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# IPBES BELGIAN UPTAKE EVENT

1<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER 2018 | BRUSSELS, BELGIUM



**ipbes**  
Belgian Focal Point



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RESEARCH INSTITUTE  
NATURE AND FOREST



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*Participants to the IPBES Belgian Uptake event taking place at the Flemish Research Institute for Nature and Forest (INBO) on 1st October 2018.*



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## INTRODUCTION

The IPBES Belgian Uptake event was organised by the IPBES Belgian Focal Point ([Belgian NFP](#)) which is coordinated by the [Belgian Biodiversity Platform](#). The event took place on October 1st 2018, at the Flemish Research Institute for Nature and Forest ([INBO](#)), and was attended by about 80 participants.

Being the first of its type, the one-day event had a number of objectives related to promoting the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services ([IPBES](#)), the uptake of its assessments (especially the Regional Assessment for Europe & Central Asia), inform the audience how they can participate in IPBES, and how it can contribute to their work. On a more practical side, this event also aimed to spur concrete actions and engagement for a better and greener future in Belgium.

The programme of the event consisted in a number of presentations, a panel discussion, and breakout groups for each of the three Belgian regions; all of which gave the audience ample opportunity to interact, either by asking questions in person or through Twitter.

This report mainly focuses on the outcomes of the breakout sessions, providing concrete suggestions to better conserve biodiversity in the regions based on the IPBES outcomes.



## SPEAKERS PRESENTATIONS

The meeting was opened by Aline Van der Werf, Biodiversity Programme Manager at the Belgian Science Policy Office ([BELSPO](#)) and by Hilde Eggermont, [IPBES Belgian Focal Point](#) and Coordinator of the [Belgian Biodiversity Platform](#).

Aline van der Werf welcomed the participants and introduced the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, a science-policy interface funded by BELSPO, working together with the federated authorities in the framework of a Cooperation Agreement. The Belgian Biodiversity Platform provides services to the Belgian scientific community engaged in biodiversity research, as well as to policy-makers and practitioners. It also provides input and support to biodiversity initiatives at national, European and global level. Aline van der Werf further explained that the IPBES Uptake event followed-up on an [Open Letter](#) signed by 270 Belgian scientists in March 2018. In this Open Letter, scientists called on the various Belgian authorities to take urgent measures for safeguarding and enhancing biodiversity, and make it a priority on the Belgian political agenda. The Open Letter was published in major Belgian media, following the release of the IPBES Regional Assessments in March 2018.

Hilde Eggermont started with a poll on the knowledge of participants on IPBES. She then clarified how ecosystems underpin our economies, yet how both ecosystems and species are collapsing at unprecedented rates. She provided information on elements such as the climate crisis, and the



shrinking of the countryside at the expense of urbanisation, etc. as IPBES assessments show. She continued by indicating that, being at a critical crossroad in history, there are also signs of hope: in 2015, almost 200 nations agreed on ambitious goals for sustainable development and achieving climate neutrality. These agreements represent a historic opportunity to improve the lives of billions of people and to put nature at the heart of political decisions. Hilde Eggermont explained that IPBES can help answering some of the crucial questions that will need to be answered in the coming years. Created in 2012 to respond to specific requests from governments, multilateral environmental agreements, United Nations bodies and other stakeholders, IPBES now counts 130 government members, as well as a large number of observers. IPBES synthesises and reviews existing knowledge on biodiversity in support of decision making. It also generates new knowledge ('actionable science'), develops and promotes policy tools and methodologies, and creates capacity to produce and use IPBES products. Mrs Eggermont concluded by stating that IPBES needs supporting national focal points, and uptake events to spread the word and increase IPBES impact.

The next speaker was Pierre Biot (Head of Unit at the Federal Public Service [Health, Food Chain Safety & Environment](#)). Mr Biot presented the policy relevance and impact of IPBES in Belgium, and highlighted relevant federal initiatives resulting from the [IPBES Pollinators, Pollination and Food Production Assessment](#). He also explained the priorities of the Federal Minister of Environment, and the federal initiatives derived from it – including the consumer awareness raising campaign [BeBiodiversity](#), and the partnerships with the private sector.

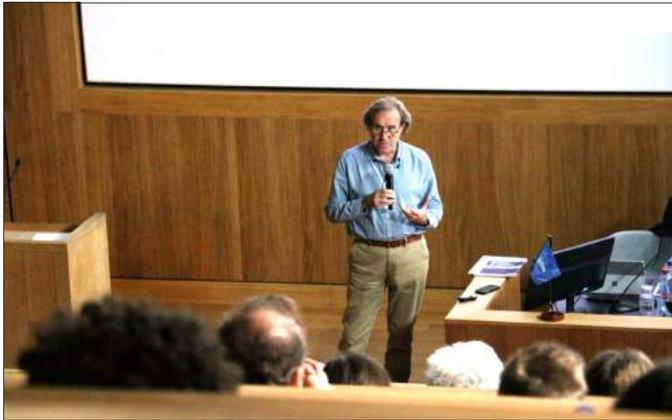


*Pierre Biot, explaining the importance of IPBES for Belgian scientists.*

Mr Biot also highlighted the importance of upcoming IPBES assessments, the opportunities for Belgian scientists to be involved in this endeavour, and the added-value of IPBES outputs for policymakers in Belgium (cf. [presentation](#)).

Mr Thomas Koetz (Head of Work Programme at the IPBES Secretariat), provided insights into IPBES set-up and working modalities, in each of its four functions: knowledge generation; assessments; policy support; and capacity building. Mr Koetz also presented IPBES achievements resulting from the first Work Programme (2014-2018), and future developments in the context of the second Work Programme to be approved in May 2019 (cf. [presentation](#)).

Mr Mark Rounsevell (Professor at the University of Edinburgh), Co-Chair of the IPBES Regional Assessment of Europe and Central Asia ([ECA Assessment](#)) gave an insightful presentation



*Mark Rounsevell, presenting the key points of ECA assessment.*

on the scientific results of the ECA assessment. He presented the policy relevant questions dealt with in the report, the status and trends of biodiversity in the ECA region, the drivers, the projected impacts on nature and their contribution to people under different scenarios, future options, and pathways to transformational change. He concluded his presentation on a positive note, pointing to the fact that decision-makers have many opportunities at hand to turn the tide (*cf.* [presentation](#)).

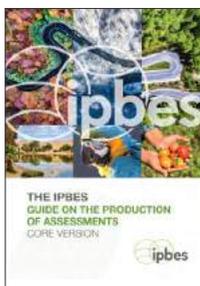
Finally, Hendrik Segers ([Belgian Focal Point to the Convention on Biological Diversity](#), based at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences - [RBINS](#)) shed light on the main drivers of biodiversity loss in Belgium, and explained how biodiversity policy is developed and implemented in Belgium. He pointed to the fact that implementation of biodiversity agreements within Belgium is nearly entirely a regional competence, and also explained the Belgian and European coordinating structures for biodiversity policy.



The morning session was followed by testimonies from Belgian experts who participated in the elaboration of the IPBES assessments. They briefly shared their perceptions on what it meant to them to be engaged in the IPBES process. Some experts mentioned the networking opportunities, the new partnerships and projects they could work on, the high-impact publications related to the IPBES assessments that they had the chance to publish in prominent journals, the unique experience it offered them, the feeling of becoming an actor of science-policy interfacing (by ensuring that scientific facts are being heard by decision-makers) etc. Others also shared what worked less well for them, such as the heavy workload, the difficulty to fit the work into their daily schedule, and the initial enthusiasm of the working groups they were involved in that soon faded away when they went back to their daily life.

Mark Rounsevell concluded by explaining that experts can be engaged at different stages in the assessment process (scoping, assessment, and review), and that their level of engagement also depends on the role they take up (e.g. co-chair, coordinating lead author, contributing author).

*For more information, you may refer to the [IPBES Guide on the production of assessments](#) developed for experts who are taking part in assessments. The Guide addresses conceptual, procedural and practical aspects of IPBES assessments.*





## PANEL DISCUSSION



*From left to right: M. Hoffmann, A. Teller, H. Eggermont, E. Aulotte, L. Bas, P. Baret.*

The afternoon started with a panel discussing moderated by Sander Jacobs (Belgian Biodiversity Platform-INBO) who also participated as expert to IPBES ECA assessment. Sander Jacobs moderated the panel by questioning the different actors and stakeholders on the usefulness of the ECA assessment. Panelists included:

- Etienne Aulotte, Nature Action Plan Coordinator for [Bruxelles Environnement](#).
- Philippe Baret, Dean of the Faculty of Bioengineers, Université Catholique de Louvain ([UCL](#))
- Luc Bas, Director of the European Regional Office of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature ([IUCN](#))
- Hilde Eggermont, IPBES Belgian Focal Point ([IPBES NFP](#))
- Maurice Hoffmann, Administrator General of the Research Institute of Nature and Forest ([INBO](#))
- Anne Teller, Policy officer for the European Commission ([DG Environment](#)).



The panel discussed several topics such as:

- the **added value of IPBES** compared to earlier and ongoing assessments.
- how to **downscale global and regional assessments to national and even subnational level.**
- the **role of research** in delivering the type of knowledge needed by the trans-disciplinary assessments.
- how to **connect IPBES assessments to conservation action** on the ground.
- likelihood of IPBES outcomes **uptake by governments, the private sector and citizens.**

## REGARDING THE STRENGTH AND ADDED-VALUE OF IPBES OUTCOMES

- » The IPBES assessments have been drafted and validated by numerous experts across the world. IPBES outputs thus have **considerable scientific weight that is needed to accelerate action at policy level at national and global scales.**
- » The **inclusiveness of the IPBES process** with regard to different knowledge systems (**natural and social science, local indigenous knowledge, practitioners knowledge...**) in the **different regions of the world** results in unique products.
- » The IPBES assessments provide **governance options, scenarios and pathways to stabilise or even reverse trends.** These governance options could be used as a basis for further **translation into more practical recommendations for governments and actors at local scale.**



*Anne Teller, European Commission - DG Environment, sharing her views on IPBES added-value with the audience.*

- » The importance of the **policy support function of IPBES**, providing **concrete tools and methodologies** that can inform, assist and enhance relevant decisions, policy-making and implementation at the local, national, regional and international levels to protect nature, thereby promoting nature's contributions to people and a good quality of life.

## **REGARDING EFFORTS BY MEMBER STATES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS**

- » The importance of **voluntary commitments and partnerships for biodiversity**, and of **monitoring frameworks to track progress of actions**.
- » The need for **equal footing** (equally strong voice) of **scientists and policy makers** in discussions related to biodiversity issues.



## REGARDING THE UPTAKE OF ASSESSMENTS BY NATIONAL AND LOCAL ENTITIES

- » The importance of **making the assessments accessible and actionable** to diverse stakeholders, so that the reports do not end up unused on a shelf.
- » The need for **translation in economic language (natural capital accounting)** so that public institutions and business owners can **adapt** their **economic paradigm** accordingly.
- » The importance of selecting the right messages, **communicating** these **messages effectively**, and keeping diverse audiences in mind while doing so.
- » The need for IPBES to **align with existing and upcoming frameworks** (such as the [Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework](#); the [Paris Agreement](#) on Climate Change; the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)) to which governments are committed.



*Etienne Aulotte, Bruxelles Environnement, expressing the need for translating IPBES assessments into concrete recommendations for regional and local authorities.*



## REGARDING COMMUNICATION AT NATIONAL AND SUB-NATIONAL LEVEL

- » The importance of **story telling** and **simplification of messages for broader audiences/ non-experts**.
- » The importance of **elaborating positive messaging** (instead of doom scenarios) **to enhance behavioural change**.

## REGARDING ELEMENTS TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION FOR FUTURE ASSESSMENTS

- » **Trade-offs between social, economic and environmental considerations**.
- » **Cost of inaction** (i.e. cost of sticking to business-as-usual, hence not considering more sustainable pathways).
- » **Interlinkages between biodiversity and health** (animal, plant and human health)

## OTHER ISSUES

- » The importance of **providing sufficient training to scientists**, making them understand that **other dimensions (i.e. policy and societal relevance) are also important**.
- » The importance of **engaging young professionals interested in science-policy interfacing work**.

## BREAKOUT GROUPS



*Breakout group discussion on Wallonia facilitated by Sonia Vanderhoeven.*

The **breakout groups** session provided an opportunity for the attendees to discuss in smaller groups on how to make use of IPBES assessments in practice in the three regions: **Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels**. The discussions were organised around three questions:

- Which **ongoing regional initiatives could be reinforced** by the IPBES outcomes and how?
- Which **potential new regional initiatives could be leveraged** by IPBES outcomes?
- What could the **region do to support IPBES** itself? especially in terms of research and innovation, capacity building, resource mobilisation, etc.

The main conclusions emanating from these discussions are presented in the following pages.



# FLANDERS

Introductory [presentation](#) by Steven Vanonckelen – Policy Officer Business & Biodiversity – Department Omgeving.

After the presentation, the participants discussed the following:

## WHICH ONGOING INITIATIVES COULD BE LEVERAGED BY IPBES OUTCOMES?

- » Integrate IPBES outcomes in policy development at different levels: **IPBES outcomes** could be taken up when drafting various **policy strategies** such as the **government coalition agreement**, the **Spatial Policy Plan for Flanders** (so-called BRV), the update of the **Rural Development Programme of Flanders**, and the upcoming EU-post 2020 Biodiversity Strategy.
- » **Integrate biodiversity in education** at all levels (primary, secondary, higher education): Education on biodiversity matters is crucial to shape new ways of seeing the world, new practices and behaviours and thus, make biodiversity conservation possible. **Through education, care for nature could be integrated into our day-to-day practices and thinking from childhood onwards.** So far, biodiversity education in Flanders is mainly restricted to secondary education, and largely theoretical.
- » **Reiterate IPBES inclusive approaches/ tools in regional and local projects:** IPBES uses an inclusive approach building on both natural sciences and social sciences, trans- and inter-disciplinary knowledge, as well as local indigenous



knowledge systems. Regional and local projects could reiterate such inclusive and holistic approaches. This would be especially relevant for valuation studies.

- » Compare IPBES assessments with similar exercises performed at regional level: it could be useful to **compare how the IPBES outcomes (especially trends and scenarios) relate to those in the State of Nature Reports of Flanders (NARA)** and to analyse the lessons that could be learned from this comparison.
- » Increase **mainstreaming** efforts in Flanders (i.e. integrating or including actions related to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in strategies relating to production sectors, such as **agriculture, fisheries, forestry and tourism**): mainstreaming efforts in Flanders can be reinforced by the IPBES findings, as they clearly show how different sectors and policies can benefit from **integrating biodiversity concerns**. The results could also reinforce exchange of best practices between relevant actors in Flanders.

## WHICH NEW INITIATIVES COULD BE LEVERAGED BY IPBES OUTCOMES?

- » Societal transformation towards sustainability: new activities that could lead to **behavioural change** should be initiated. Building on **participatory approaches, co-design (e.g. in the sector of urban planning), engagement of civil society (including citizen science projects), and adaptation of the curricula in schools** could lead to awareness raising



and induce behavioural change that will be necessary to adapt to major societal issues and lead towards a sustainable way of living.

- » **Integrating Natural Capital Accounting** (i.e. process of calculating the total stocks and flows of natural resources and services in a given ecosystem or region) in the private sector, as companies impact and depend on natural capital for their continued success.
  
- » **Stimulating of greening initiatives** of different kinds in cities, schools, agriculture, businesses etc. These **greening initiatives should receive support and incentives to be developed.**

## WHAT COULD THE REGION DO TO SUPPORT IPBES?

- » Addressing knowledge gaps: The ECA assessment points to several **knowledge gaps. Flemish research funding schemes (e.g. Fund for Scientific Research, Flanders) should look into these, so that new projects addressing these gaps can get properly funded** and ultimately deliver the knowledge needed for better decision-making.
  
- » **Communicate on IPBES outcomes:** Support the communication of IPBES outcomes (assessments and policy support tools). Several tools and channels could be used for this, including **social media**, to amplify the outreach. With regard to the assessments, it could be useful to do a **Dutch translation of the Summary for Policymakers**,



so that uptake by the executing administrations and ministries can be facilitated.

- » Provide **support to experts to participate in IPBES assessments**: Setting up a sustainable financing scheme (or common pot) for Flemish IPBES experts, and provide clear guidance for applying for such funding would help increase the number of experts participating in the assessments.
- » More extensive **contribution to review IPBES products**: **Stronger engagement of the Flemish government** in reviewing the various IPBES products (first order drafts, second order drafts) and in preparing for plenary sessions would increase ownership, and uptake of the IPBES outcomes in Flanders.
- » Set-up **mechanisms to monitor and follow-up biodiversity-related actions in Flanders**: Better monitoring and follow-up of actions implemented on the ground would help adjust them as needed according to new (IPBES) findings, as well as to global and regional policy frameworks.
- » Review regulations and legislations based on IPBES outcomes: **Translation of governance options into regulations and legislation, e.g. tax reforms, phasing out harmful subsidies, greening agricultural policies, urban planning etc.**



# WALLONIA

Introductory [presentation](#) by Laura Maebe - PhD Student Université de Liège – Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech.

After the presentation, the participants discussed the following:

## WHICH ONGOING INITIATIVES COULD BE LEVERAGED BY IPBES OUTCOMES?

- » Public debate and participatory processes: **use IPBES outcomes as a framework when setting-up public debate and participatory processes.**
  
- » **Public initiatives on biodiversity** are currently occurring in Wallonia in order to put biodiversity at the forefront of the political and public arena. These initiatives **could benefit from greater visibility and impact if they relied more on IPBES outcomes when putting biodiversity on the agenda.** An example of such initiatives is the recent *'Proposition de résolution au Parlement Wallon visant à apporter une réponse urgente, transversale et d'envergure au déclin de la biodiversité et des services qu'elle assure pour la Wallonie'*. Another initiative is the *'Ateliers de la biodiversité'* (2018-2019), dedicated workshops organised by the *Public Service of Wallonia* planning to bring together all the actors involved in biodiversity matters in Wallonia. They intend to question the Walloon citizens about the place and importance that should be given to biodiversity.
  
- » **Disseminate and evaluate the results of nature conservation projects:** there is a large number of projects dedicated to nature conservation on the Walloon territory.



The evaluation and dissemination of these projects results could be underpinned by IPBES outcomes. Putting these projects in perspective with other similar projects or global synthetic results would be an important added-value and could increase the impact they have.

- » **Reinforce existing or dormant initiatives:** a series of existing or dormant initiatives were identified as examples to be reactivated, supported, or further developed:

-**WAL-ES** is a unifying platform at the interface between the Public Service of Wallonia and Universities. It aims to create and disseminate a series of methodological tools for public decision support using ecosystem services.

-Reinforce the existing projects intended to **develop or improve green infrastructures**.

-Promote **eco-labels** related to **biodiversity conservation aspects** and improve their **transparency**.

-**Ensure Walloon data is more extensively integrated** into the Global Biodiversity Information Facility ([GBIF](#)).

- » **Increase public funds for biodiversity** in agriculture and limit funds supporting activities harmful to biodiversity.
- » Accompany societal transformation towards sustainability: **Mainstream the need for profound societal transformation towards sustainability and biodiversity protection**.
- » **Improve the legislative and regulatory frameworks:** improve the integration and coherence of legislations,



sectoral policies and planning processes, to account for trade-offs and synergies between environmental, societal and economic concerns.

- » **Increase transparency and public participation:** especially in topics such as **land-use planning, forest management, Natura2000 management.**

## **WHICH POTENTIAL NEW INITIATIVES COULD BE LEVERAGES BY IPBES OUTCOMES**

- » **Awareness raising on biodiversity related issues:**

-In **primary and secondary schools:** modifying programmes to **induce a mind shift, launching new education programmes integrating biodiversity/ nature and nature's contribution to people.**

-In **high schools and universities:** **launching transversal courses to integrate the concepts of biodiversity, biosphere, and nature's contribution to people.** This should also be done in university programmes and courses other than natural sciences (e.g. economy, etc).

-**Local authorities** could also benefit from the **scientific and objective approach of IPBES** to communicate and convince.

-**General public:** IPBES outcomes could be used for biodiversity lobbying through **communication campaigns** shaped according to the different stakeholders and audiences.



» **Induce governance change in Wallonia to better integrate biodiversity:**

-Develop an **integrated Walloon strategy for biodiversity** that could rely on IPBES outcomes.

-Implement new processes to allow for a **major shift towards better governance**. A system of **'Inspection for Sustainable Development'**, similar to the current processes of *'Inspection for Finances'* could be created. Such process would focus on **evaluating any public decision with regards to sustainable development**. This would allow a shift in policy processes and behaviour.

-Allow for an **increased inclusiveness in governance**. Improved governance can be achieved through both bottom-up and top-down initiatives, including participative approach in, between, and across levels of decision.

-**Evaluate nature conservation policies by an independent body**. The evaluation of nature conservation policies should be carried out by an independent body whose opinions could be delivered impartially, without being subjected to any pressure. Indeed, the evaluation function should be **structurally independent from the operational management and decision-making functions in the organisations**. As such, it is free from undue influence, more objective, and has full authority to submit reports directly to appropriate levels of decision-making.

-**Improve the evaluation of the state of biodiversity in Wallonia**: Methodologies used to evaluate the state of biodiversity in Wallonia should be improved and **adapted to fit into IPBES**



**methodologies so that results would more easily feed into IPBES evaluations.**

» **Integrate biodiversity in all sectoral planning and policies:**

**-Integrate biodiversity in all sectors:** biodiversity should be better integrated in all activity sectors such as building, architecture, urbanism, agriculture, hunting, fishing, tourism, health...

**-Add biodiversity as a pillar to agricultural policies in Wallonia:** biodiversity should be a major pillar of the implementation of the post-2020 *Common Agricultural Policy* (CAP) in the Walloon region.

**-Include biodiversity considerations in communication on consumption impacts:** biodiversity consideration should be reinforced in all communication activities about consumption impacts on the environment.

**-Act towards and promote a shift of economic paradigm:** a shift of economic paradigm that would take biodiversity into account should be promoted. By **adding taxes and charges on activities that have negative impacts on biodiversity across all sectors (including agriculture), we would be able to operate the shift of economic paradigm that is much needed in our societies.** Such system would replicate the principle of the “polluter pays” (i.e. those that have negative impacts on the planet should be charged for it). **Current agriculture practices (that are encouraged by public subsidies and industrial practices) have a cost to society when considering their impact on the environment, and consequently on health.** Making use of IPBES results would help **convincing the economic benefits of biodiversity-friendly agri-systems.** It would also help emphasise the fact that a



**healthy economy strongly relies on healthy ecosystems, and that our current economic system is unsustainable if we do not take into account biodiversity.** Furthermore, the results of IPBES could help shape messages explaining that biodiversity conservation is the best economic option for us all, from a short and long-term perspective.

**-Initiate concrete exchange between IPBES and the Walloon authorities:** as far as participants knew, the existence of and the outcomes of IPBES are largely unknown and therefore not used by Walloon authorities. This should be dealt with as soon as possible.

## WHAT COULD THE REGION DO TO SUPPORT IPBES ?

- » **Provide Walloon expertise and data to IPBES:** share data collected on biodiversity **through GBIF** and provide Walloon expertise to IPBES assessments.
- » **Actively communicate on IPBES results:** actively communicate on IPBES results to the public, media, policy makers, various nature stakeholders and activity sectors. Inviting IPBES representatives to the Walloon Parliament could also be an option.
- » **Ensure IPBES outcomes result in real life implementation:** set-up concrete mechanisms that will allow for making sure that IPBES recommendations are actually resulting into political decisions and implementation in Wallonia.



## BRUSSELS

Introductory presentation by Etienne Aulotte – Chef de service,  
Coordination Plan Nature – Bruxelles Environment.

After the presentation, the participants discussed the following:

### WHICH ONGOING AND POTENTIAL NEW INITIATIVES COULD BE LEVERAGED BY IPBES OUTCOMES?

#### » **Better integrate biodiversity in Brussels Region:**

-Include **biodiversity in urban regulations** of Brussels Region: include **Nature-based Solutions such as street trees, community gardens, mandatory green buildings and green areas, etc. in urban regulations**. To add such components, there would be a need to create an **official body** that would have as main objective to **add more nature components into urban regulations**. Indeed, currently, urban regulations have very few components of nature included in them (this is mainly due to the time when regulations were created: the ones related to urban issues were created before the ones on nature and since then, very few updates and integrations have been made). The recommendations of nature components to be incorporated into urban regulations would be proposed by this official body that would then work on the follow-up of the actual integration into the urban regulation.

-Involve **civil society and ecologists in urban planning**: the participation of citizens and researchers from other disciplines should be encouraged in order to avoid having only urbanists and economists in urban decision-making processes, as these



experts may not have the knowledge on biodiversity-related components.

-Create **subsidies for retrofitting with ecological criteria and for green infrastructures**: Brussels Region should launch subsidies to promote the renovation of existing buildings with criteria on the respect of ecological measures in order to **avoid constructing new buildings** and ensure **retrofitting** is done **with ecological concerns** in mind. The **permeabilisation of pavements, green roofs, fruit gardens, and other such initiatives should also be encouraged with the distribution of subsidies**. These subsidies should have as main objective, to **value and enhance nature, biodiversity, and ecosystem services, considering them as public goods**.

-Create a **soil regulation** and set-up a **soil / biodiversity authority at regional level** responsible for controlling that the political objective of healthy soils is achieved.

-Develop **permeabilised areas and renature Brussels**: Make permeabilised areas as much as possible throughout Brussels region and **renature all cyclists paths and all tramways tracks**. Specific areas that are currently void of green areas should receive special attention. For instance, the **creation of a green corridor along the Canal area** should be established.

-Apply the approach of “**mixed use management of areas**” to Brussels in order to have greater housing variety and density, more affordable housing, **reduce distances between housing, workplaces, retail businesses and other amenities**, and increase the access to fresh, healthy foods as food retail and farmer markets can be accessed on foot/bike or by transit.



-Create a **certification for buildings enhancing biodiversity**: Currently, energy certifications for buildings are in place. We could set-up similar certifications for biodiversity, with clear guidelines on how to make buildings more biodiversity-friendly.

-Use new public funds to **invest into projects for green infrastructures in Brussels**: currently, apartments and houses close to Natura2000 areas are being sold at a more expensive price on the market and the argument of “apartment close to a Natura2000 site” is used as a marketing selling point. The additional profit that selling companies get (about 50.000 Euros more for apartments close to Natura2000 areas) should be given to public authorities in charge of urbanism. This profit should then be re-invested into projects for green infrastructures in Brussels city.

-Urban interventions by public authorities based on the consideration of biodiversity: **Urban interventions by public authorities should always be done based on the consideration of biodiversity and Nature-based Solutions. If the intervention protects and enhances biodiversity and societal values, these public interventions should take place. If not, they should not take place.**

-**Improve public transports in Brussels**: Less cars would mean less parking spots. These **parking spots could be used to reintroduce nature in the city**. Policy decisions should be taken accordingly.

-Raise the awareness of Brussels Region public administrations on the values of biodiversity: **“Lobby” or raise**



**the awareness of Brussels Region public administrations (working on other issues than environment, e.g. urbanism, tourism...) on the values of biodiversity and urge them to take actions based on considerations for nature.**

-Improve Nature-based Solutions in Brussels: **Make use of existing ideas to improve the use of Nature-based Solutions in Brussels.** For instance, the [Urban Nature Atlas](#) provides 1000 examples of Nature-based Solutions from across 100 European cities.

-Green the city of Brussels and better manage green areas: **Fix the “Piétonnier” area of Brussels city center: open the ground to plants and trees and connect it to the green network.**

-**Improve freshwater and groundwater management in Brussels:** Filter water with plants around hospitals and other public buildings.

-**Use green areas and plants in renovation of public areas,** and encourage the use of green and plants in renovation of private areas.

-**Improve current strategies by adding biodiversity components:** for instance, do not replace former monitoring of the Plan Régional d’Affectation du Sol ([PRAS](#)) but add monitoring phases instead, and check it against biodiversity strategies.



-Address the need for economic paradigm shift by looking into the **ecological impact of imports and exports** and review trade rules accordingly.

» **Support citizens actions for urban biodiversity and improve public awareness on biodiversity:**

**-Urban agriculture initiatives should be supported.** Some urban agriculture initiatives already exist and new ones **should get support based on their contribution to maintaining and enhancing urban biodiversity.** Furthermore, they should get support to create a platform for **networking and sharing of best practices.**

**-“Nature Interpretation Centres” in urban areas** should be created. These “Nature Interpretation Centres” should be **open to schools and citizens** (example of existing one: [Marais Wiels](#)).

**-Create more communication initiatives on biodiversity towards the general public.** Those communication initiatives would be intended for citizens such as the one created for the **Peregrine Falcons: ‘Falcons for everyone’.** By placing video cameras near the habitats of the falcons, citizens took interest in their preservation. **Other animals could get the same type of video-support projects to increase the citizens awareness on the importance of urban bio-diversity.** Other education and public awareness on activities from Brussels Region such as actions led by [Bruxelles Environnement](#) should also be launched.



-Create **more initiatives for citizen science in cities**: train more people who could become citizen scientists and **provide them with adequate tools to record their data and publish it online**.

-Create a **series of regional communication strategies and communication campaigns for biodiversity towards citizens, businesses, etc.**

-**Increase the number of notice boards on urban species** and improve existing ones (e.g. those about Chiroptera/ bats). Reinforce these initiatives with a lot more notice boards about e.g. invertebrate biodiversity in lakes, etc.

-**Improve the education system by adding biodiversity components**. Learning about biodiversity and nature's contribution to people **in schools and universities** should be required. Curricula and trainings should be added on the value of biodiversity and green spaces. Promoting links between biodiversity and health should also be considered in education (cf. initiatives by the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#)).

-**Support citizens who have urban gardens**: provide **help, seeds and coaching to citizens who have urban gardens** ("*potagers urbains*"). Provide them with **information on ecological gardening, pollinators, and so on**.

-Increase the **information and communication on the value of biodiversity, and the link between biodiversity and health**.



» **Improve common understanding:**

-The **harmonisation of language and semantics** is crucial. For instance, **urban planners and ecologists often use the same word but do not have the same understanding of the wording.** This should be addressed through **initiatives intending to harmonise the language across various disciplines such as urbanism and ecology.**

-**Enhance cooperation and collaboration:** human behavioural aspects should be taken into consideration when working **towards a societal and economic paradigm shift.** Ways to enhance cooperation and collaboration should be studied in order to find solutions on how to implement such behaviours across sectors and within the society at large.

-**Review the management practices of green areas.** Some management practices of green areas by public authorities should be reviewed. For instance, draining lakes for oxygenation of mud should be re-considered given the negative impact it has for some species.

-**Translate the European regulation on Invasive Alien Species into concrete action in Brussels.** For instance, the Canada Goose and the Egyptian Goose are actively protected when they nest in Brussels. Yet they are invasive species. So far, too much focus is put on legal and regulation instruments, less is done in practice. New policy options need to be explored.



## WHAT COULD THE REGION DO TO SUPPORT IPBES?

-**Data collection:** Brussels Region could collect and publish data (e.g. on the Global Biodiversity Information Facility [GBIF](#)), and conduct **research specifically for IPBES assessments**.

-**Continuous reference to IPBES:** if the Region constantly refers to IPBES when implementing activities related to biodiversity, the authorities will increasingly learn about IPBES findings and would eventually support and fund more of the work produced by IPBES.

## WHAT COULD IPBES (NATIONAL FOCAL POINT) DO FOR BRUSSELS REGION?

-**Provide digestible analysis and figures at the correct decision-making level in Belgium:** IPBES assessments and other outputs provide general trends. But **regional authorities need more concrete data and targeted actions that they could take up and concretely implement at regional level**.

-**Translate the outcomes and recommendations of IPBES to public authorities** in the wording and format that public authorities and other stakeholders need would strongly help in creating momentum for ongoing and new activities for biodiversity as these would be based on IPBES outputs.

-**Provide support to experts contributing to IPBES assessments:** set-up mechanisms to provide financial support to experts contributing to IPBES assessments.



## EPILOGUE

The IPBES Belgian Focal Point ([Belgian NFP](#)) wishes to thank all the participants for making this event a success. We also would like to provide special thanks to the Flemish Research Institute for Nature and Forest ([INBO](#)) for hosting our event in their premises. We also would like to give special thanks to the [IPBES](#) Secretariat for their support. And the speakers who provided the participants with insights on key matters related to IPBES.

We also would like to call for the Regions to take up the results of the brainstorm that took place in the different break-out groups and remain available for support to help make these recommendations a reality.



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