Center for Equal Opportunities were entrusted with the task of managing discrimination complaints and with promoting the Decree's provisions. Just like Flanders, Wallonia adopted a government-wide policy to promote equal opportunities and to combat discrimination<sup>6</sup> and the French-speaking Community's anti-discrimination plan (2014-2019) translates its strong commitment in fighting all forms of discrimination in 53 concrete measures. Over one third of all Walloon municipalities have signed an Equal Opportunities Charter<sup>7</sup>. By this symbolic gesture, local administrations undertake to develop such policies in their midst, at their governance level (10.2, 10.3).

Belgian social protection also contributes to our low level of inequality compared to other European countries. In recent years, our social protection systems have been working to further reduce inequalities, for example by an increase in the minimum pensions of self-employed workers, with a view to reducing the gap between the minimum pension for the self-employed and the one for workers (10.4).

Knowledge of languages is often an obstacle for newcomers to function in daily life. Modern technologies and new media constitute a lever with a lot of potential. *NedBox* is an example: since 2015, foreigners can learn Dutch around the clock through this digital platform, on the basis of authentic and topical images and texts, and according to their own interests, levels and needs (10.2).

The *Handicare* reform project aims to improve the services available to persons with a disability. In the realm of mobility, a special focus is placed on specific needs in terms of age, disability type, and affordability (10.2).

With the publication of a practical guide on training and employment for asylum seekers and refugees in September 2016, the Federation of Enterprises in Belgium

provides answers to questions from employers who wish to recruit unemployed asylum seekers and refugees (10.7).

As for external actions, in addition to initiatives covered elsewhere – e.g. under SDGs 1 (social protection and the fight against poverty) and 16 (birth registration for all) – which are equally aimed at reducing inequality within countries, Belgium also focuses on reducing inequalities as an active member of the Group of Friends for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, advocating for the promotion and protection of those rights and for the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Enhancing equality and countering discrimination, with particular attention for the rights of women, children, and vulnerable persons, is also a specific focus in Belgium's current membership of the UN Human Rights Council (2016-2018) (10.2). The Belgian decision to allocate at least 50% of its ODA to Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and fragile states by 2019 is a deliberate choice to address some of the worst forms of inequalities between countries, by focusing its efforts on those countries furthest behind (10.b).

Conforming to the 2015 pledge in the Addis Tax Initiative Declaration, Belgium is currently implementing the OECD's Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) Action Plan and is increasing its efforts in the struggle against profit shifting and tax avoidance, practices which seriously undermine tax collection by governments, particularly of developing countries (10.4, 10.b, 17.3, 17.13). The federal parliament in 2015 moreover passed legislation against so-called vulture funds. This law, the first of its kind globally and approved overwhelmingly by the country's main political parties, prevents these funds from making huge profits out of financial crises by capping how much they can recoup from government debt and limiting the claim to the discounted price paid for the bonds rather than their face value. Within the broader European efforts to regulate and monitor the financial sector, additional

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<sup>6</sup> *Plan Global pour l'Égalité des Chances (2011).*

<sup>7</sup> *Charte de l'Égalité des Chances au Niveau Communal.*



priorities listed by the Belgian federal government in this area include strengthening regulation on the development of financial products, protecting financial consumers, addressing loopholes in the legislation and streamlining rules where possible (10.5). Belgian civil society actors are also strong proponent of initiatives such as debt audits and debt cancellation as a means to bring relations between creditor and debtor countries back on a more equal footing. Efforts in that policy area are ongoing, with Belgium participating, for example, in a Paris Club 'debt against climate adaptation' swap involving the Seychelles in early 2015 (10.b, 17.4, 13.b)<sup>8</sup>.

Within the IMF, Belgium has actively supported the process of governance review, *inter alia* through approving the last quota revision (2010), giving up its own seat in the Executive Board and sharing one with the Netherlands henceforth. Belgium also takes a constructive stance regarding discussions on further quota revisions where, with the European partners, it pleads for the protection of the voting rights of the poorest countries, which risk being sidelined by the emphasis placed by certain emerging economies on the size of the economy as a paramount pa-

rameter for quota distribution (10.6, 16.8). In terms of leveraging the development impact of remittances, reflection work in Belgium is ongoing on ways to remove obstacles such as high transaction costs or low access to adequate and affordable remittance services<sup>9</sup>. The potential for lowering transaction costs through new technologies and products for digital payments such as mobile money or e-vouchers is equally recognized within *Belgium's Digital for Development Strategy*, which can therefore be seen as another expansion conduit for the remittances markets in our partner countries (10.c).

Since March 2017, Belgium has taken up the presidency of the Rabat Process, one of the dialogue mechanisms on migration between all EU Member States, some other European countries and 27 countries in northern and western Africa and the Sahel region. In this context a new action plan was established which will be implemented from 2018 onwards, with a view to strengthen migration policies in the countries of origin and transit. Belgium is also an active participant to the thematic consultations that are taking place in order to conclude a 2018 UN Compact on safe, regular and orderly migration (10.7).

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<sup>8</sup> Overall Belgian ODA expenditure to debt alleviation was 24.6 million EUR, or 1.18% of total Belgian ODA, in 2016 (est.); the amount also represents an average of the volumes disbursed over the previous (2013-15) years.

<sup>9</sup> 2016 HIVA (Leuven University) Study for 11.11.11: "Remittances from Belgium as a lever for development".



# SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable



18% of the Belgian population admits to be living in an inadequate dwelling (a dwelling with a leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundation, or rot in window frames of floor, indicator 21 in annex), which

is higher than the percentage in the EU-28. Statistics moreover show an increasing trend.

Through suburbanization and ribbon development, space in Flanders has become an urban haze. Suburbanization leads to high costs for utilities, barrier formation and open space fragmentation, and more commuting traffic. It has an impact on water management (supply of groundwater aquifers, increased risk of flooding) and also puts the economic, social and ecological functions of the remaining open space under increasing pressure. Traffic congestion, especially around economic centers like Antwerp and Brussels, is another area of concern, leading to wasted time, higher fuel consumption levels and negative contributions to air pollution. The decreasing trend in terms of levels of exposure to particulate matter (indicator 22 in annex) is comparable with the trend in the EU-28.

As a part of the federal plan to fight poverty, combating homelessness and poor housing is a specific concern. Both temporary solutions – such as winter accommodation – and more structural ones are thereby envisaged. The *Housing First* model, which was introduced in eight cities to support homeless people in their move into permanent housing as quickly as possible, resulted in improved housing retention and health conditions in comparison to other groups of homeless people. Tenants also reported a growth in self-esteem and an improvement in social inclusion. The poverty reduction strate-

gy of the Walloon region<sup>1</sup> includes a series of measures aimed at the provision of access to housing as well as improvements in terms of housing quality and energy efficiency (11.1).

Belgian authorities are developing and deploying intelligent transport systems in order to address issues related to road safety, congestion, accessibility and energy-saving measures. By way of promoting sustainable mobility for all citizens, the Walloon government set up a plan<sup>2</sup> which encompasses a whole series of actions aimed at improving the conditions of cycling and significantly increasing its use in the region by 2020. Among the many initiatives already launched are funding to ten pilot municipalities, awareness-raising with workers<sup>3</sup> and improvements to the cycling infrastructure. Municipalities themselves are equally drafting all-encompassing mobility plans, focusing on soft mobility and incorporating measures benefiting vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists<sup>4</sup> (11.2).

Belgium appointed a national focal point for the implementation of the Sendai Framework in 2016. The subsequently established Belgian Sendai implementation platform draws on expertise of all interested Belgian authorities to assess existing initiatives, crisis-response structures, coordination protocols and civil protection responsibilities. Making the paradigm shift from crisis response to risk management should pave the way to a national disaster risk reduction security strategy (11.5, 11.b).

The Brussels-Capital Region is taking measures aimed at greening its public spaces<sup>5</sup>, while the Walloon government has adopted new legislation<sup>6</sup> in 2017 which compiles the various rules and regulations on territorial development and urbanization, thereby taking into account the key challeng-

<sup>1</sup> E.g., *Plan wallon de lutte contre la pauvreté 2015-2019*.

<sup>2</sup> *Plan Wallonie Cyclable (2010)*.

<sup>3</sup> *Tous vélo-actifs*.

<sup>4</sup> *Plan Escargot*.

<sup>5</sup> *Plan Nature*.

<sup>6</sup> *Code de Développement Territorial wallon*.



es in terms of demographics, urban sprawl and local economic development. The Flemish instrument for urban renewal<sup>7</sup> – an annual call for projects – supports cities in developing urban projects with particular attention to environmental sustainability and/or climate neutrality, mobility, spatial quality and core compaction, family and child-friendliness, green-blue features, as well as balance between private and public spaces. Projects such as the reconversion of a disaffected railway site in Leuven into housing units, social services and public spaces combine ecological concerns with social viability and are linked to community development and cooperation initiatives between public, private and civil society actors. Cities such as Ghent, Brussels or Antwerp are establishing and/or enlarging pedestrian areas as well as low emission zones, in deliberate efforts to reduce their adverse per capita environmental impact (11.3, 11.6).

Belgian governments are also promoting the role of technology and innovation in sustainable urban development through targeted ‘smart city’ approaches rolled out at the different levels. Examples include the Flemish iMinds/imec Smart Cities Programme, the Smart City Wallonia Conference, the smart city e-platform at Brussels level, or the Smart Cities Community established by the Belgian technology industry sector organization (Agoria). To many urban challenges, the *Smart Flanders* program offers solutions such as reducing congestion, sustainably distributing goods to and from downtown, improving air quality, promoting health, ensuring optimum parking policies, and eliminating barriers for disadvantaged groups. The *City of Things* test bed in Antwerp is being used as an inter-operability lab. Concrete examples include the low-emission zone in Antwerp, which is facilitated by a public authorities’ data-sharing platform<sup>8</sup>, or the Flemish Institute for Logistics, which has launched a project to investigate whether the Internet of Things can help to organize freight transport logistics in a city in a smarter way from both a traditional economic as from a more holistic sustainability perspective (11.3, 11.6).

One in five Flemish municipalities have already signed up to the *Global Goals, Local Focus* Declaration, thereby acknowledging the importance of the SDGs and the need to develop local actions in support thereof. Pilot projects have been

launched in 20 municipalities aiming to fully integrate the SDGs in overall policy and long-term plans by October 2018. In various Belgian cities, projects are currently being deployed in order to measure urban air quality with the citizens’ assistance. For instance, the citizens group *Bruxsel’air* takes part in such a measuring project involving mobile devices, while simultaneously raising awareness with the general public and the authorities through playful actions – such as the decorating of public statues with air pollution masks.

Belgian action abroad in this area includes support for sustainable and participatory urban planning incorporating issues related to gender and combating climate change (DRC, Morocco), technical and vocational education and training for local authorities on revitalization of historical centers through local economic, social and cultural development (Palestine), as well as on green building skills in school construction (Palestine, Uganda) (11.4, 11.c). Other actions are capitalizing on new digital tools in the design and implementation of gender inclusive, safe and accessible public spaces, for example through financing of a UN Habitat and UN Women project to promote human rights and advance women’s and youth’s participation in reconstruction and recovery efforts in Gaza by taking advantage of digital tools and video games such as Minecraft and Safetipin (11.3, 16.6, 16.7). The *Université Libre de Bruxelles* participates in a project on modelling and forecasting African urban population patterns for vulnerability and health assessments, contributing also to the AfriPop/WorldPop project which strives to provide open access archives of spatial-demographic data for Central and South America, Africa and Asia, in order to support development, disaster response and health applications (11.b, 9.5, 17.6).

Climate change adaptation is another specific focus area. As an integral part of the strategic structural planning approach in Vietnam, it is supported for example through climate change response strategies and climate-sensitive master plans in three coastal cities, through the strengthening of urban planning and development of early warning systems at the provincial scale, through flood prevention such as the construction of retention lakes in public parks, as well as through skills development and training centers on river engineering and river navigation (11.b, 11.3, 11.5, 11.7, 13).

<sup>7</sup> *Vlaams Instrument Stadsvernieuwing*.

<sup>8</sup> *MAGDA (Maximum data-sharing by administrations and agencies)*.



# SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns



*Belgium is the European champion when it comes to recycling of packaging materials (above 80% as compared to an EU average of 64%). The progress made in improving recycling rates as*

*well as the extensive activities at federal and regional levels<sup>1</sup> in promoting circular economy and showing leadership to public and private stakeholders have been commended by the European Commission<sup>2</sup>.*

*Estimates are that in our country the circular economy can produce, over time, almost 100,000 new jobs and an added value of 7.3 billion EUR. In the chemicals sector alone this would mean a growth of 3 to 6 percent.*

*Domestic material consumption in Belgium (indicator 23 in the annex) is above the European average of 15 tons/person. Only a small part of it is filled by reclaiming of own resources. The majority of these are raw building materials as for the majority of industrial raw materials, no exploitations exist in Belgium. Combined with the reality of an industry that is quite material intensive, this means that we are largely dependent on imports of raw materials, and that material costs for our companies can reach sensitive levels (material cost for an average Flemish SME can reach 40% of the total cost, which is more than the energy and human resources cost factors combined). Urban mining offers opportunities to recover materials, but the complexity of new products also increases the complexity of recycling processes. Furthermore, investments in high-tech recycling infrastructure have long payback periods.*

*Positive in this context is the decline in production of municipal waste (indicator 24 in the annex), from 493 kg/capita in 2007 to about 418 kg in 2015. This is well below the EU-28 average of 476kg/capita.*

Since 2015, Wallonia has been undertaking 17 actions aimed at reducing waste by 30% at all levels of the food chain by 2025<sup>3</sup>. Through a multi-stakeholder partnership<sup>4</sup>, Flanders aims to reduce the farm-to-fork waste in the food chain by 15% between 2015 and 2020. The Brussels-Capital Region has set itself the objective of reducing food waste with 30% by 2020<sup>5</sup>, *inter alia* through measures such as good food training courses, good food canteens in schools and the recycling of unsold food items. Operating as a bottom-up movement, an increasingly vibrant Belgian “zero-waste community” is equally contributing to reducing waste production, through a wide range of initiatives such as zero-waste shops and zero-waste municipalities (12.3).

Efforts in this area are guided to a large extent by actions towards a circular economy. Flemish policies aim to produce, use and consume materials, commodities and their derivatives as efficiently and effectively as possible, and to close materials cycles. Flanders is a European front-runner in this field. The region uses economic instruments (taxes on landfill and incineration, differentiated collection rates depending on the amount of waste, subsidies for recycling centers), legal instruments (landfill and incineration ban on recyclable waste, must-sort policies, extended producer responsibility) and awareness-raising campaigns. The Flemish Materials Program<sup>6</sup> was awarded the

<sup>1</sup> Gewestelijk Programma voor een Circulaire Economie/Programme Régional pour une Economie Circulaire, Strategie/Stratégie Good Food (Brussels); Stratégie de Spécialisation Intelligente and NEXT program (Wallonia); Transitieproject Circulaire Economie (Flanders).

<sup>2</sup> 2017 EU Environmental Implementation Review, Country Report Belgium.

<sup>3</sup> Plan wallon de lutte contre les pertes et gaspillages alimentaires/Plan REGAL.

<sup>4</sup> Ketenroadmap Voedselverlies 2015-2020, with the Flemish government and Boerenbond, FEVIA Vlaanderen, Comeos Vlaanderen, Horeca Vlaanderen, Unie Belgische Catering, Unizo, Buurtsuper.be, and a representative of consumer organizations.

<sup>5</sup> Good Food Strategy.

<sup>6</sup> Vlaams Materialenprogramma.



*Circulars Award* during the 2016 World Economic Forum in Davos. A partnership led by the Flemish government<sup>7</sup> is the engine of this transition to a circular economy by bringing business, government, the knowledge sector, civil society and the financial community together, through accompanying and supporting them and further inciting and anchoring innovation. The next two years of work will focus on the circular city, circular business models and circular purchases.

In the context of the Walloon region's policies on the circular economy, specific waste management related measures<sup>8</sup> will be adopted in 2017. A new vision on the management of flows will favor a Walloon economy of waste recycling and recovery. The future plan also aims to reintroduce new types of resources in the various production sectors and incorporates a new component concerning public cleanliness. The second Walloon sustainable development strategy also includes measures in its action plan to encourage more sustainable management of natural resources by using them more efficiently, making greater use of available resources at local level and promoting reuse and recycling in a circular economy (12.5). The region equally focuses on sustainable nitrogen management in the agricultural sector as well as on pesticides reduction<sup>9</sup> (12.4).

At the federal level, a roadmap containing 21 measures to support the circular economy has been agreed in late 2016. The focus will be on the development of product standards, eco-design and consumer protection. Central to these efforts will be the creation of a *Knowledge Center for Sustainable Economy*. This center will, *inter alia*, share information and collect best practices, but will also closely monitor the price development of sustainable products and address the problem of planned obsolescence. In this context cooperation agreements are sought with sectoral organizations, such as the charter with the *GO4CIRCLE*

business federation for circular economy, which over the next three years will zoom in on recurring recycling problems because of bad product design. Several studies will be launched in the course of 2017, focusing on eco-design for recycling, reparability and disassembling. The results of these studies will also feed into European efforts towards the development and establishment of standards on material efficiency. Another example is a recent seminar<sup>10</sup> where case studies on financing opportunities and obstacles for companies that want to develop activities in the field of circular economy were discussed (12.5). And in Benelux context, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxemburg have launched a study specifically looking into ways to curb the practice of planned obsolescence in products, including the possibilities of regulatory action and possibilities for extending life-span of products and appliances. Belgian federal authorities are equally planning awareness-raising campaigns on the use of official product labels concerning "sustainable purchases", in an attempt to substitute the current plethora of official and non-official labels which often have overlapping scopes (12.1-12.5, 12.8).

Public procurement covers a substantial portion of economic transactions. By utilizing this purchasing power over goods and services as a lever to reduce negative environmental and social impacts, administrations are making important strides towards sustainability. The various governments in Belgium are working together on this issue and have taken several initiatives in support of sustainable public procurement, such as the hands-on *Guide for Sustainable Purchases*<sup>11</sup>. The recently adopted Walloon<sup>12</sup> and Flemish<sup>13</sup> policies in this respect aim to ensure a 100% sustainable public procurement by 2020 (12.7).

Several sectoral organizations work on sustainability reporting: every two years, *Essenscia* (the Belgian federation of chemicals and life sciences) publishes a detailed sus-

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<sup>7</sup> *Vlaanderen Circulair*.

<sup>8</sup> *Plan wallon des Déchets-Ressources*.

<sup>9</sup> *Plan de Gestion Durable de l'Azote dans l'Agriculture (2014); Plan de Réduction des Pesticides (2013-2017)*.

<sup>10</sup> *Financing the Circular Economy (June 2017)*.

<sup>11</sup> <http://gidsvoorduurzameaankopen.be>

<sup>12</sup> *Plan d'Actions Achats Publics Responsables (2017-2019)*.

<sup>13</sup> *Vlaams Plan Overheidsopdrachten (2016-2020)*.



tainability report. In its latest edition, it makes an explicit link with the SDGs. FEVIA (Federation of Belgian Food Industry) produced sustainability reports in 2011 and 2014. The Belgium-Luxembourg association of producers and distributors of soaps, cosmetics, detergents, adhesives and sealants is taking various sustainability initiatives. 80 Belgian companies joined the Charter for Sustainable Cleaning<sup>14</sup>, whose actions encourage the use of environmentally-friendly detergents<sup>15</sup> or lower washing temperatures (I prefer 30 is a partnership between several large companies). And each year, the Institute of Registered Auditors hands out the Awards for Best Belgian Sustainability Report, from 2016 onwards also explicitly focusing on the alignment with and contribution to the SDGs. The *Eco-dynamic Enterprise* label of the Brussels-Capital Region annually rewards public and private companies that are taking a pro-active stance in terms of environmental management of their activities (12.4, 12.6).

Belgium aims to be designated *Fair Trade Country* by 2020. Since 2016, key players such as the Belgian development agency, municipalities, NGOs and foundations have taken up this challenge by stepping up advocacy activities aimed at the population at large, by increasing the supply, market share and consumption of fair trade products, also in the procurement mix of public authorities, and by increasing the number of fair trade designated municipalities to 51% (12.7-12.8).

Belgium contributes to awareness raising and communication on the importance of biodiversity and ecosystem services for poverty reduction and sustainable development, and on associated governance processes (12.8). Since 2015 it also cooperates with the European Chemicals Agency in workshops on international trade in hazardous chemicals so as to strengthen the Rotterdam Convention's implementation in third countries such as Gabon and Cameroon (12.4).

In terms of sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources, Belgium supports the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) through training activities for EITI implementation in francophone Africa and is providing financial support to the Extractives Global Programmatic Support (EGPS) Multi-Donor Trust Fund. More specifically, Belgium takes the fight against the trade in conflict diamonds at heart and remains committed to a level playing field and rigorous application of the Kimberley Process rules and standards. Overseeing 84% of world trade in rough diamonds, the Belgian control mechanism Diamond Office plays a leading role in the implementation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme and is sharing its accumulated experience with diamond producing countries (12.2).

A partnership with local authorities and private actors in Bolivia on climate smart agro-ecological practices in horticulture as well as marketing of organic fruits and vegetables resulted in improved production, harvest and conservation practices, a diminished use of pesticides, as well as higher visibility of the products by utilizing a "clean local smallholders production" label (with more than 300 producers now certified) and an increased number of selling points (12.a, 12.1, 12.2, 12.4). Belgium also provides support to actions aimed at the prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse of waste, and has contributed financially to the construction of a waste sorting and recycling plant in Morocco. Similar activities in Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso and Peru have also focused on the active participation of households, on the training of recyclers, and on the importance of a healthy environment for the communities involved, in reflection of the overall rights-based approach inspiring our actions (12.5).

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<sup>14</sup> Charter voor Duurzaam Schoonmaken.

<sup>15</sup> Goed Gewassen ([www.goedgewassen.be](http://www.goedgewassen.be))





# SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts



*Emissions of greenhouse gases (indicator 26 of the annex) have been declining in Belgium, from 14 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per inhabitant in the early 2000s to 10 tons in 2015. This remains above the EU-28 average. Indeed, in Belgium the housing park is poorly insulated. In addition, intermediary industries (chemicals etc.), which are heavy energy users, are strongly embedded in Belgium.*

*Infrastructure is well developed in Belgium, which helps alleviating the impacts of natural disasters. The numbers of victims and persons affected by natural disasters (indicator 25 in the Annex), at 3.5 per 100,000 inhabitants on average since 2000, is much below the EU-28 average of about 50 per 100,000 inhabitants, but material damage is often considerable.*

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Belgium has committed – in the framework of the Paris Agreement and the European energy and climate policy – to the elaboration and implementation of a low carbon development strategy which fits into the context of European efforts to reduce greenhouse gases by at least 80 to 95% by 2050 compared to 1990. In this context a *Low-Carbon Belgium by 2050* program was set up to inform and stimulate the debate, and to include as many actors as possible in the transition dialogue (13.2, 13.3).

Some results of this project are a number of low-carbon scenarios for such Belgian reduction targets; an analysis of the macro-economic impact of these scenarios which shows that the transition does not stand in the way of economic growth and job creation but can actually stimulate them; a mapping of low-carbon initiatives in Belgium and

the rest of Europe; and an analysis of financial flows in Belgium, from their sources to the sectors in which they are invested. Regions have made long-term scenarios for low-carbon development as well (13.2).

Sufficiently broad support is a prerequisite for the success of any societal transition. Therefore all stakeholders are getting involved in each of the projects, through workshops and consultations; and tools are offered to them for the development and analysis of their own transition scenarios. For this purpose, *My2050*<sup>1</sup>, a simplified educational calculation tool was launched in 2016, in addition to an online calculation tool for experts. It helps secondary school pupils and citizens reflect about the possibilities involved in a transition to a low-carbon society. In order to accompany young people in particular, a team of especially trained climate coaches is available to interested schools (13.3).

A national debate on the price of carbon is organized by the federal government throughout 2017. It aims to discuss and analyze in a participatory way the modalities of implementing a potential carbon pricing mechanism in sectors not covered by the European Emissions Trading Scheme (“non-ETS”) in Belgium (mainly transport and buildings). This debate consists of high-level political events and sectoral technical workshops involving a wide cross-section of the concerned Belgian stakeholders. These important discussions are based on the technical analyses of a consortium of consultants and will inform the decision-making process of the Belgian federal government (13.2).

A cooperation agreement on the internal sharing of Belgium’s climate and energy objectives for the 2013-2020 period was reached in October 2016. This agreement should enable Belgium to respect its European and international commitments in climate and energy policy

<sup>1</sup> [www.my2050.be](http://www.my2050.be)



by 2020. It focuses on greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for non-ETS sectors, the share of renewable energies in final energy consumption, and the contribution to international climate finance. This agreement also includes a section on the sharing of revenues from the auctioning of emissions allowances in the ETS system. It will enter into force as soon as the federal and regional parliaments will have given their assent. Discussions on the burden sharing for the 2021-2030 period will have to be launched, too. They are linked to developments in the context of the *Energy Pact*, the integrated national energy and climate plan Belgium will have to develop under the EU Energy Union, as well as the Belgian 2021-2030 emissions objectives trajectory under the EU Effort Sharing Regulation, which is currently under discussion at the EU level (13.2).

Flanders will contribute to the EU 2020 targets through measures in non-ETS sectors such as transport, buildings and agriculture, and by emissions trading in ETS sectors (*inter alia* energy-intensive industry and aviation)<sup>2</sup>. Monitoring through periodic progress reports allows to identify pitfalls and additional efforts needed to achieve the 2020 targets. Based on these conclusions, on the EU targets for 2030 and on the goal of a transition to a low-carbon economy in 2050, a multi-sectoral Flemish climate summit (involving stakeholder consultations and the engagement of all Flemish ministers) was organized to pave the way towards a collaborative, integrated climate and energy plan for the 2021-2030 period, and towards a long-term (2050) climate strategy. The aim of the Walloon Air-Climate-Energy Plan<sup>3</sup> is to bring together, in an integrated manner, all measures to combat and reduce the effects of greenhouse gases and other air pollutants emissions in the region. The objective is to improve human health, climate, ecosystems and the environment. 142 measures cover different sectors of activity such as agriculture and forestry, industry, energy, transport,

and the residential and tertiary sector. In the wake of the adoption of the plan, a campaign was launched inviting all citizens, associations, businesses, schools or municipalities to register their climate actions, from small, simple and daily actions to the most original initiatives<sup>4</sup>. And the Air-Climate-Energy Plan<sup>5</sup> of the Brussels-Capital Region contains 64 measures in this regard, focusing on the energy performance of buildings, on transport, air quality, and renewable energy (13.1, 13.2, 11.6).

A masterplan on coastal safety<sup>6</sup> aims at realizing increased and protection against the impacts of the sea, storm surge and flooding. Since 2011, work is ongoing to implement it<sup>7</sup>. Safeguarding the Scheldt basin from flooding due to storm surges from the North Sea is a principal policy objective, taking into account changing climate conditions – with rising sea levels and the risk of more frequent extreme weather events such as storms and heavy precipitation peaks<sup>8</sup>. The main benefits of this type of planning are to be found in avoided damage, realized through a combination of the reinforcement and raising of dykes, the construction of flooding zones, the reclamation of areas and the development of wetlands which have a water absorption function in the valley. In periods of rainfall peaks the wetlands in the valley ensure rainwater to be held and delay discharge to the river. This reduces the risk of flooding in the upper reaches. The retaining of water on the other hand is also important during times of low rainfall and high evaporation. Wetlands then hold water, thereby mitigating the effects of drought. The natural ecosystems are able to absorb carbon from the air, and to capture it, both in the vegetation as well as in the soil. As a result of the wet, oxygen-depleted conditions in the wetland areas organic material breaks down slowly and is stored in the soil for long time. This keeps a considerable amount of CO<sub>2</sub> out of the atmosphere (see also good practice under SDG 6) (13.1).

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<sup>2</sup> *Vlaams Klimaatplan (2013-2020)*.

<sup>3</sup> *Plan Air Climat Énergie à l'horizon 2022*.

<sup>4</sup> « *Les Wallons ne manquent pas d'air* ».

<sup>5</sup> *Code bruxellois de l'Air, du Climat et de la Maîtrise de l'Énergie*.

<sup>6</sup> *Masterplan Kustveiligheid*.

<sup>7</sup> [www.kustveiligheid.be](http://www.kustveiligheid.be)

<sup>8</sup> *Geactualiseerd Sigmoplan*.



Since 2008, *Klimaatcoalitie/Coalition Climat*<sup>9</sup> unites about 65 civil society organizations and aims to convince policy-makers to take strong measures and to warn the general public to a low-carbon society. Under the *Science Based Targets Initiative*, a joint WWF, WRI, CDP and UN Global Compact initiative, 222 large and often carbon-intensive Belgian companies have committed to develop a calculated goal in terms of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reductions in their business practices. The goalpost is set with a science-based benchmark and is consistent with the global goal of limiting global warming below 2°C (13.3).

A longtime advocate for an ambitious multilateral approach to tackle global climate change, Belgian climate policies stand for bridge-building, favoring a binding and rules-based climate regime that is fair and based on equity, and taking due account of the needs of the most vulnerable countries. Applying the “practice what you preach” principle, Belgium just finalized the construction of its new embassy building in Kinshasa, DRC – it is the first passive building in Africa – while our new embassy in Rabat, Morocco, is the first Zero Energy building on the same continent (13.2).

Embedding climate policy in the broader sustainable development context has been a long-standing priority for Belgium and also includes aiming for coherence between climate and human rights obligations, as is called for in the Paris Agreement. Belgium co-organized with other Parties and actors a high-level side event in the margins of UNFCCC COP 22 that explored ways of turning the historic reference to human rights in the Paris Agreement into reality on the ground. Belgium has subscribed to the Geneva Pledge for Human Rights in Climate Action, committing itself hereby to facilitate the exchange of expertise and best practices between its human rights and climate experts as well as to include human rights experts in its delegations to the UNFCCC gatherings and, where applicable, bring climate change expertise into the UN Human Rights Council (13.3, 13.b).

As a long-standing donor in terms of climate finance, Belgium's federal and regional governments contribute to the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDC Fund) and the Adaptation Fund (13.1, 13.a) according to a negotiated internal distribution ratio and totaling at least 50 million EUR annually. Further upscaling will however be necessary in the years to come in order to keep pace with the magnitude of the commitments taken up under the UNFCCC. In line with the Belgian commitment to spend at least 50% of its ODA to LDCs and fragile states (10.b), Belgium currently is the fourth top contributor to the LDC Fund, single-handedly constituting more than 15% of the total funds available there (13.a, 13.b).

By way of a concrete response to the Paris Agreement, Belgium provides support to partner countries of the Belgian development cooperation in the elaboration of their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), for example through the UNDP implemented Enhancing Capacities of Palestinian Institutions in Mainstreaming Environment and Climate Change project. Belgium also supports the International Partnership for Mitigation and MRV (measurement, reporting and verification) by providing capacity-building support to public entities in mainly French-speaking African countries in the field of greenhouse gas inventories, formulating mitigation policies and monitoring and reporting thereof. Belgium also committed to support Fiji in the preparations of the COP 23 climate conference (13.b).

The Walloon government finances some 30 climate-change related projects in countries such as Burkina Faso, Benin, Senegal and Rwanda, addressing – through adaptation or energy efficiency related actions – local climate change challenges in areas such as water and waste, agriculture and forests management and riverbed protection (13b). Under the umbrella of the WMO's Global Framework for Climate Services, the Flemish government works for increasing climate resilience in rural Malawi, with special

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<sup>9</sup> [www.klimaatcoalitie.be](http://www.klimaatcoalitie.be)



attention to the inclusion of vulnerable groups such as HIV infected families and women householders. The Flemish government aims to upscale this and to that end reflects about ways to mobilize and leverage private funds and specific knowledge and expertise available in the Flemish Partnership Water for Development and the Flemish Fund Tropical Forests (13.a, 13.b). The Brussels Region supports the empowerment of women in the context of climate change mitigation and adaptation in its partner regions in Morocco and the DRC.

Focusing on research, Belgium participates in the joint programming initiative "Connecting Climate Knowledge for Europe" which is open to participation by partners in Latin-America, Africa and Asia (13.3, 13.b) and funds

multiple research projects on climate-related hazards, natural disasters and resilience. Projects include research on culturally, technically and economically feasible resilience strategies to cope with landslides in equatorial Africa; research on modelling and assessing surface change impacts on Belgian and Western European climate; research on issues such as land use change and its implications on environmental services, the impact of global climate change and desertification on environment and society, or on water urbanism in Vietnam. Other climate change related research initiatives supported by Belgian actors focus on predicting the occurrence of extreme droughts in East Africa, on natural risk (geo-hazards, such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and seismic shifts) and hydrological catastrophes in the Kivu rift region (13.1).



# SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development



*Roughly half of Belgium's main fish stocks are harvested within biologically sustainable limits (indicator 27 in the annex), but large fluctuations happen over the years and further progress is needed. A large share (37%) of the Belgian waters are protected under the European Natura 2000 scheme (indicator 28 in the annex). This is well beyond the 10% objective proposed in Target 14.5.*

*The application of the principle of maximum sustainable yield ensures that fishery resources increase overtime so that the sector can fish sustainably, with a lesser impact on stocks and through a more efficient capture process. We also take steps to improve the energy efficiency of fishing activities, through modifications to fishing gear and techniques, as well as by improving propulsion and energy management on board.*

*The fight against the abundant waste and plastics in the Belgian part of the North Sea is another important matter of concern. The Fishing for Litter pilot project has demonstrated that at least 62% of the dredged waste can be traced back to fisheries activities: fish tanks, nets, metal chains, boots are part of this 'booty'.*

Waste management plans for sea and inland shipping control the release and collection of ship-generated waste and cargo residues. This prevents them from being discharged into the sea (14.1).

In collaboration with the fishing industry, an environment focused NGO and scientists of the Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Research, the Flemish agriculture and fisheries administration works on making Flemish fisheries

sustainable<sup>1</sup>. Through seven goals it aims for sustainable fishing stocks, a fleet with a minimal impact on the ecosystem, protection of nature at sea, economically profitable companies, a specific regime for coastal and small-scale fisheries, an attractive and safe fishing profession and the training of new fishermen as guardians of the sea (14.2, 14.4, 14.b). Our fisheries authorities also indicated that to date, the Flemish fleet is no longer relying on fossil-fuel subsidies (12.c).

Marine litter is an area of specific interest, addressed through a wide variety of actions and initiatives. The development of a *Micro-plastics Manual*<sup>2</sup> by the federal government will help enterprises from various sectors to assess and reduce their emissions of micro-plastics into the environment. A national action plan to combat marine litter is being prepared. Its scope will be broad, aiming to prevent macro as well as micro litter, and to reduce land based as well as sea based sources. It will address litter from the fisheries sector, single use plastic materials and primary micro-plastics. The action plan will also contain several cleaning activities such as the removal of fishing nets from ship wrecks. Finally, there will be an important focus on collaboration at the national level between different administrations (local, regional and federal governments), and on international collaboration. Other elements include:

- updating the current *Maritime Spatial Plan* (2014-2020) for the period up to 2026, as well as the development of a *Long Term Vision on the North Sea* with the overall objectives to be achieved by 2050;
- a sectoral agreement with the national industry of personal care products and detergents, in order to remove micro-plastics from these products;

<sup>1</sup> Vistraject; Visserij Verduurzaamt.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.health.belgium.be/en/microplastics-manual-en>



- continued support to the *Fishing For Litter* project, and expansion towards other sectors with sea-based activities;
- the introduction of marine litter education in the curricula for professional fishermen;
- the promotion and encouragement of educational programs by local government and NGOs, such as marine litter lesson days/weeks for school children;
- the promotion of awareness-raising activities and communication campaigns targeting the general public, such as the organization of beach clean-up days, preparation and distribution of promotional materials (videos, leaflets, bookmarkers) in the coastal municipalities and during various promotional national events.

The Flemish government has set a target to reduce the leakage of litter to the marine environment by 75% by 2025. An action plan is currently being drafted providing a set of measures aiming at the short, medium and long term. These measures will address both sea- and land-based sources of marine litter, will look into measures related to the leakage into the sea through rivers and waterways, and will also focus on education and communication campaigns as well as international cooperation. Specific actions will include improved availability and use of port reception facilities for waste from commercial shipping, fishing vessels, recreational craft, aquaculture and offshore activities; general waste policy and regulatory framework focusing on the prevention of litter; plastics and circular economy; phasing out of micro-plastics; waste from beach tourism; the collection of floating litter in waterways and ports; and the possibilities of improving sewage treatment plants in order to capture micro-plastics (14.1).

While Wallonia has no sea or ocean, it does contribute to their protection through, *inter alia*, hydrographic districts management<sup>3</sup>, sustainable nitrogen management in the agricultural sector<sup>4</sup> – which makes it possible to combat eutrophication – or still, through measures such as the ban on disposable plastic bags, in place since late 2016.

The latter helps to reduce the plastic waste that accumulates at sea and forms 'plastic soup' (14.1).

When it comes to international initiatives for the prevention and reduction of marine litter (14.1), Belgium actively supports the activities of the Marine Litter Advisory Group established in 2016 subsequent to UNEA resolution 2/11 on marine plastic litter and micro-plastics, and also joined as of February 2017 UNEP's Clean Seas Campaign. Belgium supports the World Animal Protection founded *Global Ghost Gear Initiative* which tackles the problem of lost and abandoned fishing gear worldwide by focusing on prevention, mitigation and recovery related practices (14.1, 14.2, 14.4). This engagement was also the subject of a side event which Belgium and this CSO organized with Tonga in the margins of the UN Oceans Conference in June 2017. Belgium is a member of the Fiji-created *Group of Friends of Oceans and Seas* in New York, and also of the *Group of Friends Oceans* in Nairobi, which takes SDG 14 as its frame of reference for information exchange between permanent representatives and experts.

The government of Flanders is the single most important provider of voluntary financial contributions to UNESCO's International Oceanographic Commission, which has enabled the establishment of a global network of regional training centers with a central coordination role for the IOC-UNESCO office in Ostend, Belgium (14.2, 14.a). As a member of the Joint Programming Initiative *Healthy and Productive Seas and Oceans*, a cooperation project between 21 EU member states, Belgium finances marine and maritime research on the impact of micro-plastics and of deep sea mining on marine ecosystems. The BRAIN-be research program involving Belgian academic and research institutions branches out to some 15 marine related projects, geared primarily towards sustainable management and exploitation of North Sea marine ecosystems. The collaboration between the Flemish Marine Institute (VLIZ) and the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research

<sup>3</sup> *Plans de gestion des districts hydrographiques (2016-2021)*.

<sup>4</sup> *Plan de gestion durable de l'azote en agriculture (2014)*.



Institute (KMFRI) supports biological, chemical and oceanographic research in the Western Indian Ocean, notably through the donation of a research vessel and the provision of training activities (14.a). Belgium attaches specific importance to an ambitious and effective system for the determination of marine protected areas, including marine reserves. In this regard, our country has shown particular engagement for two pillars of the current negotiations on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) (14.c): environmental impact assessments in the case of large-scale ocean projects on the one hand, and the protection of 10% of marine space as maritime protected areas on the other (14.5). The 2017 Oceans Conference provided an opportunity to create further momentum and strengthen the call for an international BBNJ protecting treaty. Belgium organized a three day workshop on the protection

of marine biodiversity earlier this year, offering also a platform for interaction on solutions for SIDS' ocean-related challenges between SIDS diplomats, Belgian companies, international civil society organizations, as well as promoters of blue economy and sustainable ocean management (14.5, 14.7, 14.c).

Belgian institutional cooperation with partner organizations in developing countries on marine modelling (14.a) supports both the Vietnamese Institute of Marine Environment and Resources in monitoring the dynamics of habitats in shallow ecosystems with endangered coral reefs, as well as the Peruvian authorities in monitoring marine upwelling zones in support of measures promoting sustainable fishing practices (14.a, 14.4).



# SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss



*According to the OECD Better Life Index, Belgium ranks below average in environmental quality. Offering space where people can live and work in conjunction with maintaining sufficient*

*open space is not obvious in our densely populated country. The area protected under the European scheme Natura 2000 (indicator 29 in the annex) is thus relatively low in Belgium (13% against a European average of 18%) and remained stable over the last 5 years.*

*Urban sprawl and ribbon development in Belgium cause fragmentation to the open space, which also puts the latter's ecological functions under increasing pressure.*

*As a consequence of the increasing urbanization and the changes in agricultural practices, losses in biodiversity have taken place, as witnessed by the decline in the farmland bird population index (indicator 30 in the annex). This indicator fell by 17% between 2000 and 2014, a decrease comparable to what happened in France and Germany, but smaller than in the Netherlands. According to the European Environment Agency, only 20% of animal and plant species of European interest occurring in Belgium are in good shape, and more than 40% are affected very unfavorably.*

Through management agreements and commitments<sup>1</sup> the essential contribution of the agriculture sector to the

environment, to landscape management and to nature is being assured. Nitrogen residues and animal nitrogen input are decreasing, while the use of pesticides and soil loss has been reduced (15.1).

Belgium aims to protect, develop and recover valuable plants and animals and their habitats under the EU's Natura 2000 program. At the Flemish level, the setting of specific targets and implementation measures is taking place through a strongly participatory multi-stakeholder dialogue involving regional and local levels. Investment subsidies are being deployed, among others, to realize the cross-border recovery of heath, land dunes and fens, to apply an integrated approach to exotic species<sup>2</sup>, to restore old creek arms, to foster innovative partnerships supporting agriculture in wetlands and nature sensitive areas, and to restore and sustainably manage forests. Wallonia has selected 240 Natura 2000 sites, representing 13% of its territory, in order to implement the European Birds and Habitats Directives. Other natural sites such as nature reserves enjoy protection status under the Nature Conservation Act. The region has also created a network among ten natural parks to implement sustainable development projects based on the protection and enhancement of natural and cultural heritage. The *Plan Nature* of the Brussels-Capital Region, containing 27 measures organized along 7 axes, similarly aims at the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of natural habitats as well as biological diversity (15.1, 15.2).

<sup>1</sup> Agromilieuklimaatverbintenissen.

<sup>2</sup> European LIFE Project HELVEX (2014-19).

<sup>3</sup> Code Forestier, revised in 2008.





Various mechanisms are in place in Wallonia to sustainably manage its forests and preserve its biodiversity. The Forestry Code<sup>3</sup> aims to prepare the Walloon forest for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: fighting global warming, safeguarding biodiversity, economic valorization, fighting fragmentation and strengthening the social, recreational and educational roles of forests. Public forests are subject to forest management plans, with objectives and actions to be taken (15.2).

The decline in bee populations and other pollinators is a source of concern. With more than 90% of wild flower species dependent on animal pollinators, they are a pillar of our biodiversity. Various Belgian authorities are therefore taking bee protection actions through the Flemish Apiculture Program<sup>173</sup>, the Walloon *Maya Plan* and the federal bee plan 2017-2019, while Brussels investigates the possibilities of local amenities and urban agriculture as a habitat for wild bees (15.5).

The *BeBiodiversity* strategy, implemented since April 2017 in partnership with the private sector, aims to move markets towards more biodiversity-friendly products, working simultaneously on the supply and demand sides. During its three years in operation, a decision-making tool will be developed with the collaboration of the regional authorities to promote and propose biodiversity actions related to land, infrastructure<sup>174</sup>, production and purchasing processes. A new approach to assess the impact of the production of terrestrial organic raw materials on biodiversity will also be tested. A communication campaign (awareness-raising, education and mobilization) using various tools (website, social networks, video) will guide the strategy (15.5).

With regard to access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their use, Belgium has become a party to the Nagoya Protocol in November 2016. The various Belgian authorities are cur-

rently making the necessary adaptations to their legislative frameworks in order to comply with their obligations under this protocol as well as under the corresponding European regulation<sup>175</sup> (15.6).

A hotline<sup>176</sup> developed with the *Natuurpunt* and *Natagora* associations, plays an essential role in the prevention and control of invasive alien species. Using the potential of new technology and social media, sightings can be reported quickly and geographically accurately, allowing site managers to quickly proceed with the necessary measures. Since 2012, more than 70,000 messages were thus registered about 94 invasive alien species (15.8).

A tailored *Belgian Biodiversity Platform* animates several Communities of Practice (CoP) which are active interdisciplinary groups of researchers, policy makers and stakeholders who collaborate on specific topical issues related to biodiversity. Among these CoPs, the *Belgian Forum on Invasive Species* provides free and open access to regularly updated reference lists of exotic species for Belgium, helping land managers and policy makers in the identification of species of most concern for preventive or mitigation actions, through action plans, legislative tools and voluntary codes of conduct. Lists are built using a standardized assessment protocol based on the analysis of the invasion stage and the impact of exotic species on native biodiversity. Another CoP, the *Belgium Ecosystem Services* contributes to developing ecosystem services concepts, tools and practices, in order to promote the integration of such elements in policy and management, business and society (15.8) (15.9).

Belgium pays specific attention to the protection, restoration and promotion of sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and management of forests in its governmental cooperation with partner countries. Examples include projects on sustainable management of wetland ecosys-

<sup>173</sup> *Vlaams Bijenteeltprogramma (2017-19)*.

<sup>174</sup> Another interesting initiative in this regard is the setting up of 'green corridors' through sustainable management practices around 150 km of electricity distribution lines, by a multi-stakeholder partnership between environmentalist NGOs and Belgian as well as French grid-owning companies (*Projet Life Elia*).

<sup>175</sup> EU Regulation n° 511/2014 of 16 April 2014 on measures concerning user compliance in the Union with the Nagoya Protocol.

<sup>176</sup> <https://waarnemingen.be>, <https://observations.be>



tems in Tanzania (15.1, 15.2, 15.5, 15.9) and on forest management and sustainable supply of woody biomass in Rwanda (15.2, 15.b). The multi-annual federal scientific program CEBioS carries out capacity building for partners of the Belgian cooperation in the field of biodiversity conservation and sustainable management linked to poverty eradication, thus strengthening the scientific and technical knowledge base on biodiversity (15.1). Another objective is to assist partner countries in linking scientific data to policy development in the field of biodiversity and ecosystem services, notably on national indicator processes and on non-timber forest products such as medicinal plants in Benin, Burundi and the DRC (15.1, 15.2, 15.a, 15.b).

Belgium cooperates with research institutes and independent experts in the DRC on developing guidelines for the sound management of the endangered afrormosia tree, while the Xylarium of Belgium's Royal Museum for Central Africa – ranking among the most important wood collections in the world – is often solicited to study issues linked to forest dynamics and conservation as well as to carbon stocks in different types of forests thus underpinning a smooth application of REDD+ (15.b).

Belgium supports CSOs in the implementation of various projects on sustainable forest management. The Flemish Fund for Tropical Forests currently supports several small-scale and locally anchored projects in Latin-America. Other projects are directed towards the restoration of forest ecosystems in Ecuador or at facilitating cooperation between the government and local communities in Southern Surinam on issues such as legal protection of priority areas, access to land and a recognized monitoring role for local communities (15.1, 15.2). Scientific cooperation under the earlier mentioned CEBioS program also involves work in the DRC tropical rain forest and dry clear forest, Burundian highland forest, Sudanese and Sahel forests, and Benin grasslands (15.2, 15.3).

Belgium, a UNCCD member state since 1997, annually spends more than 2 % of its ODA on combating deserti-

fication, land degradation and droughts which in terms of percentage puts our country among the 10 top providers of desertification-related ODA. In Northern Mali, Belgium and the FAO are addressing natural resources depletion and desertification, tackling the multidimensional crises of a political, security-related, economic, nutritional and ecological nature that negatively affects the resilience of the agro-pastoral sector and local livelihoods (15.3).

Since 2015, Belgium takes part in the Steering Committee of the African Elephant Fund, which finances projects protecting the African elephant taking into account their impact on local populations, which are closely involved in the projects' implementation. Belgian authorities contribute to the EU's Trade in Wildlife Information Exchange centralized database on seizures and offences. In 2014, Belgium's Ivory Crush saw the pulverization of its stockpile of 1.5 tons of illegal ivory seized by its customs services(15.c). In addition, in 2016 Belgian authorities organized a training for their counterparts from several African countries on the application of CITES-based legislation (15.5, 15.7, 15.9, 15.c) and cooperated with the Environmental Investigation Agency in the production of visual training materials, covering issues from anti-poaching to prosecution. Still in the wider anti-poaching realm, Belgium supports sustainable tourism projects in Tanzania that are also training villagers to become 'wild scouts' who can engage alongside government rangers in the fight against poachers (15.5, 15.7, 15.a, 15.c, 8.9).

At the CBD COP 13, Belgium signed up to the Coalition of the Willing on Pollinators in order to jointly protect pollinators and their habitats, share experiences and collaboration with stakeholders, develop research, and mutually extend support to other partners in the coalition, with technical work taking place as from early 2017 (15.5). Other Belgian efforts in the sphere of halting biodiversity loss include the activities of the National Platform on Biodiversity, a Belgian hub in the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (15.a) and the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES); an awareness-raising



project in Côte d'Ivoire with local partners on threats posed by invasive species to biodiversity and ecosystem services (15.5, 15.8); or the support provided for setting up the Biodiversity Surveillance Center in the DRC which serves as a secondary clearing house mechanism for the DRC and which has the ambition to become a center of reference on biodiversity in the Congo basin. Belgium also has a long history of cooperation with UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) program. Recent projects in that respect focus on the DRC, on the development of a methodology to economically evaluate ecosystem

services in Biosphere Reserves in a pan-African context (15.9, 15.b), on understanding turning points in dryland ecosystems functioning (in cooperation with Senegal), on satellite-based indicator use for mapping subtropical forest degradation and its environmental impacts in the largest continuous dry forest in the world (Dry Cacho in Argentina), on water and biosphere in arid and semi-arid areas, and on trans-border cooperation related to the marketing of sustainable products from Biosphere Reserves in Latin-America.



# SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels



*According to the OECD Better Life Index, Belgium ranks above the average concerning civic engagement and personal security. In terms of the security feeling in public spaces (indicator 31) as well*

*as trust in institutions (indicator 32) numbers are relatively high in comparison to the immediately neighboring countries (slightly higher than France and Germany, lower than the Netherlands), even if the levels of subjective security perception in public spaces show a decline in recent years. In the 2017 edition of the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index Belgium gets an overall score of 7.77/10 for the quality of its democracy and lands a 36<sup>th</sup> position globally, thereby acknowledging Belgium's high standards for electoral processes and pluralism while also pointing to low degrees of interest in political participation. In the latest edition of the World Press Freedom Index, Belgium is ranked 9<sup>th</sup>.*

The respect and the promotion of human rights is and remains among our top priorities. Essential for the defense against violent extremism and terrorism, Belgium remains engaged in preventing radicalization, hate speech and discrimination of any kind (16.1, 16.3, 16.b). Belgium has pledged to guarantee the individual fundamental rights in the roll-out of its national measures against terrorism. Any response, whether legislative, administrative or through the intervention of the police must be taken with proportionality between the population's security interest on the one hand and respect for fundamental freedoms

on the other. The seventh National Security Plan<sup>1</sup> is the integrated police's overarching strategic policy plan and our central guidance to policing. The plan, directed to all police services whether at the federal or the local level in the exercise of their respective competences and assigned tasks, is part of a cooperative process within a security context, a framework of rules, directives and forecasts, and is ambitious while taking place in a constraining socio-economic context. The focus is on ten thematic areas and seven cross-cutting themes such as radicalization, violent extremism and terrorism; human trafficking; integrated drug policies; social and fiscal fraud; cybercrime and cybersecurity; violent crime, with special attention to society's vulnerable groups and to issues relating to discrimination; property crimes; environmental crime in the widest sense; traffic enforcement; and illegal migration<sup>2</sup>. In the context of the fight against radicalization, for example, specific actions and projects were set up with local administrations (cities and municipalities), including round tables with youth and community staff, a project supporting and involving the families of radicalized individuals, interfaith dialogues and specific awareness-raising campaigns (16.1 -16.6).

Belgium continues to deploy measures to reduce illicit financial flows and corruption, notably through the establishment in 2013 and further strengthening of an anti-fraud coordination service which acts as the central point of contact for the various stakeholders and through increased exchange of information between the Central Body for Seizure and Confiscation<sup>3</sup> (OCSC/COIV) and its foreign counterparts (16.4, 16.5).

<sup>1</sup> Nationaal Veiligheidsplan/Plan National de Sécurité (2016-2019).

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.police.be/files/fed/files/ORG/INT/NSP2016-2019-S.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Organe central pour la saisie et la confiscation/Centraal Orgaan voor de Inbeslagneming en de Verbeurdverklaring.



Belgium is also committed to developing a second national plan to combat child poverty and will continue its efforts to strengthen the national child protection system to address all forms of violence against girls and boys and to prevent social exclusion. Belgium established and supports a dedicated *Children's Rights and Business Principles* (CRBD) Commission, composed of several representatives from the corporate world and civil society in our country, stimulating companies to implement the 10 principles in their corporate strategy and to take local action to improve children's rights. As a CRBD partner, the Federation of Enterprises in Belgium encourages its members to undertake actions in the workplace, the marketplace and the community. In this sense, an assessment of the current business policy on children's rights is being carried out, inspiring stories by members who undertake operations are shared, the impact of members' actions is measured and continuous improvement is promoted.

Upon the recommendation of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Belgian National Commission on the Rights of the Child<sup>4</sup> has developed 40 national indicators since 2013. The aim is to provide a better understanding of the extent to which children's rights are increasingly being realized from the point of view of the child itself. It is not the policies that are evaluated, but the concrete evolution of the children's situation. The indicators cover various aspects of these rights such as the rights to health, education, protection of family life and leisure (among many others). While highlighting vulnerable groups is one of the cornerstones of indicator development work, one of the main findings has been that some of these groups are left out in the data collection, either because they are not captured by existing surveys, or because no survey investigates their specific situations. To overcome this lack of data, two specific surveys are being carried out by the Commission in the first half of 2017, in particular concerning children in migration and children in public institutions for young people's protection (closed section).

This monitoring work on children's rights will be used by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, but its primary purpose is to be used in Belgium by politicians, administrations and civil society, either to contextualize their actions, to start a debate, or to highlight inequalities and identify groups of more vulnerable children (16.2).

Belgium is fully committed to making the operations of its own government institutions more sustainable at every level, *inter alia* through the application of sustainability reporting by selected government agencies. Since 2016 there is a concrete commitment to 'SDG-proofing' within the various Flemish Government agencies, whereby the governments' logistic support branch<sup>5</sup> appointed a sustainability coordinator and introduced its own sustainability strategy. Integrating an 'SDG test' in the policies governing subsidies to cities and municipalities is also part of the plan. The federal level will build on the existing practice of incorporating sustainability goals in the annual management plans of the respective government institutions. It is also intended to make contributing to the SDGs a recurring item in the policy statements that the various ministers annually present to parliament. The Walloon government has committed itself<sup>6</sup> to developing a user-oriented and easily accessible administration. And the French-speaking Community focuses on sustainable consumption, improved waste management and awareness raising in its administrations, and aims to progressively integrate sustainable development related issues into its public contracts and purchasing policies<sup>7</sup> (16.6).

Our country also works towards the development and implementation of e-government applications to increase access to government for both for citizens and businesses, 24 hours a day. With their Belgian ID-card, citizens have safe access to applications related to tax issues (tax-on-web and myminfin), pension entitlements, unemployment benefits, as well as patient information leaflets about medicines available in Belgium at all times (16.10).

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<sup>4</sup> Comité National pour les Droits de l'Enfant/Nationaal Comité voor de Rechten van het Kind.

<sup>5</sup> Facilitair Bedrijf.

<sup>6</sup> Contrat d'administration 2016-20.

<sup>7</sup> Sustainable development plan of the French-speaking community (2010-2015); Déclaration de politique communautaire 2014-2019.



The principle of participation and consultation prior to decision-making is of great importance. Civil society organizations for example, often organized in advisory councils also representing business federations and trade unions, interact with policy makers on a wide range of issues such as creation of biodiversity reserves, citizen cooperatives or recycling centers. Active engagement of youth in such policy and decision making is promoted at various levels, ranging from interactions through school councils, local and regional youth councils and civil society umbrella organizations to including youth representatives in the official Belgian delegation to multilateral meetings on climate and sustainable development, including the HLPF. At the level of the Walloon regional parliament, as soon as a draft decree or a motion for a resolution is tabled, it is possible for citizens, associations, companies or institutions to share their opinion with the members of the relevant parliamentary committee. Such advice shall also be communicated to the responsible minister. Similarly, a petition allows one or more citizens to make a formal request to parliament. In the field of the environment, the Walloon government applies, and has transposed into its Environmental Code the provisions of the UN Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to justice for environmental matters, commonly referred to as the Aarhus Convention. Several advisory councils were created by decree in order to provide their opinion to public authorities on the adoption of legislative and regulatory measures. The Environmental Code also provides for public participation in plans and programs established by an authority that have an environmental impact (16.7).

Conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding are essential elements of Belgian foreign policy, focusing measures in different fields such as counterterrorism, the fate of children in armed conflict and non-proliferation and disarmament<sup>8</sup>. In the latter field, Belgium has played a particularly visible role in the negotiations leading to the so-called Ottawa Convention on Anti-Personnel

Mines and will continue to pay close attention to these weapons, as well as to the more general issues of small arms and light weapons and unexploded war remnants. Belgium has actively participated in the UN's Peacebuilding Commission and has in recent years contributed troops and other assets to peacekeeping missions in countries such as Lebanon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and Mali. Belgium has been actively promoting the need to prevent atrocity crimes and to protect civilians in conflicts, in particular women and children. Sustaining peace, at the brink of or after a conflict, is a major challenge, and prevention is key. Belgium is therefore convinced that peace and security, development and the protection of human rights go hand in hand. It has a long track record as a trustworthy development partner, in particular for the poorest and the most vulnerable countries, and it is the fifteenth largest donor of humanitarian assistance. Fighting poverty, reducing inequalities, empowering women, managing scarce resources, combating climate change, promoting global health, managing migration, as well as creating stable institutions and promoting human rights, will contribute to ensuring sustainable peace and significantly reducing violence of all sorts (16.1, 16.a).

Belgium advocates for the implementation of UN Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, and actively participates in open debates on international peace and security in the UN Security Council (where Belgium is a candidate for a non-permanent seat in 2019-2020). Through the UN Joint Office, it provides political and financial support to the UN Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect. Belgium equally supports the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. Combating impunity and strengthening accountability and the rule of law are explicitly mentioned in the Belgian pledges for its membership of the UN Human Rights Council (2016-2018).

Our country is a staunch defender of the development of international criminal law and the need to fight impunity,

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<sup>8</sup> In the governance and civil society, and conflict, peace and security sectors jointly, Belgium spent roughly 200 million EUR in ODA money in 2016 (est.), or around 9.75% of total Belgian ODA.



through national and, by way of last resort, international channels. As a strong supporter of the International Criminal Court, Belgium is one of the main initiators of a proposal for a Multilateral Treaty for Mutual Legal Assistance and Extradition for Domestic Prosecution of the Most Serious International Crimes. At the General Assembly high-level meeting in September 2012, Belgium reaffirmed its commitment to the rule of law by making 17 pledges (16.3).

Belgium supports the activities of the Special Representative on Violence against Children, and is a member of the Group of Friends on Children and SDGs. Belgium is also an active member of the Group of Friends Children and Armed Conflict and is co-presiding the Group of Friends in Geneva. In early 2016, we organized a conference on the same theme to share experiences on developing and implementing child protection policies in conflict settings. Our country also formally endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration at the recent Buenos Aires Conference aiming to protect schools and universities from military use, as part of a wider effort to strengthen international humanitarian law and human rights. The declaration and guidelines will inspire the planning and execution of Belgian military operations, and complement the existing military guidelines where necessary. The Belgian development cooperation is one of the main donors of UNICEF's monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict. Numerous Belgian NGOs also oriented their activities on taking care of orphans, street children and vulnerable children as well as family, school, socio-professional and community reinsertion (16.2).

A *Guidance on Fragility* was published in 2017, providing Belgian cooperation actors with a practical and pedagogical document for integrating a fragile-sensitive approach when working in fragile and conflict situations. The main aim here is strengthening the legitimacy of institutions in partner countries (16.6, 16.7, 16.a), which should contribute to increase aid effectiveness in fragile environments. Aiming for better synergies between its foreign policy

instruments, Belgium is currently assessing possibilities for moving towards a comprehensive approach, embedding development with diplomacy, defense and rule of law. One region (the Sahel, with focus on Mali) and one country (Iraq) have been identified as potential pilot countries for which specific Task Forces will be created with the participation of all the necessary stakeholders. Two other country cases are being explored for possible implementation of this approach, and it is in the same spirit of integration that the Belgian national strategy on civilian crisis management was updated earlier this year (16.a, 16.3, 16.6, 16.7).

Belgium supports civil society actors such as *Avocats Sans Frontières*, *CNCD*, *11.11.11*, *Commission Justice & Paix* in their work in partner countries on the promotion of rule and law, inclusive and participatory decision making and equal access to justice, focusing *inter alia* on strengthening national legal aid strategies, action against illegal custody, enhanced legal security for citizens, training and protecting of journalists in electoral contexts, improved ownership of legal mechanisms for out-of-court dispute settlement, transparency and accountability mechanisms, better application of legal, political and administrative frameworks as well as civil society's capacity building to start up a constructive dialogue with the authorities (16.3, 16.7). Support is also provided to the Global Forum for Media Development, reflecting the importance we attach to promoting and protecting press freedom (16.3, 16.10).

Our country provided financial support to the OHCHR office in Burundi in order to enable it to gather independent and objective field information on the human rights situation (16.10), supported the International Center for Civil and Political Rights activities in Burkina Faso, helping civil society with implementing recommendations of the Human Rights Committee and in preparing the country's UPR through a national platform in which authorities also participate (16.10, 16.a) and funded the International Peace Information Service project that will undertake a large-scale mobile data collection exercise for mapping the socio-economic and human rights situation of artisanal and industrial mining in Northwest Tanzania.



As one of the first countries to have started legal inquiries on possible assets of the former Tunisian dictator Ben Ali in 2011 and as a precursor in the fight against vulture funds, Belgium remains committed to the fight against illicit financial flows and money-laundering. It strives – through the EU and the OECD – for fairer and more transparent taxation of multinational corporations and transboundary economic activities, and has recently extended the scope of its policies on return of cultural objects unlawfully removed from the territory of a EU Member State. Belgium also participated in the International Expert Meeting on the Management and Disposal of Recovered and Returned Stolen Assets earlier this year in Addis Ababa and will remain engaged in the ongoing reflection on how returned assets can contribute to supporting the sustainable development agenda. In May 2017, Belgium also decided to financially support the joint UNODC - World Bank Stolen Asset Recovery (StAR) Initiative under the Global Programme to prevent and combat corruption through effective implementation of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). Belgium actively participates in international efforts to translate asset recovery conceptually and practically into field work, through its involvement in the Global Forum for Asset recovery in Washington in July 2017, the UNCAC Asset Recovery Working Group, the step-by-step elaboration of the Lausanne guidelines, and the Arab Forum on Asset Recovery (16.4).

Regarding the fight against corruption, Belgium has developed an anti-corruption guide for Belgian companies overseas, providing them with practical tools and concrete examples to deal with corruption as well as possible ways to help them establish their own code of conduct. This guide is the result of the cooperation between the National Contact Point for the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises (involving federal and regional authorities) and the organizations representing the interests of businesses in our country (the Federation

of Enterprises in Belgium and the Belgian Committee of the International Chamber of Commerce). Embassies are being called upon to create awareness about the applicable rules and good practices, as well as to inform the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice in case of suspected corrupt activities undertaken by a Belgian company abroad (16.5). Belgian municipalities also extend a helping hand to improve their counterparts' services in various countries in the global South, focusing on organizational capacity in a wide array of services such as finance and human resources departments, civil and land registries, local development projects and social services. An area of special attention from a rights-based perspective is the civil registry, a crucial instrument in providing legal identity for all, including birth registration. Strengthening a reliable civil registry in Senegal and Mali is also the objective of a larger-scale project through the EU's Emergency Trust Fund to which Belgium contributes (16.9, 16.6).

The Belgian federal police has developed a solid experience in capacity building and in the planning, preparation and implementation of security sector reform (SSR) programs on the African continent, and is currently involved in such missions in Somalia, Tunisia, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. The fairly recent Belgian police reform operation in 2001 and restructuring of the Belgian federal police (2014), plus the functioning of Belgium as a federal state, have proven to be useful assets for the SSR process in Somalia, and are now also attracting interest from the government of Benin in its attempts to integrate the *gendarmerie* with local police forces. Belgian police also supports UNODC's Container Control Program in Latin America and the Caribbean Region, which - in partnership with the World Customs Organization - is aiming to minimize the trafficking of illicit goods in containers, such as drugs, fauna and flora, fake medicines, firearms and counterfeit goods by enhancing the profiling, identification and control of suspect containers (16.a).





# SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development



*With just below 0.5% of gross national income currently spent on official development assistance (ODA) (indicator 33), Belgium, like most other EU Member States, still has some considerable catch-up*

*effort to make in order to reach the internationally set 0.7% target which was recommitted to in the context of the 2030 Agenda. The target, which was nearly reached in 2010, is in the Belgian case also an objective set by law. Budgetary strictures deriving from austerity measures following the global economic and financial crisis are currently still being felt throughout the governments' expenditure, and development cooperation is no exception here.*

*A specific Belgian commitment, in the spirit of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda's encouragements to that end, has been to dedicate at least 50% of its ODA to Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and fragile states by mid-2019. While indicator 34 shows that an additional effort will be needed to match this commitment, especially towards LDCs, this figure however masks important divergences among funding sources, as the Belgian federal development cooperation administration's financial means of implementation (through the bilateral, multilateral and CSO funding channels), to the exclusion of all other Belgian actors, have already nearly reached the 50% target.*

*Meanwhile, in the last few years, Belgium has multiplied its score on the Aid Transparency Index almost threefold between 2014 and 2016, from 18.8 to 47.7%, making it the strongest climber in that respect as well as the 27<sup>th</sup> most transparent donor among international development actors worldwide.*

Since 2011, the Flemish government supports CIFAL Flanders<sup>1</sup>, which is a part of UNITAR's network of international training centers dedicated to provide innovative training to strengthen the capacities of government and civil society leaders in order to advance sustainable development. The center offers practical training on corporate social responsibility and, since a few years, on SDG implementation. Actors ranging from multinationals over SMEs and Belgian local, sub-national or federal government administrations up to vulnerable sectors in developing countries are being involved. A concrete example is the *No Business As Usual* multi-actor partnership with players ranging from the private sector – the diamond sector, banks, the Flemish network of enterprises VOKA – public sector (local government) and academia (University of Antwerp). In addition, VOKA receives support in its endeavor to integrate SDGs and more sustainable development commitments in the mission, vision and operation of Flemish companies. In this context, the VOKA Charter on Sustainable Entrepreneurship is being rolled out across Flanders as from early 2017. Participating companies are expected to achieve SDGs related actions within a period of one year. The Flemish authorities also work with the umbrella organization of colleges and universities<sup>2</sup> to integrate SDGs and sustainability better within the academic landscape (17.17).

The Federal Planning Bureau in 2014 developed a series of indicators complementary to gross domestic product, based in particular on the recommendations of the Conference of European Statisticians on measuring sustainable development (17.19). Since 2016, these 67 indicators are published in an annual report which provides information

<sup>1</sup> The Antwerp International Training Centre for Authorities & Leaders, formerly International Training Center for Corporate Opportunities (ITTCCO).

<sup>2</sup> *Vlaamse Hogescholenraad (VLHORA), Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad (VLIR).*



on social, environmental and economic issues and describes the evolution of well-being in Belgium. This work is also being taken on board in the further development of specific SDG indicators for Belgium.

The Regulatory Impact Analysis tool applied by a number of government administrations in Belgium aims to improve the quality of public policy by analyzing ex ante a project's potential consequences in a wide range of areas (economic, social and environmental). This allows for measures to be taken at the start of the project. The analysis integrates several cross-cutting dimensions such as policy coherence for development, administrative simplification, gender, or SME focus (17.14).

The federal coalition agreement foreshadows compliance with the 0.7% ODA/GNI target while taking into account the overall budgetary context (17.2). The government at the same time places greater importance than ever before on the quality and transparency of our aid flows, and on achieving results. Effective development cooperation is a prerequisite for sustainable progress in the 2030 Agenda implementation, and Belgium strives to continue the significant strides that were recently made in order to reach the world's top in terms of aid transparency. Our publishing standards are now fully IATI<sup>3</sup> compliant, and the Belgian development cooperation is in the process of setting up a transparency portal where governmental and non-state actors of our development cooperation will be able to upload their expenditures and results. The fact that these actors will no longer be required to report the same data elsewhere will also reduce their administrative burden significantly. A new, focused and reduced set of partner organizations and partner countries for our development cooperation since 2015 and our participation to EU joint planning further help to fight aid fragmentation.

Domestic resources mobilization is high on the Belgian international development agenda. This is why Belgium decided to start contributing to the IMF's Revenue

Mobilization Trust Fund as from 2015, to help meet increased demand for technical assistance from low- and lower middle-income countries in the area of revenue policy and administration. International cooperation between local governments has taken the issue at heart as well, for instance through a focus on taxation and allowances in the work of Belgian French-speaking municipalities with their counterparts in Benin. While actively spurring its fellow EU Member States to follow suit, Belgium recently decided to voluntarily forego tax exemptions on the contributions of its bilateral development cooperation, and such a waiver is already fully operational in the case of recipient country Guinea (17.1).

"Humanitarian Impact Bonds" and "Social Impact Bonds" are innovative financing mechanisms utilized by the Belgian development cooperation (developed together with ICRC for financing its physical rehabilitation centers) and the Flemish Government (developed together with ILO for financing of social economy projects in South Africa) respectively because of their potential to broaden the resource base for such humanitarian and/or social projects and programs. Social investors pre-finance humanitarian or social programs and will be refunded by the Belgian and Flemish government as "outcome funders" if the program objectives are achieved (17.3, 17.17, 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 5.5, 8.5).

Credendo is the fourth largest European credit insurance group. The thematic focus of its activities is rather reactive, since dependent on the activities which its clients are developing. However, environmental and social aspects of transactions are being analyzed in the context of these commercial contracts and sometimes lead to recommendations or specific clauses in the insurance policies. Among the projects covered by this Belgian credit insurance group, some fifty deal with either climate change adaptation or mitigation, energy efficiency, conservation of natural resources, renewable energy development, waste reduction or public health and distribution of freshwater (17.3, 6.1, 7, 8, 12.2, 12.5, 13).

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<sup>3</sup> The International Aid Transparency Initiative; *Publish What You Fund* classified Belgium in 2015 among IATI's top rank of "ambitious" members.



Belgium considers digitalization as a cross-cutting lever for SDG attainment throughout its international development activities (17.6, 5.b, 9.c). Belgium in parallel also successfully lobbied its fellow EU Member States in order to jointly insist on the development of a European Commission Staff Working Document, requiring the EU to integrate the digital perspective in its own development programs. Belgium finances several international scientific networking initiatives, with partners from various African countries (on themes such as the impact of water pollution on health in Northern Africa, the use of natural substances for therapeutic ends, addressing data gaps for aerosols and trace gases measurements in Central Africa), and Brazil (Man and Biosphere Reserves Network). Belgium also organized a first International Conference on the Biodiversity of the Congo Basin, with more than 200 academics and researchers from over 20 countries worldwide in attendance, and supports joint 'challenge oriented' research and innovation projects on biodiversity and climate with other EU and Latin American and Caribbean (CELAC) states (17.6).

Trade policy is another important lever for SDG attainment. Within the EU, in the context of the EU's 2015 *Trade for All* strategy<sup>4</sup>, Belgium advocates a cross-cutting promotion of the latter throughout the trade sector. The overarching goal in this sense is to leverage trade as a development tool and as a positive impact factor favoring respect for social and environmental standards internationally. Complementarily to the multilateral debates, Belgium continues to invest in plurilateral negotiations which constitute a vanguard on specific sustainability related themes such as green goods or information technology products, hoping the ensuing agreements become multilateralized in due course. Belgium moreover works for EU trade policies which support inclusive growth and sustainable development in developing countries, and, through privileged partnerships and its system of unilateral trade preferences,

links trading opportunities to, *inter alia*, good governance. Together with Finland, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Sweden, Belgium also sent a letter to the EU's Trade Commissioner suggesting some short-term ideas to further improve the implementation of existing EU trade agreements' sustainable development chapters (17.10, 17.12).

More than one hundred organizations from the public and private sector (17.3) as well as civil society in 2016 signed a Belgian SDG Charter for International Development, with the aim of creating and strengthening partnerships to contribute to the realization of SDGs beyond the national borders. Specific thematic roundtables were subsequently set up to start joint work on, *inter alia*, renewable energy, agriculture and nutrition and health and access to medicines (17.16, 17.17). In September 2016, Belgium joined the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD), through which it committed itself to support its development cooperation partner countries in acquiring and processing SDG related data (17.16, 17.18). This approach will now be operationalized in the bilateral cooperation agreement between Belgium and Senegal, most probably in the agricultural sector. By way of yet another practical application on the ground, UNCDF and the Belgian firm Real Impact Analysis (RIA) are jointly executing a project in Uganda in order to develop telecommunications data (call data records) based dashboards which can be used in a developmental setting (17.18). Other dashboards are simultaneously rolled out for management of urban transport in Kampala (11.2) and for the promotion of mobile payments and therefore enhanced financial inclusion (8.3, 9.3). This highly innovative project has great potential to be replicated in other countries at a low cost. International cooperation between municipalities, too, has seen involvement by Belgian actors to improve the gathering of high-quality data at local levels (17.18).

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<sup>4</sup> Adopted right after the 2030 Agenda, committing the EU to a sustainable trade and investment policy which integrates sustainable development in all its dimensions.



# CHAPTER 3:

## Transversal approaches

### 3.1 Overarching Strategies and Initiatives

As mentioned in the first chapter of this report, the overarching umbrella document under which the principal governmental actors in the Belgian federal system will combine their efforts in order to jointly reach SDGs is the 2017 National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS). Alongside a common vision statement for the Belgian 2030 outlook and references to the individual strategies of each participating government, the strategy lists a selection of priority themes for which the various authorities will jointly carry out specific actions. Sustainable food, sustainable building and housing, sustainable public procurement, means of implementation, awareness-raising and contributions to the follow-up and review of the SDGs were identified as such. In those areas, the common understanding among the NSDS signatories is that strengthened forms of coordination are particularly necessary since insufficiently guaranteed through the existing cooperation and consultation mechanisms.

Parliaments at the federal and federated levels are currently studying how to get their work organized on this new global Agenda. The federal parliament, for instance, for several years has known an 'MDG Group of Friends' which has now been renamed 'SDG Group of Friends'. More efforts are underway to make sure the universal and integrated character of the new Agenda can be more adequately reflected in the assemblies' roles in holding to account the respective executives as a whole – rather than just the ministers in charge of the sustainable development portfolio, or of the international development efforts in a strictly North-South perspective. It is intended that as from Autumn 2017 onwards, each federal parliamentary committee will integrate in its work the SDGs relevant for its substantive policy area. The committee for external affairs also plans to organize a focused debate, at the rate

of one SDG per parliamentary year, thereby discussing aspects of both domestic and external implementation, and inviting all interested colleagues MPs from other committees to join in. The debate's conclusions would be channeled into a resolution that is subsequently debated in plenary in the presence of the Prime Minister. The NSDS furthermore envisages a national 2030 Agenda implementation report to be jointly issued to all parliaments twice per government term. The aim of this report will be to highlight progress made and gaps identified towards the realization of the SDGs, in order to spell out recommendations in terms of corrective action or re-prioritization. In order to make sure this happens in dialogue with all concerned stakeholders, at each such occurrence a large-scale event will be organized whereby informed civil society organizations, local administrations, academia and experts members can exchange experiences, views and advice with representatives of all involved governments. The first of these events is expected to take place in Fall 2017, after the presentation of this first NVR report at the 2017 HLPF.

The 2030 Agenda calls upon governments to translate the global SDGs into their own goals and policies. The role of governments is to define a clear ambition, a long-term vision and goals for 2030, and to take remedial action in order to achieve the 2030 agenda. The fact that all composing entities of the Belgian federal system saw governments formed in the course of 2014 – at a time when the contours of the future 2030 Agenda were largely becoming clear – made the task for ministers easier to individually and collectively take this global policy push into account in their own mission statements and policy declarations, right from the start of the Agenda's implementation period.

As far as the federal level is concerned, reference was already made to the existing five year cycles with federal plans and reports on sustainable development<sup>1</sup>. The 2010 revision of the federal sustainable development law adds two new instruments that foster a transversal approach and policy coherence of the federal government's policies: an ex ante impact assessment of regulatory action, and the earlier mentioned Long-Term Vision, which is articulated along four challenges for the Belgian society: enhancing social cohesion, adapting the economy to economic, social and environmental challenges, protecting the environment and taking societal responsibility as a government. The ICSD moreover prepares transversal policies for the federal government bodies on, *inter alia*, public procurement, health-related inequalities, corporate social responsibility and business and human rights. In terms of whole-of-government awareness raising on the cross-cutting relevance of the 2030 Agenda as well as kick-starting its actual implementation, the federal Minister of Sustainable Development invites – from 2016 onwards – all other federal ministers to articulate the way in which their declared policies contribute to the implementation of specific SDGs in and by Belgium. As a mapping exercise it made a valuable contribution to this NVR and provided the basis for a gap analysis the results of which are being expected in late summer 2017.

Flanders mapped out an ambitious SDG implementation agenda in late 2016, with a clear long-term vision aligned with the SDGs; a translation of the global goals into Flemish 2030 targets; implementation guidance for these targets; the elaboration of a monitoring and reporting system; the integration of SDGs in internal operation and management processes of public institutions; modalities for cooperation with cities, municipalities and provinces; and adjustment of long-term planning in terms of adapted stakeholder management and new SDG partnerships. *Vision 2050 - A long-term strategy for Flanders* serves as Flemish sustainable development strategy and explicitly states that SDG achievement by 2030 is a prerequisite to realizing this Flemish vision by 2050. Sustainability

is the guiding principle and throughout the Vision's text themes are linked to the 17 SDGs. The aim is to create prosperity and well-being in a smart, sustainable and innovative way to create a social, open, resilient and internationally-oriented Flanders where everyone counts. A major overhaul is necessary to achieve such an ambitious vision. Flanders therefore spelled out seven interconnected transition priorities: (1) continuing the transition to the circular economy; (2) smart housing and living; (3) making the leap to an 'industry 4.0'; (4) life-long learning and the dynamic personal and professional life cycle; (5) taking care seriously and 'well-being 4.0'; (6) working on a smooth and safe mobility system; and (7) delivering the energy transition. These transition priorities can accelerate SDG achievement and, combined with the appropriate governance model to achieve them, will constitute a model of good practice. Adopting a cross-sectoral policy approach – bringing together selected stakeholders as well as governmental transition managers – Flanders aims to have the SDGs translated by the end of this year into an integrated Flemish 2030 goals framework. This framework and corresponding action plan to address key issues will help realize the long-term vision of a sustainable society. In parallel with the drafting of this framework, Flanders is also working on an appropriate monitoring and reporting system. The integration of the SDGs in the internal functioning of its public institutions, in cooperation with cities, municipalities and provinces, is already underway.

Strategies for sustainable development in Wallonia must provide a framework to guide all public and private actors who want to promote sustainable development and strengthen the transversal character, coherence and mutual reinforcement of sectoral policies. The second Walloon sustainable development strategy, in line with the 2013 Decree, was adopted in 2016 and consists of four parts: a long-term vision describing the desired future for Wallonia; a diagnosis of the achievements and weaknesses of the Region in terms of sustainable development; short- and medium-term intermediate goals that mark the path towards the long-term desired sustainable development

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<sup>1</sup> Publicly available at <http://sustdev.plan.be>

outcomes as described in the vision; and an action plan that includes concrete measures to help achieve some of these objectives within the scope of the covered themes. While the first three chapters cover all dimensions of sustainable development and are therefore very broad in scope, the action plan has a more narrow focus on key political priorities: food, energy and resources and a number of cross-cutting tools. The development of the strategy coincided with the adoption of the SDGs, which made it possible to anchor them in the strategy. Through it, the government has committed itself to achieving these objectives by 2030. The government approved its first report on the implementation of the SDGs in Wallonia<sup>2</sup> in April 2017, which has also contributed to this NVR preparation. The strategy calls for successive reports every three to four years. Moreover, since April 2016, the Walloon Government in its policy notes indicates the contribution to sustainable development objectives of envisaged projects. An annual report on these contributions is planned. Since 2014, an Autonomous Advisory Unit on Sustainable Development<sup>3</sup> advises politicians and the administration in their policy-making work. To carry out a 360° review, the unit developed an analysis grid based on the principles of sustainable development commonly accepted at the international level. Following their adoption, the SDGs were inserted into this grid.

In Wallonia, transversal tools are also available at the local level, where municipalities can develop development plans aimed at improving the quality of life of their inhabitants<sup>4</sup>: 68 municipalities have made commitments in the context of local Agenda 21 initiatives, 181 municipalities have developed social cohesion plans and 130 municipalities have established rural development plans.

Taking into account possible differences between men and women – the gender dimension – is essential in the

2030 Agenda implementation and across all SDGs: it is a necessary precondition to ensuring that all goals are being reached by both gender groups. It has to be considered not only in order to reach SDG5 on gender equality and the empowerment of women, but also throughout actions in favor of other SDGs. In Belgium this special attention matches a gender mainstreaming approach whereby legislation at all relevant levels was adopted<sup>5</sup> in order to make the integration of a gender dimension mandatory in all actions of the authorities involved. This commitment is obviously also applicable when undertaking actions relevant to the 2030 Agenda. Gender, together with the environment, is also a cross-cutting priority in the Belgian 2013 law which governs development cooperation.

Through a choice in favour of new substantive accents and policy instruments, the federal government, upon taking office in 2014, initiated a profound overhaul of the Belgian development policies, thereby fully embracing the new reality of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Two main strands of thought – promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth on the one hand and applying a rights based approach on the other – are henceforth transversal lines running through all Belgian development related efforts abroad. They reflect the notions of comprehensiveness – the wide variety of public and private sources that will generate means of implementation for the Agenda – and universality – leaving no-one behind through an individual rights focus to development, and with a special focus on the rights of women and children – respectively. Another important diagonal dimension of ‘leaving no-one behind’ in Belgium’s international development efforts is ‘leaving no country behind’ and ‘reaching out to those countries farthest behind’ – which implies an important focus on least developed countries (with the commitment to spend at least 50% of Belgian ODA in these countries and in fragile states by mid-2019).

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.wallonie.be/sites/wallonie/files/pages/fichiers/rapport\\_odd\\_wallonie\\_0.pdf](http://www.wallonie.be/sites/wallonie/files/pages/fichiers/rapport_odd_wallonie_0.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Cellule Autonome d’Avis en Développement durable.

<sup>4</sup> Programmes communaux de développement rural.

<sup>5</sup> *Wet van 12/01/2007 strekkende tot controle op de toepassing van de resoluties van de wereldvrouwenconferentie die in september 1995 in Peking heeft plaatsgehad en tot integratie van de genderdimensie in het geheel van de federale beleidslijnen; Decreet van 10/08/2008 houdende een kader voor het Vlaamse gelijkekansen- en gelijkebehandelingsbeleid; Ordonnantie van 29/03/2012 houdende de integratie van de genderdimensie in de beleidslijnen van het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest; Décret du 11/04/2014 visant à la mise en œuvre de résolutions de la Conférence des Nations unies sur les femmes à Pékin de septembre 1995 et intégrant la dimension du genre dans l’ensemble des politiques régionales; Décret du 07/01/2016 relatif à l’intégration de la dimension de genre dans l’ensemble des politiques de la Communauté française.*

Unlocking the transformative potential of the private sector is key for the SDG attainment, and as such a priority of the Belgian development cooperation. In the wake of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, special emphasis was furthermore put on the potential of enhanced domestic resources mobilization through a number of new partnerships, instruments and interventions, acknowledging the important role entrepreneurship plays.

The Belgian development agency's mandate has been adapted to the main lesson of the four major 2015 international conferences that we need to search for multi-actor partnerships 'beyond aid' in order to achieve the goals set there. Operating under a new name – *Enabel* – from 2018 onwards, the agency will no longer just carry out their own programs but also encourage and coordinate the participation of other, non-traditional public and private actors, and contribute to the mobilization of additional financial means such as domestic resources and private funds. The partnership idea was also eloquently captured in the earlier mentioned Belgian SDG Charter for International Development, to which more than hundred Belgian companies, a string of civil society organizations and a host of public sector representatives signed up, and which will see concrete initiatives between all these players emerge in the coming months and years. The public sector commitment under the Charter notably involves “the integration of a human rights based approach across all 17 SDGs, taking into account criteria such as the respect for core labor standards and embedding social and environmental safeguards in the goals, design, specifications, tender evaluation and supplier selection, ensure development of and universal access to social services, and encourage and facilitate citizens' participation and dialogue, in particular for the most vulnerable groups in society”. A last priority area with echoes throughout the Agenda is digitalization, which – either as a tool or as part of the outcomes – has to be part of every new international development project or program.

Young people are natural and special custodians of a 15 year Agenda aiming to transform our world. Aware of the challenges of the future and well-placed to help shape the changes needed, they take countless initiatives for a more sustainable world. The Belgian youth councils act as a

bridge between youth and the authorities, informing young people about the challenges and opportunities connected with this Agenda and reminding governments about the importance of ensuring intergenerational solidarity. They have already put a considerable amount of effort in aligning their initiatives to the SDGs, including through actions to reduce inequalities within and outside the educational system (SDGs 4 and 10), to 'green' universities (SDGs 12, 13, 14 and 15), to combat food waste (SDGs 2 and 12) and stimulate recycling practices (SDGs 12 and 13), to focus on urban ownership (SDG 10) and mutual help in the job search and in creating start-ups (SDG 8).

Looking at the EU level, Belgium has been consistently advocating a strong and ambitious European Union approach towards sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. It has done so during the post-2015 negotiation process and is continuing to do so when it comes to establishing the overarching policies needed to implement the 2030 Agenda at the EU level and throughout the EU institutions, notably in the context of the recently adopted European Consensus on Development and during the discussions on the Council Conclusions related to a Sustainable European Future.

When it comes to embedding SDGs in our international development planning processes, the goals play a threefold role: first, as a compass, bringing conceptual coherence throughout our different strands of activities; second, as a coordination platform, a common toolkit between the various Belgian actors active in the field; and third, as one of the instruments that can guide our measuring of results. In this respect, Belgium has a lively interest for countries who are developing multi-layered results indicator frameworks, where SDGs can fulfil the role of a thematic 'superstructure' in a bigger programming and results measuring instrument. Further examples of this integration of SDGs into day-to-day toolkits involve the addition of an SDG target footnote system to every thematic strategy note which is currently in use in the federal development cooperation administration, or the intended tagging of bilateral cooperation programs with global and 'domesticated' SDG targets of the partner country, wherever available.

Belgian regions have also attempted to align their own international development efforts to the 2030 Agenda. The Flemish government, for instance, in late 2016 adopted a vision statement which focuses on reaching the weakest chain links in societies ('leaving no-one behind'), on investing in and catalyzing societal innovation, on system approaches through multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary

## 3.2 Advocacy

The 2015 Eurobarometer shows Belgium as the number seven pupil in the EU classroom when it comes to awareness of SDGs, after Finland, Luxemburg, Sweden, the Netherlands, France and Austria, but well ahead of the EU28 average. This however still means that 58% of Belgians had at that stage – three months after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda – not yet heard about the SDGs at all, and that only 11% knew what they were. Addressing this, Belgium is stepping up SDG advocacy efforts. Notable examples are the *sdgs.be* website, which serves as a registry and clearing house for SDG-related initiatives and aims to inform and engage citizens, associations and authorities about all things SDGs; or the 'SDG Voices' project through which eight highly diverse organizations, ranging from a retail supermarket chain over a municipality to several NGOs big and small, will communicate in the course of 2017 about SDGs to their respective audiences and beyond. In Wallonia, a sustainable development fair is organized annually to raise awareness of citizens on sustainable development. A film festival about the SDGs has also been put in place<sup>6</sup>. Development education has always been an important branch of Belgian international development efforts, and has recently been extended into the field of global citizen education in a welcome move from an MDG towards an SDG orientation. About twenty million EUR are thus spent on an annual basis in order to inform the Belgian general public on SDGs

work, and on multi-actor partnerships (private sector, knowledge institutions, civil society, the citizenry at large) with particular attention for new partners. In the case of the Brussels-Capital Region, the year of the 2030 Agenda's global adoption coincides with the very inception of development cooperation as a policy area, and with a corresponding budget line as such.

and to involve it in furtherance of the various goals and targets. In a similar vein, *Glo.be*, the news magazine of the Belgian development cooperation becomes a digital news site as from summer 2017 onwards<sup>7</sup> and will entirely be structured around the 17 SDGs.

*The Shift* is an organization that brings together over 350 members from CSO, research, private sector as well as public sector backgrounds in a multi-stakeholder partnership that reflects the switch from identification of targets to pledges and action. It aims to bring forward SDG implementation by its members and provides support through a series of SDG Change projects and SDG clinics. It has been a key partner in the creation of the Belgian Charter on Decent Work for All, the Belgian SDG Charter for international development, the SDG Voices project and the Generation T youth partnership. It also hands out the annual Sustainable Partnership Award, attracting further attention for Belgian implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the country and abroad.

At the local level, provinces as well as associations of municipalities play an important role in spreading awareness. An animation movie and a magazine's special edition about the municipal 'translation' of SDGs in Dutch, Spanish, French and English that was developed by the Flemish association of municipalities<sup>8</sup> in the margin of

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<sup>6</sup> [www.festival-gofuture.be](http://www.festival-gofuture.be)

<sup>7</sup> [www.glo-be.be](http://www.glo-be.be)

<sup>8</sup> *Vlaamse Vereniging van Steden en Gemeenten*.



an international conference with 200 African and Latin-American counterparts called 'Global Goals, Local Focus', are telling examples of how such efforts can be shared with partners worldwide. The same association consequently uses SDGs as their frame of reference in exchanges on policy coherence for sustainable development with its southern counterparts, as well as in planning and financing processes regarding the partnerships involved.

Belgian civil society organizations, alone or in partnership with others in multi-stakeholder platforms, are also taking ownership of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, focusing on accountability, advocacy and awareness-raising, as well as on implementation. Examples include a series of national thematic campaigns on food<sup>9</sup>, climate justice<sup>10</sup>, social protection<sup>11</sup>, health<sup>12</sup> and decent work<sup>13</sup>; seminars and workshops on SDG related issues such as empowerment of women<sup>14</sup>; and the integration of the SDGs into actions undertaken with partner organizations in the global South<sup>15</sup>.

Among CSOs, an interesting recent evolution has been how 'third world', 'fourth world', environmentalist and other

constituencies – traditionally silos in the associations landscape – have found each other very early on in the process with a remarkably comprehensive brochure compiling 338 recommendations for the Belgian authorities on how to implement the SDGs at home and abroad<sup>16</sup>. It will now be a matter of maintaining this comprehensive approach momentum throughout the 2030 Agenda's lifespan.

Prominent personalities further add their weight to the debate. Her Majesty Queen Mathilde of the Belgians was appointed by former United Nations Secretary-General Ban ki-Moon as one of the first batch of 17 SDG Advocates, and focuses in this global awareness-raising mandate on issues such as mental health, education, gender and the importance of the EU's implication in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Our eminent climatologist and former IPCC Vice-Chair Jean-Pascal van Ypersele will be one of the 15 authors of the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report. And, in the more fictional realm, Belgian animation characters the Smurfs are now also rooting for the SDGs in their own inimitable way.

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<sup>9</sup> *Coalition contre la faim*; Forum agroecology in action; *Plateforme Souveraineté alimentaire*.

<sup>10</sup> *Plateforme Justice Climatique*.

<sup>11</sup> *Campagne Sociale Bescherming voor Iedereen*. (<http://www.11.be/wat-doet-11-11-11/item/basisdossier-sociale-bescherming-voor-iedereen>)

<sup>12</sup> *Plateforme Ensemble pour la Santé* (<http://www.sante-solidarite.be/activite/ensemble-pour-la-sante-rencontres-2017>); *Campagne Gezondheidszorg* ([www.winkel.11.be/algemeen/dossier-gezondheid-eeen-koopwaar](http://www.winkel.11.be/algemeen/dossier-gezondheid-eeen-koopwaar)).

<sup>13</sup> *Coalitie Waardig Werk*.

<sup>14</sup> Seminar Duurzame Ontwikkeling en maatschappelijk empowerment van vrouwen (January 2017)

<sup>15</sup> E.g., monitoring water quality in mining areas in Peru.

<sup>16</sup> *Pistes voor de uitvoering van duurzame ontwikkelingsdoelstellingen in België/Pistes pour la mise en oeuvre des objectifs du développement durable en Belgique* (<http://www.associations21.org/Pistes-pour-la-mise-en-oeuvre-des>), 2015.

## CHAPTER 4:

# Conclusion: Main Messages and Lessons Learned

Belgium can build on a long tradition of efforts towards sustainable development. For a full decade, sustainable development has been anchored in the Belgian Constitution as a general policy objective. For several years, the various governments at federal and federated levels have been using overarching plans and strategies to ensure coherence between their endeavors in the different dimensions of sustainable development, while a tailored institutional framework enables cooperation, consultation and coordination between the actors involved. While these elements provide Belgian authorities with a good starting point, further accelerations and adaptations to the existing mechanisms in terms of policy-making, institutional functioning and staffing are necessary in view of incorporating the SDGs and targets into all of our internal and external policy frameworks in the best and most coherent manner possible.

This process is ongoing, and the national voluntary review has so far played a pedagogical and instrumental role, thereby also maximizing the peer learning potential inherent to the Belgian federal system. Coordinated by a political steering committee chaired by the Prime Minister, and with the active involvement of representatives from the various federal and federated entities, it has ensured a much needed high-level political impetus. It has intensified reflections on the best way to operationalize the SDGs within government departments and agencies; set in motion working methods whereby sustainable development is no longer just a matter for specialized SD administrations or designated SD focal points, but rather a whole-of-government affair; allowed progress in the work on a Belgian SDG indicator framework; emphasized the need to ensure all relevant actors are truly on board in a comprehensive approach coherently combining development, defense, diplomacy and rule of law

instruments abroad; and it has given a renewed impulse in terms of collaboration with civil society stakeholders and private sector. Most importantly, it has allowed for the first time to deliver a wide-ranging overview of the panoply of actions which, domestically as well as externally directed, are currently ongoing and contributing to SDG attainment.

NVR findings underscore the commitment of the Belgian authorities to implementing the SDGs as a whole, taking on board key principles such as leaving no-one behind, adopting a rights-based approach and mainstreaming gender throughout the SDGs. The focus is on all SDGs, working through overarching strategies and initiatives to address interlinkages and to enhance cooperation within and between the various governments. Governments are aligning sectoral and thematic policy plans at national, subnational and local levels to the 2030 Agenda. This alignment has, for example, already contributed to a far-reaching overhaul in Belgian international development policies. The NVR also highlights the commitment of civil society organizations and private sector players, who are launching a broad range of actions and are often setting up new umbrella organizations or revitalizing and adapting existing ones.

All 17 SDGs as well as a large majority of their corresponding 169 targets are currently being addressed in one way or another, with many actions being reported on the SDGs related to, *inter alia*, health, gender, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work, terrestrial biodiversity and peaceful societies. Themes such as the fight against inequality are not confined to the reporting under one single SDG, but instead offer a strongly woven subtext to Belgian efforts in a number of areas scattered over several goals (in this particular case, spanning from social protection related measures at home and abroad under SDG1 over a birth registration drive in partner

countries under SDG16 to the actual 'equality mainstay' which constitutes SDG10).

The review also allows to identify a number of areas where further efforts will be required in order to address specific challenges. Scale matters, moreover, in terms of the extent to which various governments have been able to systematically incorporate the SDGs throughout their areas of competence. Civil society counterparts, consulted in the context of this NVR, indicated that they expect additional attention across the board from all relevant policy-makers for issues pertaining to, *inter alia*, lifelong learning, water and air quality (including particulate matter), energy intensity and renewable energy, greenhouse gas emissions, people at risk of poverty as well as mobilization of the necessary means of implementation. Studies undertaken by the OECD<sup>1</sup> or by the *Sustainable Development Solutions Network and the Bertelsmann Foundation*<sup>2</sup> are an equally helpful tool in this regard, as they provide an overview of strengths and weaknesses for different countries at a time. Even though their findings are not always concurrent in

all respects,<sup>3</sup> all of them<sup>4</sup> confirm Belgium's outperforming of its peers on goals such as gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and notice our relative successes at tackling poverty and inequality (SDGs 1, 5 and 10).

Reviewing the implementation of the SDGs in and by Belgium remains work in progress. Given the challenges related to undertaking a full-fledged review of progress and impact covering the full breadth and depth of this agenda, this first edition of the Belgian NVR should be considered primarily as a stocktaking exercise, a starting point providing us with a partial baseline (shaped by the statistical annex below) and a benchmark: for guiding further action in a federal context with multiple decision-makers hence multiple priorities per policy area; for future gap analysis, progress monitoring and impact assessment; for improving collaboration with civil society in the implementation and review of SDGs; and for strengthening accountability towards parliaments, civil society as well as the Belgian population at large.

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<sup>1</sup> OECD, 2017 edition of the "Measuring distance to the SDGs targets" report.

<sup>2</sup> *SDG Index & Dashboards*, pages 23 and 24, ranking Belgium 12<sup>th</sup> 'SDG readiest' in 149 countries, with a total score of 77.4% compared to a regional average of 75.3%.

<sup>3</sup> The latter confirmed that while our country scores well on the goals related to poverty, health and sustainable consumption and production (SDGs 1, 3 and 12) further efforts would be needed under SDGs 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15 and 17, whereas the OECD study indicated a performance below OECD average especially on SDGs 12 and 13.

<sup>4</sup> Including a separate 2015 report by Bertelsmann, SDSN and SGI which ranks Belgium on position 8, out of a total of 34 OECD members in terms of SDG readiness, and which lists SDGs 2 (sustainable agriculture), 6 (freshwater resources' sustainability) 7 (renewable energy) and 11 (particulate matter) among the country's current weaknesses: *Sustainable Development Goals: Are the rich countries ready? Country profiles - Belgium*, page 20.

# Statistical Annex

This annex presents a set of 34 indicators to monitor Belgium's progress towards the SDGs. These indicators were selected for the purposes of this report by the Inter-federal Statistical Institute (ISI)<sup>1</sup>. These indicators have been collected by the Federal Planning Bureau and are available, with more details than in this annex, in the online database [www.indicators.be](http://www.indicators.be). Other indicators on Belgium – currently about 70 in number – are also available in this database.

Analysis by the ISI also found that about half of the indicators in the list of global indicators agreed by UNSTAT are currently available for Belgium, and these will be progressively added to the set of indicators used to monitor progress towards the SDGs. Another third of these indicators require further scrutiny and could be added to this set at a later stage.

## Selection criteria.

This annex presents 2 indicators per SDG, selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- to be as close as possible to the indicators on the list proposed by the UN Statistical Commission to monitor progress towards the SDGs;
- to use indicators relevant for Belgium, thus starting from indicators already available in Belgium or at Eurostat;
- for each SDG two indicators should relate to different targets;
- indicators should be independent from each other;
- each indicator should have a clear and quantified objective, or at least a clear direction of desired evolution;
- each indicator should follow the criteria of statistical quality;
- whenever possible, preference should be given to indicators that can be disaggregated by sex, age, income, education level, etc., as requested by the UN Statistical Commission;

- whenever possible, a comparison should be possible with the European level;
- whenever possible, preference should be given to indicators that could be disaggregated by region at a later stage.

## Presentation of each indicator

Each SDG is presented on a single page. For each indicator, a chart presents its evolution for Belgium and an international comparison when available. These charts present the information available for years between 2000 and 2016 (data as per early May 2017). In the online database [www.indicators.be](http://www.indicators.be), indicators go back to 1990 whenever possible.

As a rule, the international comparison is made with the EU-28. However, the EU-28 aggregate is not always available. In such cases, the comparison is made, by order of preference, with the EU-27 (without Croatia), with an average of another set of European countries, or with the three largest of our neighbouring countries, namely France, Germany and the Netherlands.

Next to each chart, additional information is provided:

- a definition of the indicator;
- the objective of the indicator, i.e. the value it should reach in 2030 according to the SDG or other sustainable development agreements. When no quantitative objective exists for 2030, the direction in which the indicator should evolve to reach the SDG is indicated;
- the disaggregations available in the online database. Only the value for Belgium as a whole is shown on the chart. Many indicators can however be disaggregated by sex, age, income, education level... as requested by the UN Statistical Commission.
- the detailed sources of information for this indicator.

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<sup>1</sup> The Interfederal Statistical Institute (ISI) brings together the Federal Public Service Economy, Statistics Belgium (Statbel), the National Bank of Belgium (NBB), the Federal Planning Bureau (FPB) and the statistical authorities of the Regions and Communities: the Flemish statistics authority, the Walloon institute for Evaluation, Prospective and Statistics (IWEPS) and the Brussels Institute of Statistics and Analysis (BISA).

#### Main national sources

Federal Planning Bureau (FPB), a public agency that makes studies and projections on economic, social and environmental policy issues and on their integration within the context of sustainable development: [www.plan.be](http://www.plan.be) and [www.indicators.be](http://www.indicators.be).

Federal Ministry of the Economy, Directorate General Statistics - Statistics Belgium (Statbel), the department in charge of the national (official) statistics in Belgium: <http://statbel.fgov.be/>.

National Bank of Belgium (NBB), Belgium's central bank: <http://www.nbb.be>.

Scientific Institute of Public Health, the scientific reference in the field of public health in Belgium.

<https://www.wiv-isp.be>.

#### Main international sources

European Environment Agency (EEA):

<http://www.eea.europa.eu/>.

European Social Surveys (ESS), an academically driven cross-national survey:

<http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>.

Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union:

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>.

# SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

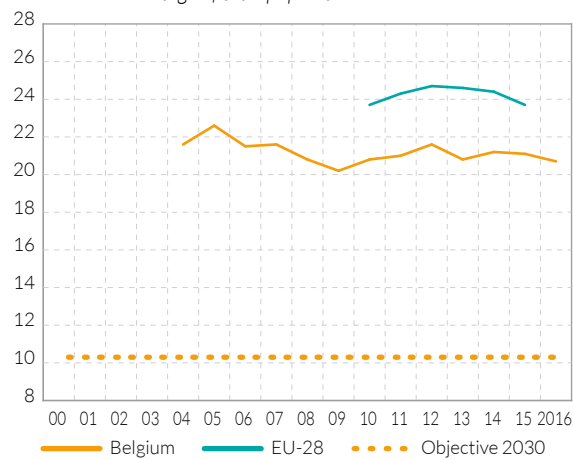
The first indicator chosen for this goal refers to the population in Belgium facing a risk of poverty or social exclusion. This population finds itself in at least one of the following conditions: suffering income poverty, being severely materially deprived or living in households with very low work intensity. This composite indicator is defined at the EU level and is used to define national poverty reduction targets in the EU 2020 strategy. However, this indicator does not capture all aspects of poverty or social exclusion, nor their severity. Therefore, the second indicator covers one issue related to income poverty, i.e. over-indebtedness or, more precisely, the population in Belgium with a collective debt settlement according to national law.

**UN-Target: 1.2** By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 1.2.2** Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

**NVR-Indicator** Risk of poverty or social exclusion: percentage of total population.

**Chart 1. Risk of poverty or social exclusion**  
Percentage of total population



Source: Statistics Belgium, Eurostat (SILC)

**Definition:** population at risk of poverty or social exclusion, as a percentage of the total population. This population is at least in one of the following conditions: at-risk-of-poverty after social transfers (income poverty), severely materially deprived or living in households with very low work intensity.

**Objective:** assuming target 1.2 applies equally to each country, this indicator should decrease from 21.1% in 2015 to 10.6% in 2030.

**Disaggregations:** sex, age, household type, activity status, income.

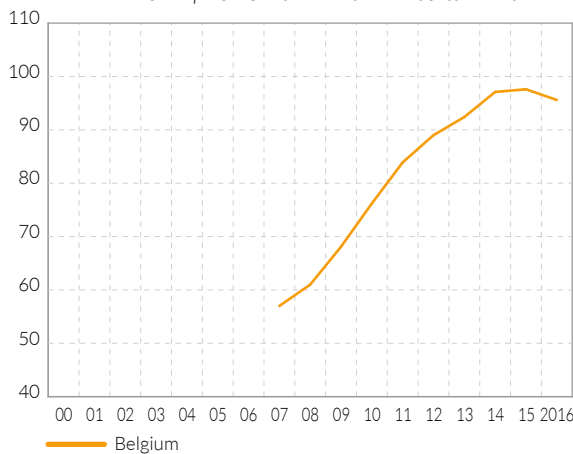
**Source:** Statistics Belgium; Eurostat (2016), European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), codes ilc\_peps01, ilc\_peps02, ilc\_peps03 (last consulted 15/5/2017).

**UN-Target: 1.4** By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 1.4.1** Proportion of population living in households with access to basic services.

**NVR-Indicator** Over-indebtedness of households: thousand persons with collective debt settlement.

**Chart 2. Over-indebtedness of households**  
Thousand persons with collective debt settlement



Source: National Bank of Belgium

**Definition:** persons who are confronted to an excessive debt burden or severe financial difficulties can ask the Central Individual Credit Register of the National Bank of Belgium for a collective debt settlement. This indicator measures the numbers of running procedures.

**Objective:** to be consistent with target 1.4, this indicator should decrease.

**Disaggregations:** sex, age.

**Source:** NBB (2017), Centrale de crédits aux particuliers. *Statistiques 2016* (as well as *Statistiques 2014* and *Statistiques 2015*). Brussels: National Bank of Belgium; NBB (2016), Direct communication for the data 2007-2009 (5/5/2015).

# SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

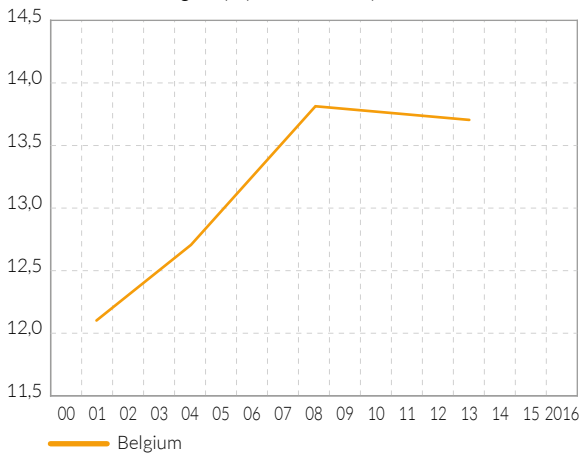
The first indicator is the obesity rate of the adult population. Food security has largely been achieved in Belgium. It seemed thus more relevant to focus on an impact of the abundant diet in Belgium (and of sedentariness), that is obesity, as it is associated with non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, cardio-vascular diseases, and some cancers. The second indicator measures the area of organic agriculture, a proxy for sustainable agriculture.

**UN-Target: 2.2** By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 2.2.1** Prevalence of malnutrition (weight for height  $>+2$  or  $<-2$  standard deviation from the median of the WHO Child Growth Standards) among children under 5 years of age, by type (wasting and overweight).

**NVR-Indicator** Adult obesity: percentage of population of 18 years and over.

**Chart 3. Adult obesity**  
Percentage of population of 18 years and over



Source: Scientific Institute of Public Health

**Definition:** percentage of the adult population (18 years and over) with a body mass index (BMI) greater than 30. The BMI is the weight of a person (in kg) divided by the square of its height (in meters).

**Objective:** to be consistent with target 2.2, this indicator should decrease.

**Disaggregations:** sex, education, income.

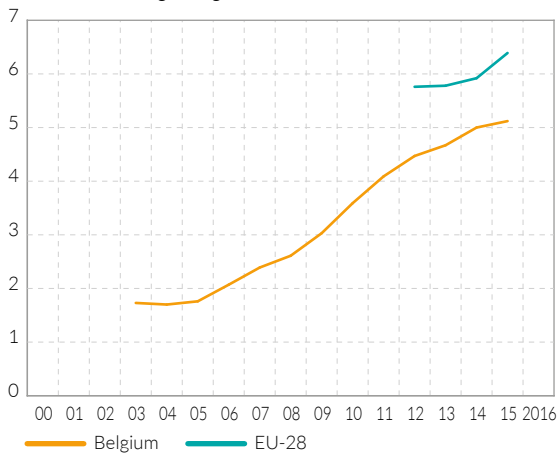
**Source:** Scientific Institute of Public Health (2014), Drieskens, S. *État nutritionnel*. In: Gisle L, Demarest S (éd.). *Enquête de santé 2013. Rapport 2: Comportements de santé et style de vie*. WIV-ISP, Bruxelles; Scientific Institute of Public Health (2016), Belgian Health Interview Survey – Interactive Analysis, <https://hisia.wiv-isp.be/SitePages/Home.aspx>.

**UN-Target: 2.4** By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 2.4.1** Proportion of agricultural area under productive and sustainable agriculture.

**NVR-Indicator** Organic agriculture area: percentage of agricultural area.

**Chart 4. Organic agriculture area**  
Percentage of agricultural area



Source: calculations FPB (based on Statistics Belgium, Eurostat)

**Definition:** share of the total agricultural land where organic agriculture methods are used.

**Objective:** to be consistent with target 2.4, this indicator should increase.

**Disaggregations:** none.

**Source:** calculations FPB based on Statistics Belgium (2016), *Chiffres-clés de l'agriculture 2010-2015* and on Statistics Belgium (2016), *Agriculture biologique* (last consulted 2/5/2017); calculations FPB based on Eurostat (2016), *Organic crop area by agricultural production methods and crops, code org\_cropar* and on Eurostat (2016), *Land use: number of farms and areas of different crops by type of farming, code ef\_oluft* (last consulted 2/5/2017).

# SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

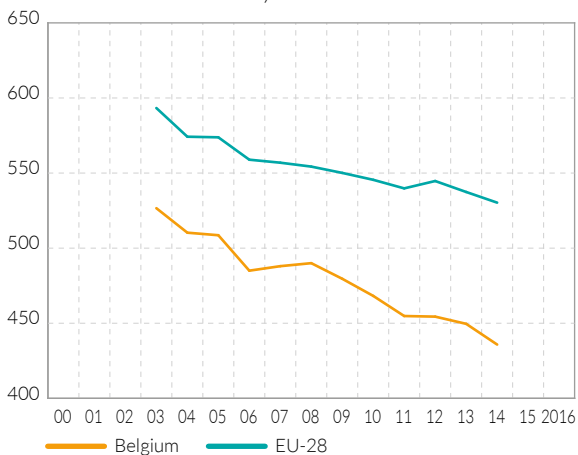
The first indicator selected for this goal, death from chronic diseases, measures one dimension of the overall health situation that is particularly relevant in European countries. The second indicator, about daily smokers, measures a behaviour that is a determinant of the health situation.

**UN-Target: 3.4** By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 3.4.1** Mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease.

**NVR-Indicator** Deaths due to chronic diseases: crude death rate by 100 000 inhabitants.

**Chart 5. Deaths due to chronic diseases**  
Crude death rate by 100 000 inhabitants



Source: Statistics Belgium, Eurostat

**Definition:** number of death per 100.000 inhabitants due to chronic diseases: malignant neoplasms (C00-C97), diabetes mellitus (E10-E14), ischaemic heart diseases (I20-I25), cerebrovascular diseases (I60-I69), chronic lower respiratory diseases (J40-J47) and chronic liver disease (K70, K73-K74). Codes in parentheses are from the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD).

**Objective:** to be consistent with Target 3.4, this indicator should decrease.

**Disaggregations:** sex, age.

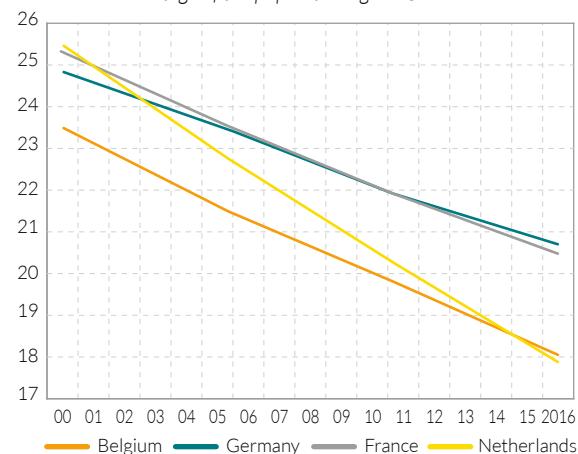
**Source:** Statistics Belgium; Eurostat (2017), Causes of death, codes hlth\_cd\_acdr, hlth\_cd\_acdr2 (last consulted 2/5/2017).

**UN-Target: 3.a** Strengthen the implementation of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in all countries, as appropriate.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 3.a.1** Age-standardized prevalence of current tobacco use among persons aged 15 years and older.

**NVR-Indicator** Daily smokers: Percentage of the population aged 15 and over.

**Chart 6. Daily smokers**  
Percentage of the population aged 15 and over



Source: WHO

**Definition:** percentage of the population (15 years and over) that reports smoking daily.

**Objective:** this indicator should decrease as it measures the implementation of Target 3.a. Tobacco use is also a well-known cause of chronic diseases. A decrease of this indicator would thus contribute to reduce the incidence of those diseases.

**Disaggregations:** sex, education, income.

**Source:** WHO (2016), WHO global report on trends in prevalence of tobacco smoking 2015. WHO.int (last consulted 2/5/2017); Disaggregations: Scientific Institute of Public Health (2014), Gisle L. *La consommation de tabac*. In: Gisle L, Demarest S (éd.). *Enquête de santé 2013. Rapport 2: Comportements de santé et style de vie*. WIV-ISP, Bruxelles; Scientific Institute of Public Health (2016), Belgian Health Interview Survey – Interactive Analysis, <https://hisia.wiv-isp.be>.



# SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

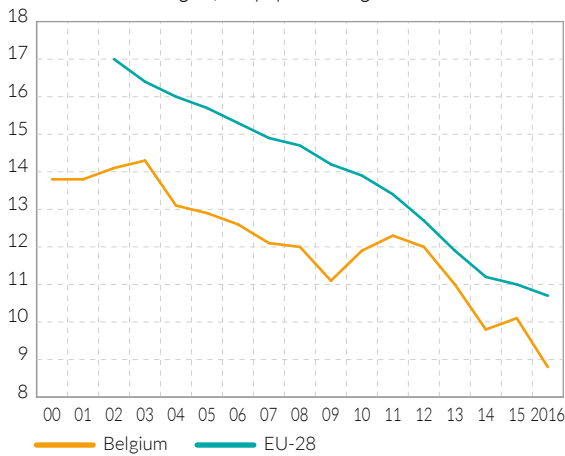
The two indicators have close links to the SDG-targets 4.1 and 4.3 and their respective UNSTAT-indicators (4.1.1 and 4.3.1). They are monitored on the EU level and cover two different aspects of education: learning in school and learning as an adult in formal or non-formal education and training.

**UN-Target: 4.1** By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 4.1.1** Proportion of children and young people: (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex.

**NVR-Indicator** Early school leavers: percentage of the population aged 18-24.

**Chart 7. Early school leavers**  
Percentage of the population aged 18-24



Source: Statistics Belgium, Eurostat (LFS)

**Definition:** percentage of the population aged 18 to 24 having attained at most lower secondary education and not being involved in any education or training (neither formal nor non-formal) in the four weeks preceding the survey. Lower secondary education at most corresponds to International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011 level 0, 1 or 2 (ISCED 1997: 0, 1, 2 or 3C short).

**Objective:** to be consistent with target 4.1, this indicator should decrease.

**Disaggregation:** sex.

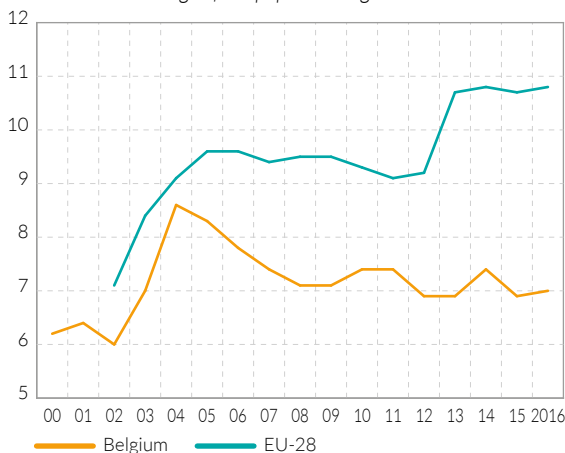
**Source:** Statistics Belgium; Eurostat (2017), European Union Labour Force Survey (EU LFS), code edat\_lfse\_14 (last consulted 2/5/2017).

**UN-Target: 4.3** By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 4.3.1** Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex.

**NVR-Indicator** Lifelong learning: percentage of the population aged 25-64.

**Chart 8. Lifelong learning**  
Percentage of the population aged 25-64



Source: Statistics Belgium, Eurostat (LFS)

**Definition:** percentage of the adult population between 25 and 64 years old that participated in formal and non-formal education and training in the four weeks prior to the interview.

**Objective:** to be consistent with target 4.3, this indicator should increase.

**Disaggregations:** sex, education.

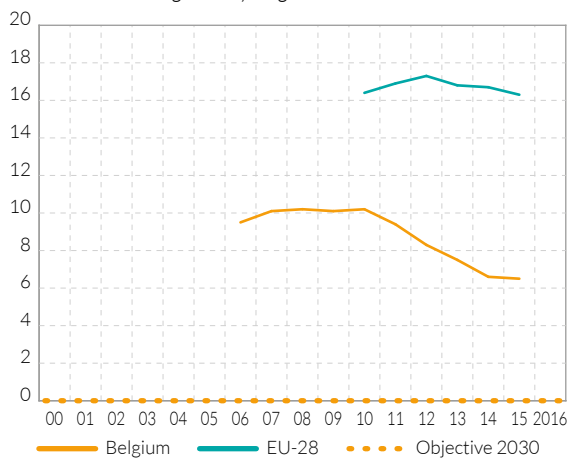
**Source:** Statistics Belgium; Eurostat (2017), European Union Labour Force Survey (EU LFS), code trng\_lfse\_01, trng\_lfse\_03 (last consulted 2/5/2017).

# SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

The indicators selected for this goal cover two important aspects of women's empowerment for which data are readily available. Other subjects covered in this goal, such as violence against women and female genital mutilation, are also crucial, but too few data are currently available on these topics in Belgium.

<b>UN-Target: 5.1</b>	End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.
<b>UNSTAT-Indicator: 5.1.1</b>	Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex.
<b>NVR-Indicator</b>	Gender pay gap: percentage difference for women relative to men in average hourly wages.

**Chart 9. Gender pay gap**  
*Percentage difference for women relative to men in average hourly wages*



Source: Statistics Belgium, Eurostat

**Definition:** difference between the average hourly salary of women and men, expressed in percentage of men's salary.

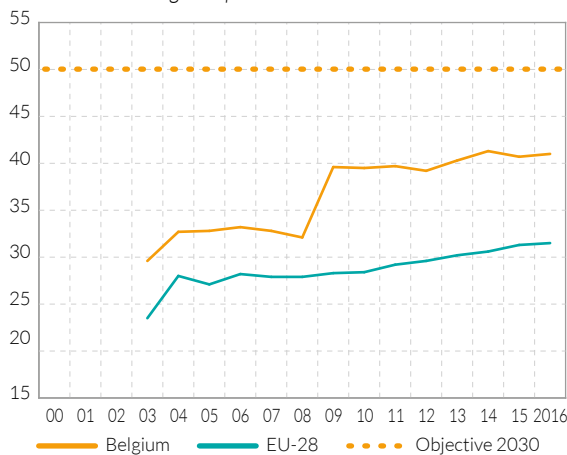
**Objective:** the gender pay gap should reach zero in 2030.

**Disaggregations:** none.

**Source:** Statistics Belgium; Eurostat (2017), European Union Labour Force Survey (EU LFS), code tsdsc340 (last consulted 5/5/2017).

<b>UN-Target: 5.5</b>	Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.
<b>UNSTAT-Indicator: 5.5.1</b>	Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments.
<b>NVR-Indicator</b>	Female members of parliament: percentage of members of national and regional parliaments.

**Chart 10. Female members of parliament**  
*Percentage of members in national and regional parliaments*



Source: European Institute for Gender Equality

**Definition:** Proportion of women in the national parliament (single/lower house) and the regional assemblies.

**Objective:** The percentage of female members in the parliament should increase to 50% in 2030.

**Disaggregations:** none.

**Source:** European Institute for Gender Equality (2017), Gender statistic database, Women and men in decision-making. <http://eige.europa.eu/> (last consulted 3/5/2017).

# SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

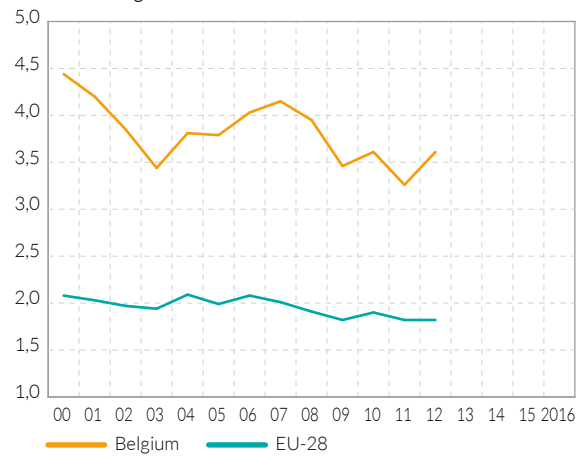
The first indicator selected for this goal is about the quality of surface water, measured by the concentration of nitrates. It is a witness to the changes in agriculture practices and of increasing wastewater treatment. The second indicator is about the quantity of water used each year.

**UN-Target: 6.3** By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 6.3.2** Proportion of bodies of water with good ambient water quality.

**NVR-Indicator** Nitrates in river water: mg NO<sub>3</sub>-N/l.

**Chart 11. Nitrates in river water**  
mg NO<sub>3</sub>-N/l



Source: European Environmental Agency

**Definition:** average concentration of nitrates in river water, estimated by averaging the concentrations measured at 36 stations spread all over Belgium. This concentration is measured by the weight of nitrogen in these nitrates per litre of water (mg NO<sub>3</sub>-N/l).

**Objective:** To contribute to target 6.3, this indicator should decrease.

**Disaggregations:** none.

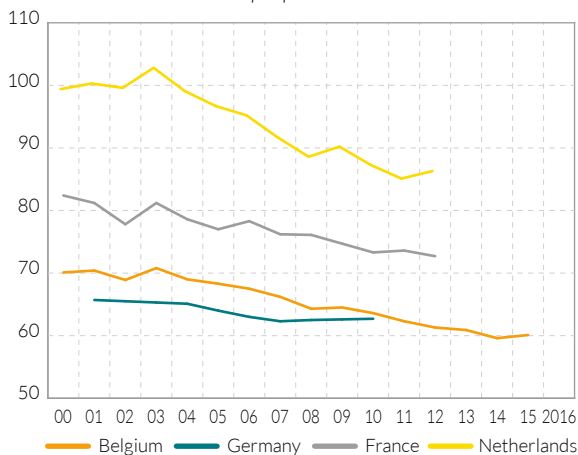
**Source:** EEA (2015), Nutrients in freshwater (CSI 020/WAT 003) - Assessment published Feb 2015 (last consulted 2/5/2017). Europe (29 countries): Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Finland, France, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Croatia, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Austria, Poland, Romania, Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, United Kingdom, Sweden, Switzerland.

**UN-Target: 6.4** By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 6.4.1** Level of water stress: freshwater withdrawal as a proportion of available freshwater resources.

**NVR-Indicator** Water consumption: thousand litres per person.

**Chart 12. Water consumption**  
Thousand liters per person



Source: calculations FPB (based on Statistics Belgium, Eurostat)

**Definition:** quantity of drinking water supplied through the public water distribution network to households, businesses, administrations, industries (except cooling water) and agriculture. Water consumption from households with a rainwater collection system and from administrations or industries with their own water extraction system is not included.

**Objective:** To contribute to target 6.4, this indicator should decrease.

**Disaggregations:** None.

**Source:** calculations FPB based on Statistics Belgium (2017), *Distribution de l'eau potable par le réseau public* and Eurostat (2016), Annual freshwater abstraction by source and sector, code env\_wat\_abs (last consulted 2/5/2017) and Eurostat (2017), Demography and migration, code demo\_gind (last consulted 2/5/2017).

# SDG 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

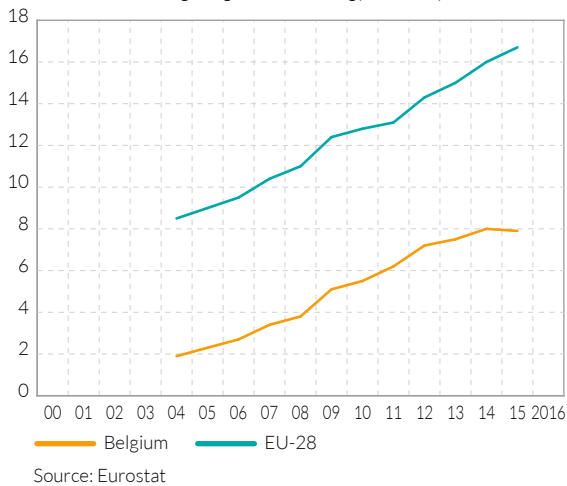
The first indicator selected for this goal is about how energy is produced. Renewable energy has several advantages, for example in terms of energy import dependency and pollution. The second indicator is about how energy is consumed overall in the economy.

**UN-Target: 7.2** By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 7.2.1** Renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption.

**NVR-Indicator** Renewable energy: percentage in gross final energy consumption.

**Chart 13. Renewable energy**  
Percentage in gross final energy consumption



**Definition:** percentage of the energy consumption produced from renewable sources in the gross final energy consumption, as defined in the European Directive 2009/28/EC. The gross final energy consumption is the energy consumed by all final users, including losses in the transport network and the auto-consumption of the energy sector.

**Objective:** The share of renewable energy in the gross final energy consumption should increase.

**Disaggregations:** none.

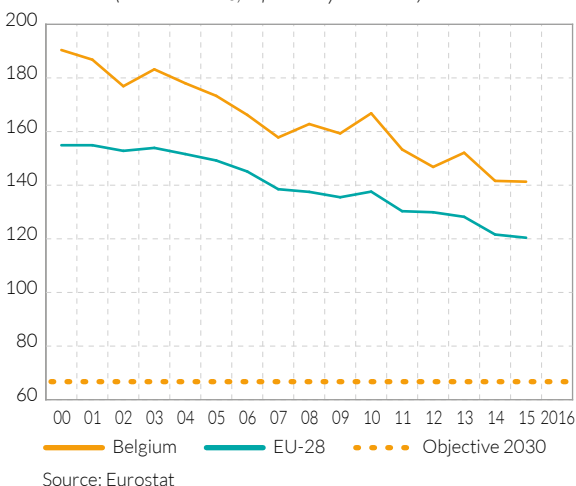
**Source:** Eurostat (2017), Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption, code t2020\_31 (last consulted 2/5/2017).

**UN-Target: 7.3** By 2030, double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 7.3.1** Energy intensity measured in terms of primary energy and GDP.

**NVR-Indicator** Energy intensity: tonnes of oil equivalent per million EUR (chained euros, reference year 2010).

**Chart 14. Energy intensity**  
Tonnes of oil equivalent per million EUR (chained euros, reference year 2010)



**Definition:** quantity of energy needed to produce one euro of GDP. The quantity of energy is measured in tonnes of oil equivalent (toe) by the gross inland energy consumption. GDP is measured in chained euros (reference year 2010), in order to remove the impact of inflation on GDP growth.

**Objective:** the energy intensity is the inverse of the energy efficiency. To reach this objective, the reduction of this indicator between 2015 and 2030 should be double the reduction observed between 2000 and 2015. This is equivalent to reach a level of 68 toe/M€ in 2030.

**Disaggregations:** none.

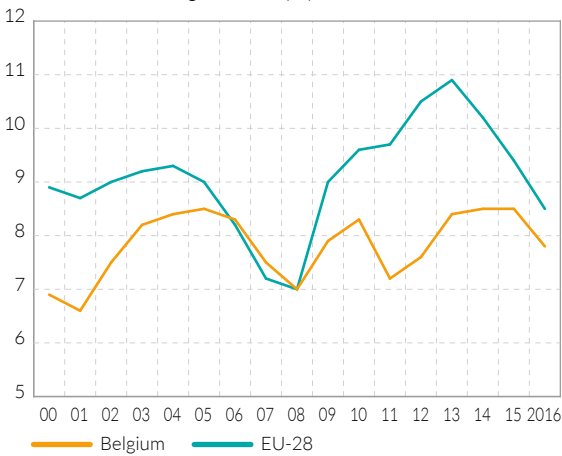
**Source:** Eurostat (2017), Energy intensity of the economy, code tsdec360 (last consulted 2/5/2017).

# SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

The two indicators selected for this goal relate to unemployment issues. The first indicator covers unemployment. The second indicator finds itself at the intersection of employment and education.

<b>UN-Target: 8.5</b>	By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.
<b>UNSTAT-Indicator: 8.5.2</b>	Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities.
<b>NVR-Indicator</b>	Unemployment rate: percentage of active population.

**Chart 15. Unemployment rate**  
Percentage of active population



Source: Statistics Belgium, Eurostat (LFS)

**Definition:** number of unemployed persons as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of persons, aged 15 to 74, either in employment or unemployed (i.e. not in employment but actively seeking employment).

**Objective:** To contribute to target 8.5, this indicator should decrease.

**Disaggregations:** sex, age, education, long term unemployment.

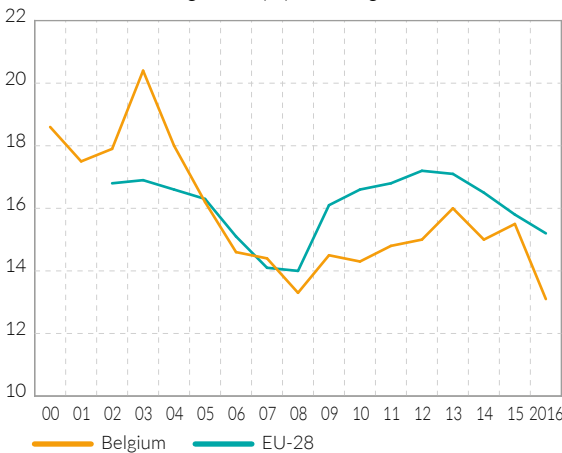
**Source:** Statistics Belgium; Eurostat (2017), European Union Labour Force Survey (EU LFS) codes une\_rt\_a, une\_ltu\_a, ifsa\_ur-gaed (last consulted 5/5/2017).

**UN-Target: 8.6.** By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 8.6.1** Proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training.

**NVR-Indicator** Young people neither in employment nor in education and training: percentage of the population aged 18-24.

**Chart 16. Youth not in employment, education or training**  
Percentage of the population aged 18-24



Source: Statistics Belgium, Eurostat (LFS)

**Definition:** This indicator is the share of 18 to 24 years old that are neither in employment nor in education and training in the total population of that age group.

**Objective:** To contribute to target 8.6, this indicator should decrease.

**Disaggregations:** sex, education.

**Source:** Statistics Belgium; Eurostat (2017). European Union Labour Force Survey (EU LFS), code: edat\_lfse\_21 (last consulted 5/5/2017).

# SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

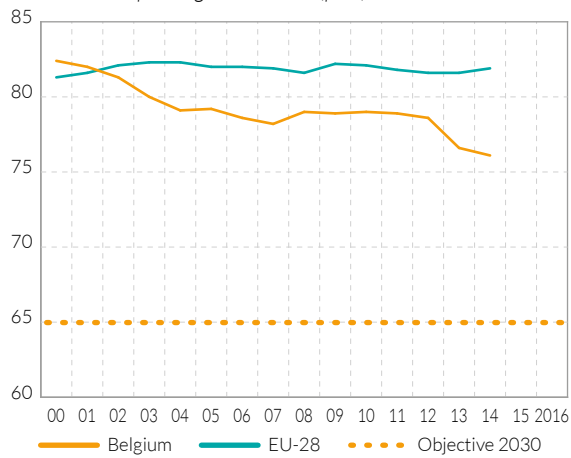
goal focuses on the use of the existing transport infrastructure, which is related to several major issues such as road congestion and air pollution. The second indicator focuses on research and development, a key factor of innovation and productivity growth.

**UN-Target: 9.1** Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 9.1.2** Passenger and freight volumes, by mode of transport.

**NVR-Indicator** Passenger transport by car: percentage in total inland transport, in passenger-kilometres (pkm).

**Chart 17. Passenger transport by car**  
Percentage in total inland transport, in passenger-kilometres (pkm)



Source: European Commission

**Definition:** share of cars (plus mopeds and motorcycles) in passenger transport. The other modes of transport considered here are trains, tramways, busses, coaches and metro. Transport is measured in passenger-kilometre (for each journey, the number of kilometres is multiplied by the number of travellers).

**Objective:** To be on a path to reach the long-term goal of 50% of collective transport, this indicator should reach 65% in 2030.

**Disaggregations:** none.

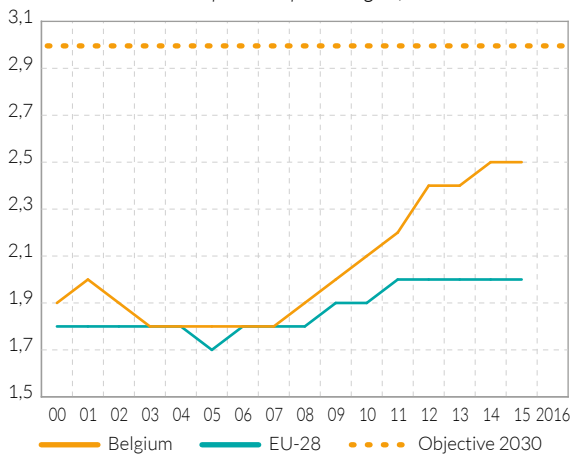
**Source:** European Commission (2016), *European transport in figures 2016* (last consulted 3/5/2017).

**UN-Target: 9.5** Enhance scientific research, upgrade the technological capabilities of industrial sectors in all countries, in particular developing countries, including, by 2030, encouraging innovation and substantially increasing the number of research and development workers per 1 million people and public and private research and development spending.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 9.5.1** Research and development expenditure as a proportion of GDP.

**NVR-Indicator** Research and development: Gross domestic Expenditure on Research and Development in percentage of GDP.

**Chart 18. Research and development**  
Gross domestic Expenditure on Research and Development in percentage of GDP



Source: Eurostat

**Definition:** gross domestic expenditure on R&D (GERD) expressed as a share of gross domestic product (GDP).

**Objective:** the objective of the EU2020 strategy is to reach 3%.

**Disaggregations:** none.

**Source:** 1995-2015: Eurostat (2016), Total intramural R&D expenditure (GERD), code rd\_e\_gerdtot (last consulted 2/5/2017) and 1993-1994: FPS Science Policy (2011), Database (direct communication).

# SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

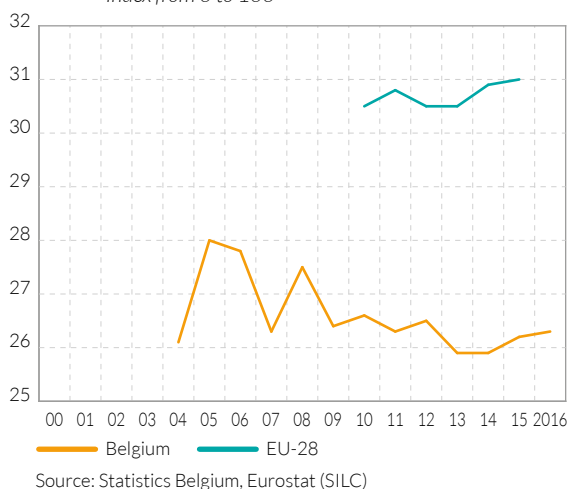
The two indicators selected for this goal are widely used to measure inequality and poverty and are complementary. The Gini index is a summary measure of the overall inequality of income distribution in a country. The risk of poverty, that is the share of the population below a given threshold, focuses on the bottom part of the income distribution.

**UN-Target: 10.1** By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 10.1.1** Growth rates of household expenditure or income per capita among the bottom 40 per cent of the population and the total population.

**NVR-Indicator** Gini index: scale from 0 to 100.

**Chart 19. Gini index**  
Index from 0 to 100



**Definition:** the Gini index measures the equality of the income distribution, based on equalized disposable income. Its value is in the range between 0 to 100. When it is equal to zero, there is complete equality, everyone receiving the same income. The value 100 corresponds to the highest possible inequality, one person receiving all incomes and the others nothing.

**Objective:** To contribute to target 10.1, this indicator should decrease.

**Disaggregations:** none.

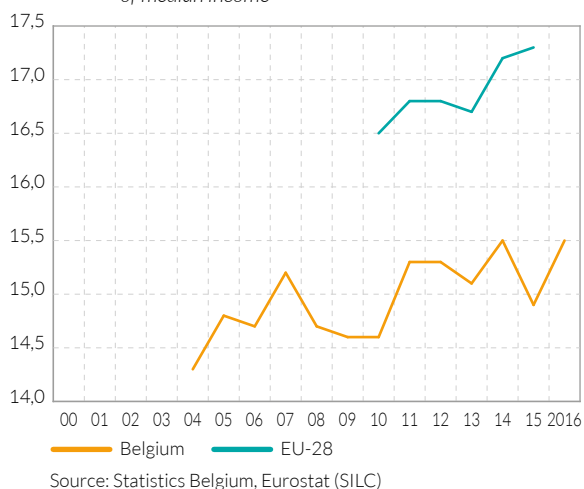
**Source:** Statistics Belgium; Eurostat (2017), European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), code ilc\_di12 (last consulted 15/5/2017).

**UN-Target: 10.2** By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 10.2.1** Proportion of people living below 50 per cent of median income, by age, sex and persons with disabilities.

**NVR-Indicator** Risk of poverty: percentage of total population under 60% of median income.

**Chart 20. Risk of poverty**  
Percentage of total population under 60% of median income



**Definition:** percentage of the population of which the equalized income (this takes account of all income in a household and of its composition) is lower than 60% of the national median equivalent income, as defined at the EU level.

**Objective:** To contribute to target 10.2, this indicator should decrease.

**Disaggregations:** sex, age, household type, activity status.

**Source:** Statistics Belgium; Eurostat (2017), European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), codes ilc\_li\_02, ilc\_li\_03, ilc\_li\_04 (last consulted 15/5/2017).

# SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

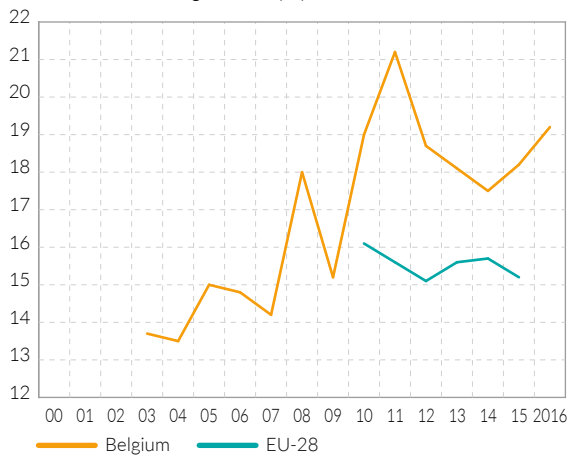
The two indicators selected for this goal correspond to two dimensions of a sustainable urban environment: the quality of dwellings and air pollution. These specific indicators have been chosen for their relevance to Belgium. Other dimensions such as harassment, though important, could not be included for lack of data. This specific topic is however partially covered by the indicator Security feeling in public space and its disaggregation by sex, available in the online database.

**UN-Target: 11.1** By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 11.1.1** Proportion of urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing.

**NVR-Indicator** Inadequate dwelling: percentage of total population.

**Chart 21. Inadequate dwelling**  
Percentage of total population



Source: Statistics Belgium, Eurostat (SILC)

**Definition:** percentage of the population living in a dwelling with a leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundation, or rot in window frames of floor.

**Objective:** To contribute to target 11.1, this indicator should decrease.

**Disaggregations:** sex, age, household type, income.

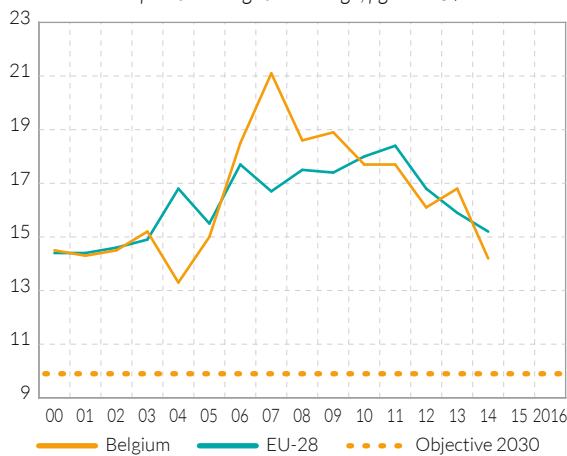
**Source:** Statistics Belgium; Eurostat (2017), European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), code ilc\_mdho01 (last consulted 15/5/2017).

**UN-Target: 11.6** By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 11.6.2** Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter (e.g. PM2.5 and PM10) in cities (population weighted).

**NVR-Indicator** Exposure to particulate matter: Population weighted average,  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  PM2.5.

**Chart 22. Exposure to particulate matter**  
Population weighted average,  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$



Source: Eurostat

**Definition:** population weighted annual mean concentration of particulate matter at urban background stations in agglomerations. In this indicator, fine particulates are those whose diameters are less than 2.5 micrometres (PM2.5).

**Objective:** The WHO 2005 guidelines proposes a maximum level of  $10\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  for annual average concentration of PM2.5.

**Disaggregations:** none.

**Source:** Eurostat (2017), Urban population exposure to air pollution by particulate matter, code tsdph370 (last consulted 3/5/2017).



# SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

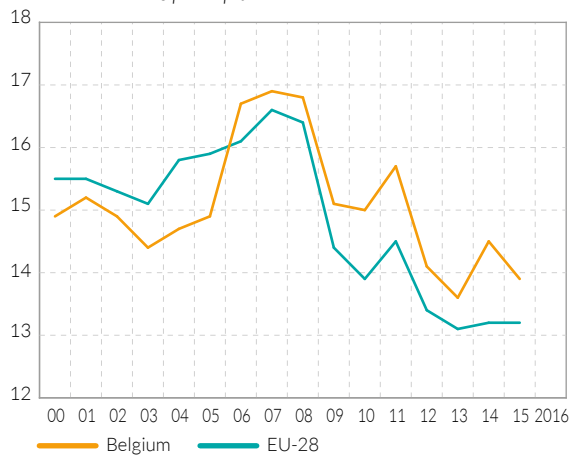
The two indicators selected for this goal relate to the use of natural resources and the production of waste, the two dimensions of sustainable consumption and production mainly covered in this goal. The production of waste is limited to municipal waste here, as other waste flows are measured less accurately. Waste production was preferred on waste recycling, as prevention comes before recycling in strategies on resource efficiency.

**UN-Target: 12.2** By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 12.2.2** Domestic material consumption, domestic material consumption per capita, and domestic material consumption per GDP.

**NVR-Indicator** Domestic material consumption: tonnes per capita.

**Chart 23. Domestic material consumption**  
Tonnes per capita



Source: Eurostat

**Definition:** domestic material consumption (DMC) measures the total amount of materials used by a country. It is the sum of domestic extractions, plus imports and minus exports of materials. DMC takes account of the raw materials embodied in finished and semi-finished products that are imported or exported. However, the entire weight of the imported and exported finished and semi-finished products is attributed to the single raw material category that constitutes the largest part of the product concerned.

**Objective:** to contribute to target 12.2, this indicator should decrease.

**Disaggregations:** none.

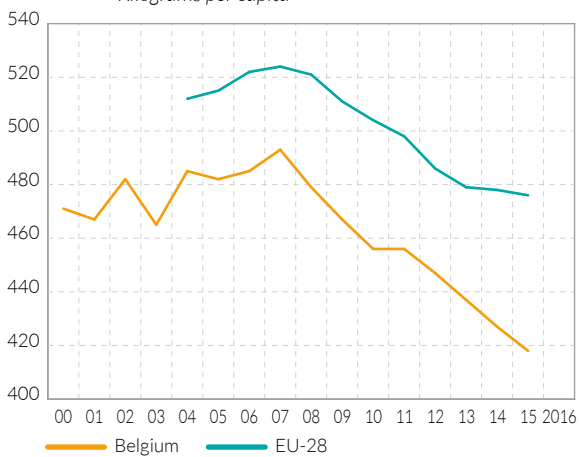
**Source:** Eurostat (2017), Domestic material consumption - tonnes per capita, code t2020\_r1110 (last consulted 3/5/2017).

**UN-Target: 12.5** By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 12.5.1** National recycling rate, tons of material recycled.

**NVR-Indicator** Municipal waste: kilograms per capita.

**Chart 24. Municipal waste**  
Kilograms per capita



Source: Statistics Belgium, Eurostat

**Definition:** municipal waste includes waste collected by municipal services (or on their behalf), such as door-to-door collection (sorted and unsorted), voluntary deposits, bulky waste, park maintenance, yard waste and street sweepings, etc. It excludes construction materials.

**Objective:** to contribute to target 12.5, this indicator should decrease.

**Disaggregations:** none.

**Source:** Statistics Belgium; Eurostat (2017) Municipal waste generation and treatment, by type of treatment method, code tsdpc240 (last consulted 2/5/2017).

# SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

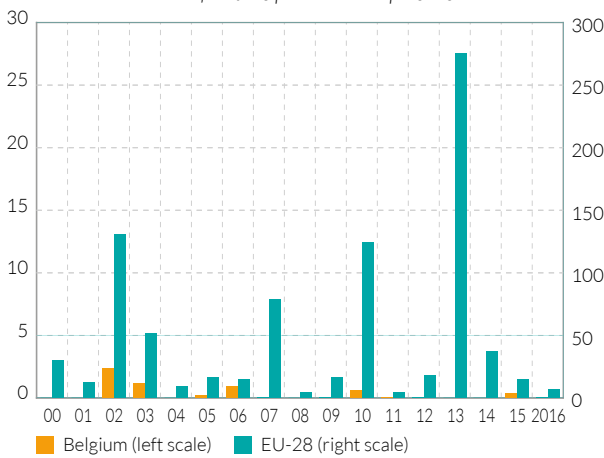
The first indicator selected for this goal is about the impact of adaptation to climate change, which will contribute to reduce the number of persons affected by disasters. Because this goal refers to the UNFCCC as the main international tool to combat climate, most of the indicators proposed by UNSTAT are about processes. Nevertheless, greenhouse gases emissions have been selected as the second indicator for this goal, as these emissions are the main cause of climate change. This indicator is about mitigation of climate change.

**UN-Target: 13.1** Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 13.1.2** Number of deaths, missing persons and persons affected by disaster per 100,000 people.

**NVR-Indicator** Natural disasters victims: number of victims per 100 000 persons.

**Chart 25. Natural disasters victims**  
Number of victims per 100 000 persons



Source: calculations FPB (based on Guha-Sapir D., Below R., Hoyois Ph. (2017) and Eurostat

**Definition:** victims of natural disasters include deaths, missing persons and persons affected by natural disasters. Persons affected include those that have been injured, those who need shelter because their house has been destroyed or damaged and those who need help during the emergency. Note that this indicator is highly variable from year to year.

**Objective:** according to the Sendai framework, during the period 2020-2030, this indicator should on average be under the average value of the period 2005-2015.

**Disaggregations:** none.

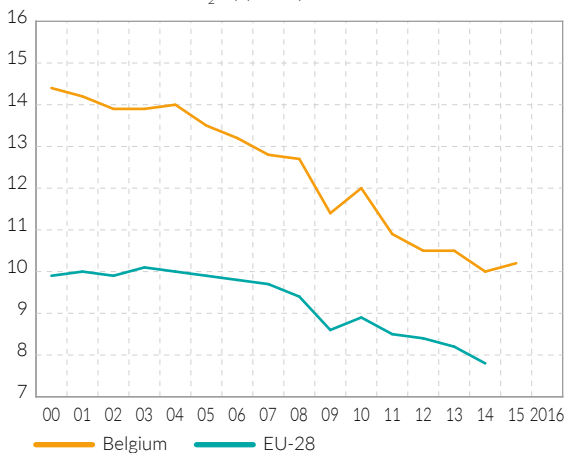
**Source:** Guha-Sapir D., Below R., Hoyois Ph. (2017), EM-DAT: The CRED/OFDA International Disaster Database [www.emdat.be](http://www.emdat.be). Université Catholique de Louvain, Brussel, Belgium; Eurostat (2017), Population on the first of January, code demo\_gind (last consulted 4/5/2017).

**UN-Target: 13.2** Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.

**UNSTAT-Indicator:** /

**NVR-Indicator** Greenhouse gas emissions: tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> eq. per capita.

**Chart 26. Greenhouse gas emissions**  
Tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> eq. per capita



Source: National Climate Commission, EEA

**Definition:** emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG) are the emissions on the Belgian territory. The included GHG are those covered by the Kyoto Protocol: carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and several fluorinated gases (HFC's, PFC's, SF<sub>6</sub>, NF<sub>3</sub>) not covered by the Montreal Protocol. Net emissions are covered by this indicator. They take into account emissions and absorptions by the LULUCF-sector (Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry), such as the absorption of CO<sub>2</sub> by forests.

**Objective:** to be consistent with UNFCCC objectives, this indicator should decrease.

**Disaggregations:** none.

**Source:** National Climate Commission (2017), *National greenhouse gas inventories*, [www.climat.be](http://www.climat.be); EEA (2017), Greenhouse gases viewer; Eurostat (2017), Population on the first of January, code demo\_gind (last consulted 3/5/2017).

# SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

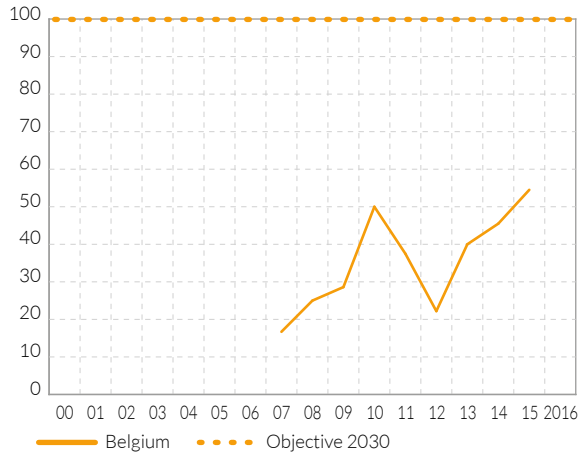
The two indicators selected for this goal are related to biodiversity (for commercial fish species only) and to protected areas. Other indicators proposed by UNSTAT were not readily available.

**UN-Target: 14.4** By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 14.4.1** Proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels.

**NVR-Indicator** Sustainable fisheries: proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels.

**Chart 27. Sustainable fisheries**  
Proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels



Source: calculations FPB (based on ICES)

**Definition:** this indicator is based on the concept of 'maximum sustainable yield', which defines sustainable threshold values for fish stocks and catches. When fish stocks and annual catches are within these values, a sustainable exploitation of the fish stock is guaranteed. This indicator gives the share of commercial fish species in the North Sea and boundary waters that respect these criteria.

**Objective:** to be consistent with target 14.4, this indicator should reach 100%.

**Disaggregations:** none.

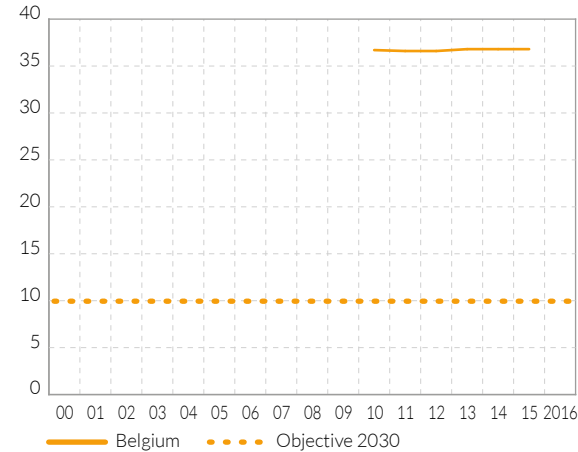
**Source:** calculations FPB based on ICES (2016), ICES advice 2008-2016, International Council for the Exploration of the Sea <http://www.ices.dk/> (last consulted 2/5/2017).

**UN-Target: 14.5** By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 14.5.1** Coverage of protected areas in relation to marine areas.

**NVR-Indicator** Natura 2000 protected marine area: percentage of total Belgian marine surface.

**Chart 28. Natura 2000 protected marine area**  
Percentage of total Belgian marine surface



Source: calculations FPB based on EEA and FPS Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment

**Definition:** sea area included in the Natura 2000 network, as a percentage of Belgian waters (including the territorial waters, the exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf). The Natura 2000 network is defined in the Habitat Directive (92/43/EEC) and in the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC). Objective: to be consistent with target 14.5, this indicator should stay above 10%.

**Disaggregations:** none.

**Source:** calculations FPB based on EEA (2016), Natura 2000 barometer statistics and FPS Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment (2016), *Notre mer en quelques mots*. <http://www.health.belgium.be/fr/notre-mer-en-quelques-mots> (last consulted 2/5/2017).

# SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

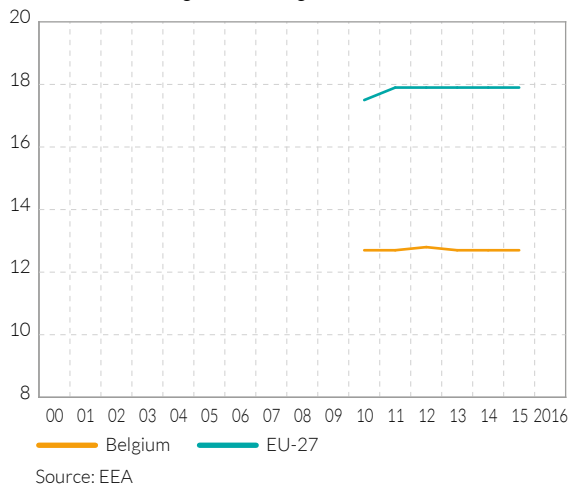
The first indicator selected for this goal measures the proportion of area protected under the Natura 2000 label. Other types of protection exist, but have yet to be measured for more than one year. The second indicator cover biological diversity. The Red list index proposed by UNSTAT would be preferable to the Farmland bird population index used here, but the coverage of the latter is more stable and more consistent than the coverage of the former.

**UN-Target: 15.1** By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 15.1.1** Forest area as a proportion of total land area.

**NVR-Indicator** Natura 2000 protected land area: percentage of total Belgian land surface.

**Chart 29. Natura 2000 protected land area**  
Percentage of total Belgian land surface



**Definition:** the land area included in the Natura 2000 network, as a percentage of the total country area. The Natura 2000 network is defined in the Habitat Directive (92/43/EEC) and in the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC).

**Objective:** to be consistent with target 15.1, this indicator should increase.

**Disaggregations:** none.

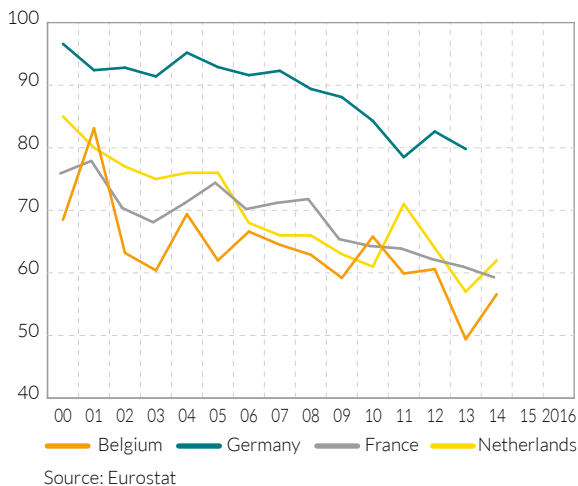
**Source:** EEA (2016), *Natura 2000 barometer statistics* (last consulted 2/5/2017).

**UN-Target: 15.5** Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species.

**UNSTAT-Indicator: 15.5.1** Red List Index.

**NVR-Indicator** Farmland birds population: index 1990 = 100.

**Chart 30. Farmland birds population**  
Index 1990 = 100



**Definition:** the farmland birds population index is a composite index of population estimates for 15 farmland birds species. The index is normalised to 100 in 1990.

**Objective:** to be consistent with target 15.5, this indicator should increase.

**Disaggregations:** none.

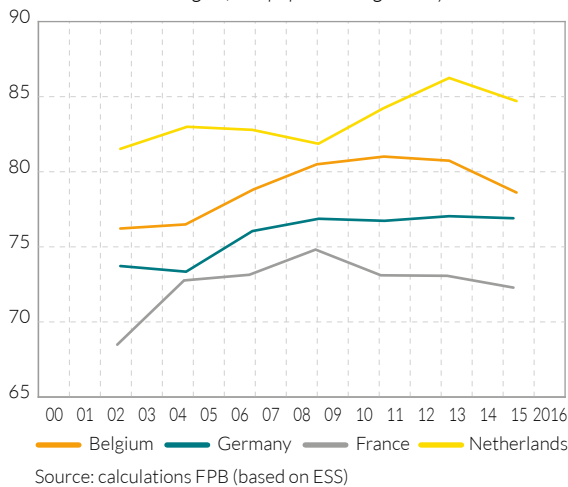
**Source:** Eurostat (2016), Common bird index, code tsdnr100 (last consulted 2/5/2017).

# SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

The two indicators selected for this goal have been selected among the few that were readily available. They cover two important dimensions of this goal, peaceful societies and the quality of the institutions (as measured by the trust people have in these institutions).

<b>UN-Target: 16.1</b>	Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.
<b>UNSTAT-Indicator: 16.1.4</b>	Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live.
<b>NVR-Indicator</b>	Security feeling in public space: percentage of the population aged 15 years and over.

**Chart 31. Security feeling in public space**  
Percentage of the population aged 15 years and over



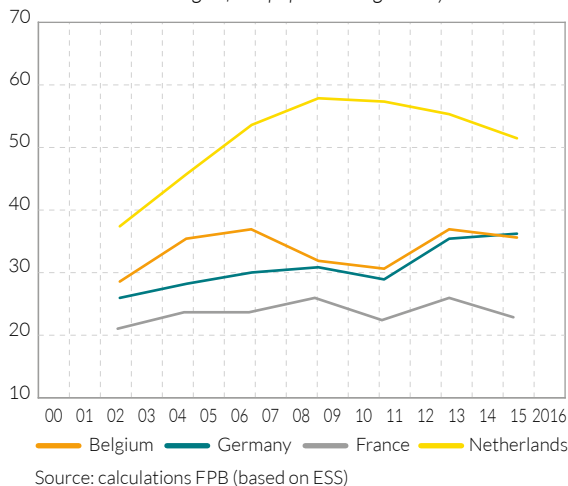
**Definition:** the security feeling in public space is measured through a survey, in this case the European social survey (ESS). It is estimated as the share of the population that answered 'very safe' or 'safe' to the question: 'How safe do you - or would you - feel walking alone in your neighbourhood after dark?'  
**Objective:** to be consistent with target 16.1, this indicator should increase.

**Disaggregations:** sex, income.

**Source:** calculations FPB based on ESS (2016), Dataset European Social Survey, <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/> (last consulted 2/5/2017).

<b>UN-Target: 16.6</b>	Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.
<b>UNSTAT-Indicator: 16.6.2</b>	Proportion of the population satisfied with their last experience of public services.
<b>NVR-Indicator</b>	Trust in institutions: percentage of the population aged 15 years and over.

**Chart 32. Trust in institutions**  
Percentage of the population aged 15 years and over



**Definition:** trust in institutions is measured through a survey, in this case the European social survey (ESS). It is estimated as the average share of the population that answered at least 6 (on a scale from 0 to 10) to the following four questions. 'How much do you personally trust each of the following institutions: the Belgian parliament, the legal system, the politicians and the political parties?'

**Objective:** to be consistent with target 16.6, this indicator should increase.

**Disaggregations:** sex, income.

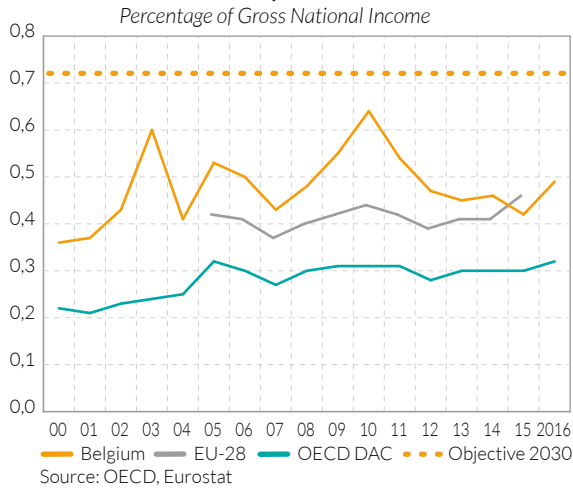
**Source:** calculations FPB based on ESS (2016), Dataset European Social Survey, <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/> (last consulted 2/5/2017).

# SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Many indicators proposed for this goal are relevant for developing countries and are not relevant for Belgium. Hence, the two indicators selected for this goal relate to the same Target. These two indicators have also been chosen because they correspond to commitments made by Belgium.

<b>UN-Target: 17.2</b>	Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of ODA/GNI to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries; ODA providers are encouraged to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries.
<b>UNSTAT-Indicator: 17.2.1</b>	Net official development assistance, total and to least developed countries, as a proportion of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee donors' gross national income (GNI).
<b>NVR-Indicator</b>	Official development assistance: percentage of Gross National Income.

**Chart 33. Official development assistance**



**Definition:** share of official development assistance (ODA) in gross national income. ODA consists of grants and loans (with a grant element of at least 25 per cent) to developing countries and to certain multilateral agencies undertaken by the official sector and having promotion of economic development and welfare as their main objective. ODA includes both financial flows and technical co-operation.

**Objective:** this indicator should reach 0.7% in 2030.

**Disaggregations:** none.

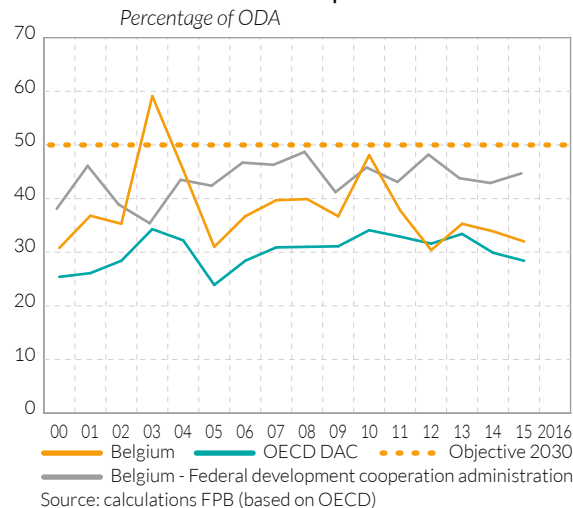
**Source:** OECD (2017), OECD.Stat, Theme: Development > Flows by Provider > Total flows by donor (ODA+OOF+Private) [DAC1], <http://stats.oecd.org/> (last consulted 5/5/2017); Eurostat (2017), Official development assistance as share of GNI, code tsdgp100 (last consulted 3/5/2017).

<b>UN-Target: 17.2</b>	Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of ODA/GNI to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries; ODA providers are encouraged to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries.
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<b>UNSTAT-Indicator: 17.2.1</b>	Net official development assistance, total and to least developed countries, as a proportion of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee donors' gross national income (GNI).
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<b>NVR-Indicator</b>	Official development assistance to least developed countries: percentage of ODA.
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**Chart 34. ODA to least developed countries**



**Definition:** share of ODA that is directed to least developed countries.

**Objective:** under the AAAAA, the European Union commits to collectively meet the target of 0.20 per cent of ODA/ GNI to least developed countries within the time frame of the post-2015 agenda. As a best practice, the AAAAA applauds allocating at least 50 per cent of ODA to least developed countries.

**Disaggregations:** none.

**Source:** calculations FPB based on OECD (2017), OECD.Stat, Theme: Development > Flows by Provider and recipient > Aid (ODA) disbursements to countries and regions [DAC2a], <http://stats.oecd.org/> (last consulted 5/5/2017) and direct communication from the Federal Ministry Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation.

