

Annual Report 2014



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1/ INTRODUCTION – SUMMARY OF 2014 HIGHLIGHTS

The Workplan we had foreseen for 2014 was fairly ambitious. Yet, the Platform team was very successful as exemplified by several highlights in each of our three ‘work areas’ (pillars): biodiversity data, national science-policy, and international science-policy activities (SPI).

As in previous years, the Platform strongly contributed to the strengthening of biodiversity e-infrastructures, most notably through the services it provides as national node to the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF). By the end of 2014, Belgium provided more than 7.756.343 records from 67 occurrence datasets and 148.162 records from 8 checklists to the GBIF network. The Platform directly served 2.067.347 records from 46 occurrence datasets and 6 checklists (see also Annex IV). In addition, several initiatives have been established to further promote the publication and use of biodiversity data. These include the organisation of our first GBIF day, and dedicated seminars at Universities – to name a few. The IFBL dataportal was nominated by the eGov Awards 2014, underlining the quality and relevance of our actions. At the international level, we successfully organized the 6th European Nodes meeting, contributed to LifeWatch initiatives, and (co-)organised several data workshops. Clearly, biodiversity e-infrastructures have become a hot topic, and will therefore be the focus of our next biannual Platform meeting.

Our Communities of Practice (CoPs), bringing together relevant knowledge holders and stakeholders around issues of topical interest, have also been very lively in 2014. The activities in the ‘Belgium Ecosystem Services’ network (BEES), for example, have been revitalized through various topical working groups, interactions with similar initiatives across the EU, and networking events like the very successful BEES Christmas market organized last December. Similarly, numerous initiatives have been established at regional, federal and European levels in which the expertise of the ‘Belgium Forum on Invasive Alien Species’ was instrumental. Highlights include the testing and launch of the Harmonia+ webtool (i.e. science-based framework for the risk analysis of invasive alien species) which seems highly relevant in the context of the EU directive on Invasive Alien Species, and the organisation of the ‘Alien Alert’ final conference (‘Aliens on the Horizon’) Conference which was widely welcomed. Within the CoP on Biodiversity and Health (COPBH), we particularly note the publication of the research brief highlighting the need for enhanced capacity building in Belgium on Biodiversity & Health science and policy, the revamping of the website, and the various community building meetings allowing for cross-fertilization and initiation of new collaborative actions (e.g. with Ugent in the framework of a nutrition-biodiversity; and in the context of the 2014 Brain Call).

In 2014, we also guaranteed the follow-up of recently established initiatives, like the ‘Conservation Research Matters’ initiative which was the focus of our 2013 Conference. More specifically, the methods and outcome of this process have been published in a public report, and the statistics of the survey are now publicly accessible via an interface specifically developed by the Platform for this purpose. In addition, several new initiatives have been explored within the lines of the Strategic Plan (e.g. citizen science), and involvement of early career scientists has been reinforced through the set-up of a mailing list/network. At the EU level, we have been involved in several Horizon scanning initiatives, most notably on Nature-Based Solutions (e.g. the BiodivERsA Nature-based Solutions workshop organised by the Platform; and the e-Consultation jointly organised by EC and EPBRS).

During 2014, the Platform also further extended its activities in the EU science-policy arena. For example, we were involved in the organisation of a European Parliament event on April 1st which brought together over 150 participants around a science-policy-stakeholder-society interface conference entitled 'Towards a consolidated network of knowledge (NoK) on biodiversity and ecosystem services in Europe', resulting from an EU-funded coordination action. Moreover, although 2014 marked the end of BiodivERsA2, it was a very productive and successful year for the network. For example, we launched the second BiodivERsA database booklet, helped to produce the Stakeholder Engagement Handbook, organised a strategic foresight workshop on nature-based solutions, contributed to various brochures, helped in the drafting of two new policy briefs, and contributed to the BiodivERsA2 Final Conference. The Platform was also involved in the preparation of the BiodivERsA3 proposal (granted by EC in October); and will play an important role over the coming years, especially in SPI activities, mapping and foresight activities, communication, and coordination/governance.

At the global level, we engaged the Belgian research community and other stakeholders in the preparation for SBSTTA-18 (cf. e-consultation on Synthetic Biology) and acted as co-pilot in various SBSTTA and CBD-COP12 dossiers. During an informal meeting, we also brought together the European SBSTTA-National Focal Points to improve the effectiveness of the SBSTTA with regard to its role and procedures, especially in the light of new developments such as IPBES and the new Subsidiary Body of Implementation of the CBD. With regard to our IPBES-National Focal Point activities, we specifically focused on awareness events (IPBES info day, and BEES Christmas market booth), recruitment of experts and stakeholder engagement for the implementation of the IPBES work programme, stakeholder consultations, and preparations of plenary meetings. The political nature of these processes delivers products for which no single participant can claim ownership, precluding an easy evaluation of the involvement and effectiveness of the Platform in these processes. However, the fact that our involvement is clearly increasing already indicates the Platform's effectiveness in these activities.

Over the past year, we also put quite some efforts in improving our internal and external communication, and in increasing our visibility. This was not without effect: the website attracted ca. 71% more unique visitors compared to 2013 (and more than 150% compared to 2012!). End of 2014, we also made three promotional movies to explain our services to a broad audience.

Last but not least, the Platform also made some steps forward in addressing some of the concerns from the evaluation panel with regard to its institutional arrangement and management. The move of the Platform support functions to BelSPOBelSPO/STIS was completed in August. We also initiated the development of a first set of Key Performance Indicators which will provide an independent basis for the evaluation of Platform activities, and help us to monitor our progress towards our operational objectives (see Annex II; a full report will be produced by end of February 2015). In the same context, we also set up a User Satisfaction Survey which will help us to further improve our role in the field of biodiversity science and policy in Belgium (see Annex III for first results).

Unfortunately, the complex Belgian context in combination with a difficult budgetary situation has had regrettable consequences as well. The new cooperation agreement and pilot committee is still not in place. Again, the renewal of personnel contracts was delayed for S. Vanderhoeven and K. Articus (DEMNA), who were disengaged for some five months. There were some more movements in

personnel: Bram D'hondt left the Platform end of August; Angélique Berhault interrupted her career for one year from September onwards; Estelle Balian went on maternity leave from September to December; and Hans Keune started to working half-time from October onwards for a period of two years. As a consequence, we also welcomed two new people: Florin Popa (social scientist, for the follow-up of BEES activities and various science-policy task forces) and Pierre Huybrechts (our new communication manager). Due to shuffles in personnel, a few tasks have been delayed – yet, they will be initiated and/or completed in 2015.

Below, we describe the progress made within each work area of strategic plan, with reference to the six major objectives and tasks. We must, however, note that categorization of tasks is not always straightforward. They may relate to more than one objective; and should be seen as being interlinked and mutually supportive. The presented information on the spin-off project AntaBIS is more condensed, as a full report on its activities are available as a results of its own specific reporting obligations. Together, our results testify the credibility and relevance of the Platform as a science-policy interface, and as an important catalyst to the development and support of initiatives related to national and international biodiversity research. As for 2014, the 2015 Workplan will be presented as a separate document.

Annex I presents an overview of the deliverables initially foreseen in the 2014 Workplan, and the extent to which they have been achieved (75% complete; 20% initiated/ongoing). As will show from this report, many more have been achieved as opportunities arose, all of which make a good fit with our Strategic Plan.

2/ PLATFORM STAFF

Biodiversity experts:

- ✓ Kristina Articus (KrA, Dr., DEMNA; 60% but without contract from February to September 2014)
- ✓ Estelle Balian (EsB, RBINS; 60% but on maternity leave from September until end of December 2014)
- ✓ Dimitri Brosens (DiB, INBO; 100%)
- ✓ Hilde Eggermont (HiE, Dr., RBINS; 100%)
- ✓ Hans Keune (HaK, Dr., INBO; 100% until October 2014; but 50% for a period of two years)
- ✓ Florin Popa (FIP, Dr., INBO; 50% from October 2014 onwards)
- ✓ Sonia Vanderhoeven (SoV, Dr., DEMNA; 100% but without contract from January to June 2014)

Communication officer:

- ✓ Angélique Berhault (AnB, RBINS; 100% until September 2014)
- ✓ Pierre Huybrechts (PiH, RBINS; 100% from October 2014 onwards)

IT support team:

- ✓ Julien Cigar (JuC, System Administrator, ULB-VUB until May but BELSPO STIS from August onwards; 100%)

- ✓ André Heughebaert (AnH, IT engineer, ULB-VUB until May but BELSPO STIS from August onwards; 100%)
- ✓ Nicolas Noé (NiN, IT developer, ULB-VUB until May but BELSPO STIS from August onwards; 80%)

Spin-off projects:

- ✓ Alien Alert: Bram D'Hondt (BrD, Dr., project manager, RBINS; 80%; until end of March). After March, BrD was involved in other national SPI activities until end of August 2014.
- ✓ AntaBIS: Anton Van de Putte (AvP, Dr., project coordinator, RBINS; 100 %) and Nabil Youdjou (NaY, IT developer for AntaBIS; from Jan1- June30 at ULB paid by BBPf budget; from July1-Dec31 at RBINS paid by AntaBIS budget; 100%)

3/ PROGRESS OF THE ACTIVITIES

3.1. Platform management and operational structure

As in previous years, the management of the Platform remained in the hands of Aline Van der Werf (**AvdW**; BELSPOBELSPO). Scientific coordination has been taken up by **HiE**; and management of the IT team by **AnH**.

Following the political agreement, the current phase of the Platform runs from January 2013 until the end of 2016, with an annual budget of 700 000 EUR (i.e. conditions of 2013). The budget was renewed in April 2014.

In the strategic plan, an entire work package is dedicated to improving the operational structure of the Platform, in order to enhance its visibility, functioning and efficiency. To that end, hosting arrangements with the STIS/BELSPO have been set up for the Platform support functions (IT and communication) during the first half of 2014. The administrative transfer was completed in May; all IT infrastructures were moved by the end of August. The latter was a very labour-intensive task. Regarding the political governance of the platform, a new cooperation agreement between the federal and federated authorities has been prepared for the development and follow-up of Platform activities, including the set-up of a pilot committee. The signing of the agreement has suffered extensive delays due to administrative and political hurdles. It is now in the hands of E. Sleurs for approval and signature by the federal level (by the State Secretary for science policy and by the Finance Minister). The process is ongoing in the federated entities. In addition, there was again an interruption of the employment contract of SoV and KrA (some 5 months), biodiversity experts at DEMNA, which did not only cause personal stress but also negatively affected the whole team.

To further respond to the suggestions put forward by the evaluation panel in October 2012, the Platform has initiated the development of a first set of Key Performance indicators (Annex II for a few examples). These KPIs will be finalized in the course of February 2015 and a separate report will be made available; this should help us to better monitor our progress towards our operational objectives, and to better position ourselves in the field of biodiversity science and policy. To achieve this, we set up a task force with all Platform members involved (meetings on 23 April; 20 June; 20 October; 3 November and 7 December 2014). We received additional guidance and support from P. Roose (Director OD Nature, RBINS). Although the KPIs are not covering every single task we manage, they do cover each of our work areas and operational objectives, and are considered representative for the great variety of activities implemented by the Platform team. In the same context, and as we are constantly striving to improve the quality of our service to the Belgian scientific and policy communities, we designed a survey (<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/bbpf2014>) with the aim of assessing user satisfaction with our current activities, and getting feedback on needed improvements and future priorities. The survey and first results are presented in Annex III (by **FIP**). The feedback will be carefully reviewed and integrated in the Platform's 2015 Workplan. A separate report will become available end of February, together with the report on the KPIs.

3.2. Work Area 1: Strengthening biodiversity e-infrastructures

3.2.1. – Objective 1: To foster and support the publication, accessibility, and use of biodiversity data through appropriate means

3.2.1.1 TASK - Support of Belgian biodiversity data providers by installing tools, and enabling capacity through workshops

This task encompasses the Platform's role as national node to the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF – <http://www.gbif.org>). By the end of November 2014, Belgium provided more than 7.756.343 records¹ from 67 occurrence datasets and 148.162 records² from 8 checklists to the GBIF network. The Platform directly served 2.067.347 records from 46 occurrence datasets and 6 checklists. In addition to the Platform itself, eight other Belgian institutions are officially part of the GBIF network as Data Publishers: INBO, RBINS, RMCA, Meise, UMons, UGent, VLIZ and DEMNA. See Annex IV for more details on our contribution to GBIF.

Part of the task of a GBIF node consists of contributing to the development of IT tools supporting the goals of GBIF. In 2014, the Platform participated actively in the testing, translation and helpdesk of GBIF Tools.

The Platform also maintains the Belgian BIF, an infrastructure hosting a variety of biodiversity databases being published to GBIF through provider software (IPT, Tapir, BioCase and Digir). A number of data sets/dedicated portals were published through the INBO involvement (Red list of Dragonflies in Flanders, VIS Fishes in Estuarine waters, VIS Fishes in Inland waters & Watervogels, wintering waterbirds in Flanders). Through DEMNA, efforts have been made to collect data of aquatic invasive alien species in the Walloon region; for Flanders, similar data have been gathered through INBO but have not been published yet. See Annex IV for a complete list of hosted datasets. In this context, we also developed an internal document defining the needs and priorities of data publication.

This year, we also start a series of 'GBIF Day' seminars to explain to (early-career) scientists how to retrieve information from the new GBIF portal, to illustrate the added-value of GBIF data in the development of their research, and to highlight other options for data use. The first one was organised at UCL on 20th November; it was very well received.

Finally, we contributed to a data paper on VIS, Estuarine and Inland waters fish occurrences (accepted by *Zookeys*).

Due to time constraints and availability of new opportunities (Atlas of Living Australia portal), we decided to postpone the renewal of our Belgian data portal to 2015. Yet, we have already investigated the framework and technology to be used.

¹ 45% increase compared to 2013

² 80% increase compared to 2013

Meetings (see also 3.2.1.1. and 3.4.1.2)

- GBIF Day @ UCL Louvain-la-Neuve; 20 November 2014 (organiser: **AnH**)
- GBIF data publisher seminar at the Botanic Garden, Meise, Belgium; 1 April 2014 (organiser: **DiB**)

Publications:

- **Brosens D**, Breine J, Van Thuyne G, Belpaire C, Desmet P, Verreycken H (submitted) VIS – A database on the distribution of fishes in inland and estuarine waters in Flanders, Belgium. ZooKeys @@: @–@. doi: 10.3897/zookeys.@@.8556.
- Internal document on needs and priorities for data publication (**DiB**, **AnH**)

3.2.1.2 TASK - Development and hosting of dedicated portals; Development and implementation of projects aiming at compiling, linking and integrating biodiversity topical data

Here, we specifically highlight the Digitization Calls, AntaBIF/AntaBIS, Biofresh/FADA, Harmonia/Pandora, BioGR, Congo River Portal and Open-Up.

Digitization Call

To promote the digitization of biodiversity related data, the Platform used to organise a yearly call for relevant projects. The 5th (and most likely the last) Digitization call was issued on October 1st, 2011 (submission deadline: October 21st, 2011) with a total budget of €100.000; four project were selected. They are now all finished and published on GBIF, representing more than 600.000 additional occurrence records.

- **IFBL3** from the National Botanical Garden of Belgium (Fabienne VanRossum). At this moment, the [IFBL Data Portal](#) brings together data from three digitization projects (IFBL1, IFBL2 and IFBL3), and the Florabank (i.e. the database that deals with the distribution data of the wild flora of Flanders and the Brussels Capital Region). It now shows more than 3 million plants occurrences, all historical data (1939-1971) for the country and the Florabank data on Flanders and Brussels Capital Region. This project was nominated by the eGov Awards 2014.
- **African Plants IUCN redlists** from the National Botanical Garden of Belgium (Steve Dessen) and Université Libre de Bruxelles (Pierre Meerts)
- **EarlyBirds2** from Aves-Natagora (Yves Paquet)
- **Arachnofauna** from the Royal Belgian Institute for Natural Sciences (Frederik Hendrickx)

AntaBIF/AntaBIS (Antarctic Biodiversity Information Facility; see <http://www.biodiversity.ag>)

AntaBIF is a project funded by the Belgian Science Policy Office (<http://www.BelSPO.be>: SD/BA/856, total budget € 470.860,00 (2009-2014)) that aims at building a dedicated Antarctic biodiversity data portal giving access to a distributed network of contributing databases, following to the principles of GBIF. In June 2014 AntaBIF came to a successful end. Additional funding was obtained from BelSPO to initiate the development of the Antarctic Biodiversity Information System (AntaBIS, July 2014-March 2015). This vision for AntaBIS concurs with the LifeWatch goal, which is to construct and bring into operation facilities for data generation and processing; for data integration and interoperability; and to establish virtual laboratories offering a range of analytical and modelling tools for scientific and policy users. As such, AntaBIS has been proposed as a potential LifeWatch virtual laboratory and a significant Belgian Federal contribution to this ESFRI project.

The success of the facility depends largely on its extensive collaboration with networks of scientists involved in Antarctic research (e.g., the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research SCAR, www.scar.org) and the Southern Ocean Observation Network SOOS, www.soos.aq) and an active community of IT experts underpinning its work. In accordance with the Antarctic treaty, the facility has succeeded not only to promote the management, publication and open access of vast collections of biodiversity data related to Antarctic marine and terrestrial ecosystems, but has demonstrated the power of web-based applications and IT tools in the analysis and modelling of these data and information, for a wide range of users. Furthermore the Biogeographic Atlas of the Southern Ocean was launched at the SCAR open science conference in Auckland New Zealand.

The feasibility of AntaBIS to become a full-fledged Belgian federal LifeWatch project has been evaluated by testing the different IT-tools and services developed and/or used within the framework of the AntaBIF project as to their utility as potential modular elements within the LifeWatch virtual laboratory.

Databases published:

- **Van de Putte A. & N. Youdjou** (eds) (2014). AntaBIF: The Antarctic Biodiversity Information Facility. <http://www.biodiversity.aq/>

Meetings:

- Evaluation workshop of The "**Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) portal**", ULB Belgium; 2-4 June 2014 (**NaY**)
- Lifewatch marine technical meeting. Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR), Gournes, Heraklion, Crete; 2-6 June 2014 (**AVdP**)
- SCAR Open Science Conference (incl. AntaBIF/AntaBIS annual Meeting, AntEco Meeting SCADM meeting, SOOS data meeting), Auckland, New Zealand; August 2014 (**AVdP**)
- RDA plenary 4, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; 23-24 September 2014 (**AVdP**)
- GSBI workshop 2014 "Towards establishing a global framework to link soil biodiversity data", INRA, Dijon, France; 1-2 December 2014 (**NaY**)

Publications:

De Broyer C., Koubbi P., Griffiths H.J., Raymond B., Udekem d'Acoz C. d', **Van de Putte A.P.**, Danis B., David B., Grant S., Gutt J., Held C., Hosie G., Huettmann F., Post A., Ropert-Coudert Y. (eds.), 2014. Biogeographic Atlas of the Southern Ocean. Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research, Cambridge, XII + 498 pp.

BioFresh/FADA

We continued our support to [BioFresh data portal](#) and [FADA website](#)³. This involves:

- Hosting of the BioFresh data portal and FADA website on the Platform servers
- Offering technical ICT support to the BioFresh team at OD Nature (on databases, application deployment, GIS, GBIF tools...) to establish the data portal

End of 2014, we have also set up a Memorandum of Understanding formalizing the existing collaboration between [OD Nature](#) and the Platform.

HARMONIA information system and invasive species impact assessment

In 2014, efforts were carried on to further promote the use of Harmonia⁴ as the information system of choice and to underpin impact assessment of invasive alien species in science-policy initiatives at the federal, regional and European scale (see also 3.3.1.3 for further details). In particular, Harmonia was promoted in three elements developed at the EU level: (1) the network of interoperable web services EASIN (European Alien Species Information Network), (2) a European Information System for Alien Species (supported by an EU funded COST Action: Alien Challenge, A European Information System for Alien Species; 30 participating countries; estimated overall budget 116 Million €; **SoV** being the Belgian representative at the management committee), and (3) the establishment of a list of invasive species of EU concern related to the new EU regulation instrument.

By March 31st, the Platform spin-off project **Alien Alert** came to an end. (Full project title: “*Alien Alert* - Horizon scanning for new pests and invasive species in Belgium and neighbouring areas”. Funding: BELSPO contract nr. SD/CL/011. Budget: € 219,438 of which € 90,300 to BBPf at RBINS.) The project was realized by a consortium of eight Belgian scientific institutions, coordination of which was provided by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform (coordinator: BrD). The project had started on 2012-10-01. Central to the project was the development of a framework to analyze the risk of emerging and potentially invasive non-native species, and an analogue for emerging infectious diseases. These risk analysis tools were termed *Harmonia*⁺ (invasive species) and *Pandora*⁺ (pathogens). The final steps

³ The development of the BioFresh data portal (<http://data.freshwaterbiodiversity.eu/>) was initiated during the EU-funded FP7 project [BioFresh](#) (Biodiversity of Freshwater Ecosystems: Status, Trends, Pressures, and Conservation Priorities). The Freshwater Animal Diversity Assessment ([FADA](#); <http://fada.biodiversity.be/>) database was developed and hosted by the Platform following a number of BELSPO funded workshops with taxonomic experts. [OD Nature](#) actively worked on extending the content of the FADA database in the framework of the BioFresh project, and adopted it as a taxonomical backbone for the BioFresh data portal.

⁴ *Harmonia*⁺ and *Pandora*⁺ were created as parts of the Alien Alert project, on horizon scanning for new pests and invasive species in Belgium and neighbouring areas. The Alien Alert project was performed by a consortium of eight Belgian scientific institutions. It was coordinated by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform and funded by the Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO contract SD/CL/011).

of the project, taken in 2014, involved: (i) a test round performed by an independent panel of 30 (inter)national experts, (ii) finalization of the tools according to final comments, (iii) their digitization as online tools, and (iv) their publication in scientific literature. Apart from that, a concluding symposium was held on March 12th as to present the project's outcome within the broader frame of rapid response measures towards invasive species (*"Aliens on the Horizon - Prioritisation, prevention & rapid response for invasive species in Belgium"*, at BELSPO). With 96 people attending, and given very positive feedback (from 24 questionnaire respondents), this symposium was deemed a success. Afterwards, the project's deliverables have been presented at several networking occasions (see Meetings, below).

The risk assessment tools package developed by the platform is thus the following:

- [Harmonia+](#) is a first-line risk assessment scheme for potentially invasive species.
- [Pandora+](#) is a first-line risk assessment scheme for pathogenic or parasitic (micro)organisms that may be of concern to environmental, plant, animal or human health. It refers directly to a particular host organism, and as such, is designed to support assessments within Harmonia+.
- [Pandora](#) is a first-line risk assessment scheme for the risks posed by pathogenic and parasitic (micro)organisms. It is the counterpart of Harmonia+ for potentially invasive (macro)organisms.

The whole package was implemented as a web-based tool and launched end of March 2014.

Harmonia+ and *Pandora+* have been picked up by several external initiatives, for which the project coordinator acted as a contact person during the course of 2014.

Publications :

- **D'hondt B, Vanderhoeven S**, Roelandt S, Mayer F, Versteirt V, Ducheyne E, San Martin G, Grégoire J-C, Stiers I, Quoilin S, Branquart E. 2014. *Harmonia+* and *Pandora+*: risk screening tools for potentially invasive organisms. Belgian Biodiversity Platform, Brussels, 63 pp.
- **D'hondt B, Vanderhoeven S**, Roelandt S, Mayer F, Versteirt V, Adriaens T, Ducheyne E, San Martin G, Grégoire J-C, Stiers I, Quoilin S, Branquart E. *Harmonia+* and *Pandora+*: risk screening tools for potentially invasive plants, animals and their pathogens. Submitted. *Biological Invasions*.
- Groom Q., Desmet P., **Vanderhoeven S.**, Adriaens T. The importance of open data for invasive alien species research, policy and management. Submitted. *Management of Biological Invasions*.

Bio-GR

The Platform collaborates in the Bio-GR project aiming at removing existing technical barriers, adopting a common exchange format and sharing of biodiversity primary data from the Great Region (located between Rhine, Mosel, Sarre and Meuse; total area of 65.401 km²) and building a web portal for geographic visualization. The Platform budget amounts to 50.000 euro, provided by five regional partners; this budget covers the data harmonization and development of Bio-GR portal. By offering a trans-boundary view on species observations related to Birds and Habitats Directive, this project

delivers a more accurate evaluation of the Natura2000 network. The [Data Portal](#) was officially launched in September 2012 and showcased during a Greater Region Press Conference in Trier in May 2013. No further work was done in 2014 as the Great Region partners are waiting to fund a second phase through an INTER-Reg V project in 2015 (see 2015 Workplan)

Congo River data portal

As management tool for biodiversity data generated by the 2010 Congo River Expedition, the Platform subsequently developed a dedicated data portal site. Meanwhile, some 24 datasets by various researchers, in different formats, were integrated. Several thousands of images were converted to illustrate the data and/or expedition sites; and the Platform continued the update of underlying datasets and metadata. Further improvements are expected based on the feedback of expedition researchers and site visitors.

Open-Up

This project is a Best Practice Network, co-funded by the European Commission under the 'eContentplus' programme, as part of the i2011. The result of this project and the procedures set in place to publish natural history data can serve as proof of concept of the networking and distributed access mechanisms used for [EUROPEANA](#) content provision. This experience can be extended to other content provider communities with a similar high degree of distribution.

As Belgian BIF, the Platform takes part of the WP7: Helpdesk Facility and Extending the Network. Over the past years, we concentrated our efforts on helping the three major Belgian partners (RBINS, RMCA and NGBG) to deliver their multimedia content to the Europeana and GBIF networks. In addition, RBINS asked the Platform to publish its contribution to OpenUp! and to develop/host a multimedia website that showcases the insects images they provided. OpenUp! project officially ended in 2014 but the multimedia website ([Pictorial Beetle Collection of the RBINS](#)) remains active and regularly updated.

3.2.2. – Objective 2: To promote and contribute to the development and application of internationally accepted standards and infrastructures for the exchange and use of biodiversity information

3.2.2.1. TASK - Development and implementation of biodiversity standards and tools

This task was implemented through supporting of several relevant international initiatives such as GBIF (see also sections 3.2.1.1 and 3.4.1.2.); and attending dedicated meetings (reports on each of these meetings are available upon request).

The platform (**DiB**) was invited by the Norwegian GBIF node to give a workshop on the subject of Data papers (December 2014). This was received very well and this workshop will be reorganised in

cooperation with the Norwegian GBIF node and March 2015. In addition, **DiB** gave a 4 hours “Biodiversity Informatics” course at Ugent (1st Master Biology, course Taxonomy and Evolution) and an invited lecture at Antwerp University.

In the context our mentoring project with Togo and Mauritania (**NiN**, **AnH**), two workshops were held with more than 30 people attending.

Meetings:

- ALA portal workshop, Brussels, Belgium; 2-4 June 2014 (**NiN**)
- [be OpenGIS Day](#), Brussels, Belgium; 6 November 2014 (**NiN**)
- [TDWG-2014 Conference](#), Jönköping, Sweden; 27-31 October 2014 (oral presentation: **NiN**, **DiB**, **NaY**)
- Data workshop, Lomé; 16-22 June (organiser: **NiN**)
- Data workshop, Nouakchott; 31 Aug-5 September 2014 (organiser: **AnH**)
Both workshops were part of our [Mentoring project](#) with Togo And Mauritania
- Data paper workshop, Oslo Norway; 2-3 December 2014 (invited Lecture: **DiB**)
- “Biodiversity Informatics”, 4 hours course UGent (1st Master Biology, Taxonomy and Evolution); 2014/11/04 2014/11/18 & 2014/12/09 (**DiB**)
- Seminar on research data, Antwerp University, Belgium; 15 April 2014 (**DiB**)
- Creative-B final event (Global Roadmap for biodiversity data research infrastructures), Brussels, Belgium; 26 September 2014 (**DiB**)
- National Biodiversity Strategy Networking event, RBINS Brussels, Belgium; 19 May 2014 (**DiB**, **AnB**, **HiE**)

3.2.2.2. TASK - Development and maintenance BeCRIS database and data portal

Belgian Biodiversity Current Research Information System ([BeCRIS](#)) centralizes access to expertise and resources available in Belgium in the field of biodiversity. It allows information on institutions, research units, researcher and projects related to biodiversity in Belgium to be freely retrieved. This freely accessible database replaces BioBEL and BIODIV, the formers inventories on the subject. BioBEL was a BelSPO-funded initiative that started in 2007; content was maintained and updated directly by the biodiversity research community through a secured access. Since May 2012, BioBEL was no longer directly updated by the researchers. The Belgian Biodiversity Platform is only updating the database on demand, or on specific topics (for example, in the framework of research analysis projects performed by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform). Furthermore, BioBEL is used as an internal tool for inventorisation and analysis of biodiversity research in Belgium (e.g. to support the work of the forums/Communities of Practice). There was virtually no change to BeCRIS (content or application wise) in 2014. At the European scale, updated information related to Belgian biodiversity research funding programmes and projects can now be found in the pan-European [BiodivERsA database](#); this database is also hosted, managed and updated by the Platform (see 3.4.2.6). It was officially launched in March 2014.

3.2.2.3. TASK - Contribute to biodiversity EU e-infrastructures

During 2014, the Platform continued its support the Belgian LifeWatch contact group, at present consisting of experts of sponsored institutions (VLIZ, INBO, UCL, RBINS and MRAC). In addition, discussions have been set up with these partners to explore the opportunity for the Platform to become the national 'Lifewatch Service Center'. This task would involve animating and promoting a community of Lifewatch data providers in Belgium (but not in coordinating the Lifewatch activities, as this role will be taken up by VLIZ), and promoting communication amongst Belgian stakeholders. The node would also facilitate the publication of Lifewatch related data. In fact, we are already performing these tasks; the work just needs to be officialised (pending ERIC status). In addition, we have now also been appointed as national member to the LifeWatch communicator group (together with Stefanie de Keyser, VLIZ). This role implies the Lifewatch communication from the national level towards the other Lifewatch member countries. An article for the first newsletter was submitted. In 2014, preparations were also made to turn AntaBIS (formerly AntaBIF) into a federal Lifewatch contribution.

In the same context, the Platform explored the opportunity to focus its biannual 2015 conference on "Biodiversity e-infrastructures" (see 3.3.2.1. for more details, and related meetings).

Meetings:

- Belgian LifeWatch Contact group meeting, Brussels, Belgium; 4 April 2014 (organisers: **DiB**; **AnH**, **AvdP**, **NaY**, **HiE**)
- LifeWatch online meeting on Communication, 2 September 2014 (**DiB**)

3.3. Work Area 2: Fostering biodiversity research

3.3.1. – Objective 3: To foster inter- and transdisciplinary research by encouraging communication and discussion amongst scientists, and between scientists, policy makers and other stakeholders, through the animation of Communities of Practice (CoPs) in topical areas in biodiversity research

The CoPs are recognized tools to develop capacity and to build exchange knowledge amongst members of a community of stakeholders. At present, the Platform animates CoPs in three topical areas: "Ecosystem Services and Ecosystem Valuation", "Biodiversity and Health" and "Invasive Alien Species". Progress in each of these is specified below.

3.3.1.1. TASK - Animation of the CoP on Ecosystem Services and Ecosystem valuation (national and international); Belgian Ecosystem Services (BEES)

Web address: <http://www.beescommunity.be>

BEES working groups: In 2013, a BEES work shop survey for collecting ideas for topical workshops was organised. The overview of ideas was distributed amongst the BEES community for prioritization. As the outcome was inconclusive, the BEES coordinators proposed to group topical ideas in [working](#)

[groups](#) that would go beyond workshops with presentations, but would foster concrete collaboration and development of ideas and practices. BEES members are requested to coordinate the working groups, with the support of the BEES coordination team and the Platform. Some working groups started with first meetings to discuss matters of common interest and agree on future actions: WG Agriculture, WG on Value Integration, WG on operationalization, WG Governance, WG Business and ES, and WG on Legal Issues. A specific WG on ES and Public Health was considered to be too much in overlap with the COPBH: this perspective thus is part of the COPBH in close coordination with BEES.

Belgian Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services (MAES) Working Group: The Belgian representatives to the EU MAES working group are Gilles Bertrand (FUNDP) and **HaK**. On the Belgian level the [Belgian MAES-working Group](#) facilitates the connection between the EU process to the Belgian context and vice versa. In March 2014, the MAES BE WG produced a [reflection on the second MAES report](#). Several BE MAES WG and BEES members were present at the [High-Level Conference on Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services \(MAES\) in Europe, Brussels, Belgium; 22 May 2014](#). The role of BEES was explicitly highlighted by both Jurgen Tack (INBO, speaking on behalf of the Flemish Minister Joke Schauvliege) and Jan Verboven of VLM in their [presentations](#). As an initiative from the Dutch MAES WG, a BENELUX group was initiated to better coordinate the MAES related activities of BENELUX countries.

9th of July group: Following from the last BE MAES meeting of 2014, a group of Flemish, Walloon and Federal policy representatives and scientists started discussions with the aim of developing 1) a policy brief to raise awareness on the importance of the uptake of the concept of ecosystem services in policy and society at large, and 2) a [vision text for BEES](#). The policy brief, renamed to [BEES brief](#), was launched in the beginning of 2014.

2014 BEES event - the BEES Christmas market: On December 17th, we co-organised the [BEES Christmas market](#), an event set up to share knowledge and practices on ecosystem services in a relaxed market setting. The event attracted a wide diversity of participants and types of expertise (i.e. over 30 market stands and some 130 registered participants; show-up rate of 77%). The participants represented a diversity of institutions and types of expertise, including: DG ENV of the European Commission, EU-funded projects (OPENNESS, BIOMOT, BESAFE), projects supported by the Flemish or Walloon authorities (ECOPLAN, BELBEES, WAL-ES), relevant international and EU initiatives (IPBES, MAES), the Belgian community of researchers and practitioners on ecosystem services and biodiversity (INBO, Natuurpunt, Natagora, ULG, KUL, UCL, ULB), regional and local policy makers, forest groups, as well as two prestigious key-note speakers: Dr. Joachim Spangenberg, Vice-President of the Sustainable Europe Research Institute (SERI) and Ben Delbaere, Head of Programme Operations at the European Centre for Nature Conservation (ECNC). The Platform also displayed two booths (i.e. a general Platform booth, and IPBES National Focal Point booth).

Based on informal feedback of the participants, we rate the event to have been very successful. Briefly after the event, we have also sent out a short evaluation to the participants; the results will be included in the event's report (to be published 2015). In addition, the Gembloux video team produced a short [video](#) on the event.

BEES communication and website: The BEES coordination group agreed on a more structured communication strategy for BEES, including the website, newsletter and newswatches, policy briefs, as

well as user surveys to better assess the needs, expectations and evaluation of BEES participants and other stakeholders. End of 2014, the BEES [website](#) was therefore refreshed to make it more user-friendly; content was also updated especially with regard to document uploads. We also initiated a monthly BEES newsflash, instead of sending out individual messages/news items.

BEES coordination and facilitation: From October 2014, Florin Popa joined the BBPF for a 50% FTE for two years, his main task being support of BEES. In his first months at the BBPF 2014 unforeseen he got notice that during the first half year of 2015 he was offered a six month maternal leave replacement opportunity at the European Parliament. After consultation with the BBPF he was granted to take this opportunity, after which he will pick up his BEES and other BBPF activities again. During this six month period he will keep up part of his BEES tasks voluntarily.

Collaboration with the Dutch Community of Practice Ecosystem Services: On [April 22nd 2014](#), members of the Belgium Ecosystem Services (BEES) community and of the Netherlands Community of Practice on Ecosystem Services (CoP-ESD) met in Antwerp, Belgium. The aim of the meeting was to get to know each other better and explore if and where best practices can be exchanged. For example, as European member states, both countries share the commitment to implement Action 5 of the Biodiversity Strategy. This requires, amongst others, to assess and map the status and economic value of ecosystems and their services in our national territories. During our meeting, we focused on the MAES initiative (see above) and formulated a few [recommendations](#) to contribute to this Action.

Ecosystem Services Partnership Regional Chapter Europe incl. Russia & Turkey: Together with the Dutch Community of Practice Ecosystem Services (CoP-ESD), BEES coordinated the [Regional ESP Chapter Europe incl. Russia & Turkey](#) of the Ecosystem Services Partnership. In 2014, for a key activity was collecting national experiences for the overview of national and regional activities for the 2014 ESP conference in Costa Rica. In 2015, interested parties will further discuss and develop ideas for organising a regional European ESP conference in 2016. There seems to be good interest for such an event, with contributions from several ecosystem services projects.

Ecosystem Services Partnership Thematic Working Group Value integration: The BEES-coordinators co-coordinated the [ESP Thematic Working Group Value integration](#). The working group organised a session at the 2014 ESP conference. As a follow-up, a special issue in [Ecosystem Services](#) is being prepared.

Publications:

- BEES brief (2014), [Nature...why care?](#) (contributor: **HaK**)
- Belgian MAES working group (2014), [Reflection of the Belgian MAES working group on the 2nd MAES report](#) (contributor: **HaK**)
- Belgium Ecosystem Services (BEES) community and the Netherlands Community of Practice on Ecosystem Services (CoP-ESD) communication (2014), [Recommendations](#) (contributor: **HaK**)
- **Keune H.** et al. (submitted in 2014), Emerging ecosystem services governance issues in the Belgium Ecosystem Services Community of Practice, Special issue Governance of Ecosystem Services: Challenges for Sustainable Development, Ecosystem Services (Elsevier), Special Issue Editors: Dr. Lasse Loft, Dr. Carsten Mann & Prof. Dr. Bernd Hansjürgens

Meetings:

- BEES WG Agriculture meeting, Brussels, Belgium; 21 January 2014 (**HaK**)
- BEES WG Business preparation meeting, Brussels, Belgium; 21 January 2014 (**HaK**)
- BEES coordination meeting, Brussels, Belgium; 29 January 2014 (**HaK**)
- BEES WG Business meeting, Brussels, Belgium; 17 February 2014 (**HaK**)
- MINA plan meeting, Brussels, Belgium; 18 February 2014 (**HaK**)
- MAES BE WG, Brussels, Belgium; 25 February 2014 (**HaK**)
- MAES EU WG meeting, Brussels, Belgium; 6 March 2014 (**HaK**)
- BEES WG Business follow up meeting, Brussels, Belgium; 7 March 2014 (**HaK**)
- BEES WG Governance preparation meeting, Brussels, Belgium; 7 March 2014 (**HaK**)
- ESP WG Governance workshop: Governance of Ecosystem Services: Challenges for Sustainable Development, Frankfurt am Main, Germany; 10-11 March 2014 (**HaK**)
- BEES WG Governance meeting, Brussels, Belgium; 14 March 2014 (**HaK**)
- BEES WG Agriculture meeting, Brussels, Belgium; 27 March 2014 (**BEES coordinator Nicolas Dendoncker**)
- BEES – ES CoP NI preparation meeting, Brussels, Belgium; 14 April 2014 (**HaK**)
- BEES – ES CoP NL meeting University of Antwerp, Belgium; 20 April 2014 (**HaK**)
- BEES coordination meeting, Brussels Belgium; 24 April 2014 (**HaK**)
- BEES WG integrated valuation meeting, Brussels, Belgium; 12 May 2014 (**HaK**)
- High-Level Conference on Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services (MAES) in Europe, Brussels, Belgium; 22 May 2014 (**HaK**)
- BEES coordination meeting, Brussels, Belgium; 30 June 2014 (**HaK**)
- Presentation Transdisciplinarity in practice: the use of Communities of Practice at the 2014 ESP conference, Costa Rica; 8-12 September 2014 (**BEES coordinator Sander Jacobs**)
- The ESP Thematic Working Group Value integration of which the BEES WG integrated valuation is a prominent member, organised a special session at the 2014 ESP conference, Costa Rica; 8-12 September 2014 (**BEES coordinator Sander Jacobs and Nicolas Dendoncker**)
- EP NBS meeting, Brussels, Belgium; 30 September 2014 (**HaK**)
- MINA plan meeting, Brussels, Belgium; 9 October 2014 (**HaK**)
- BEES event preparation meetings, Brussels, Belgium: 21 August; 9 October; 13 November; 8 December; 16 December 2014 (**HaK, FIP**)
- BEES event Rochefort preparation meeting, Brussels, Belgium; 21 October 2014 (**HaK, FIP**)
- BEES Xmas market, Gembloux; 17 December 2014 (**HaK, FIP, HiE, PiH, DiB, SoV**)

- BEES WG legal issues, Brussels, Belgium; 22 December 2014 (**BEES coordinator Jeroen Panis**)
- BIOMOT Conference: Beyond economic valuation. Alternative ways to express the value of biodiversity. RBINS, Brussels, Belgium; 24 March 2014 (**HiE**)

3.3.1.2. TASK - Animation of the CoP on Biodiversity and Health (national and international; CoPBH)

Web address: <http://www.biodiversity.be/health>

Research brief: In 2014, the CoPBH published a [Research Brief](#) on the need for enhanced capacity building in Belgium on biodiversity & health science and policy. The research brief demonstrates the growing recognition of this topic at national and international levels; and highlights the importance of enhanced capacity building in Belgium.

CoPBH community building: Early 2014, several CoPBH coordination meetings have been organised in order to prepare a set of CoPBH community building meetings. During the first community building meeting ([20140829](#)), several ideas have been developed for reinforcing the network and for enhancing true community building. These included a combination of smaller and bigger events. The purpose of the smaller meetings is mainly networking and exchange of ideas and expertise by means of individual presentations (see e.g. [20141024](#)). The idea of creating topical working groups or a series of workshops will be further discussed in 2015.

As an idea for a *bigger event*, and in the framework of the Belgian National Environmental Health Action Plan (NEHAP), two CoPBH member policy representatives proposed to organise a Belgian conference on Biodiversity and Health with support from several Belgian policy institutions. A main ambition would be to get more attention in the policy communities for the importance of Biodiversity and Health for policy makers. The idea to jointly organise the conference with policy representatives therefore also has strategic importance. The initiative was welcomed, but will demand further discussion in 2015.

Website and logo: In close collaboration with the Platform communication officer and with support of the Platform IT team, the [CoPBH website](#) has been restyled and updated, including a new CoPBH logo. In the [20140829](#) CoPBH meeting, several ideas were proposed to further update the website content (e.g. a database of members/experts, and past and current projects; sharing of data and maps etc.) and make it more user-friendly.

Nutrition and biodiversity data connections: Ghent University (Department of food safety and food quality) approached the CoPBH to work out a project connecting nutrition (food intake) data with biodiversity (food source) data. This topic is rather innovative; it will not only allow tracing back food origin, but will also contribute to the linkage between biodiversity and health, as food is an important factor determining human health. Funding ([UK funding program](#)) has been applied for by Ghent University; the CoPBH and the Platform IT team will provide support.

2014 BRAIN call: Following the launch of the 2014 BRAIN call, the CoPBH has organised a brainstorm meeting for experts interested to contribute to a joint project proposal. This was followed

by several Skype calls, as to establish a solid research proposal developing risk assessment and policy decision support on international trade related emerging infectious diseases in Belgium.

Ecosystem Services Partnership: End of 2013, a survey on Ecosystem services and human health - awareness and attitudes (<http://cohab.limequery.com/index.php/356482/lang-en>) was launched. The aim of this survey was to gain a clearer view to what extent human health issues have been dealt with by people working in the field of ecosystem services research, policy and practice (what we call the "ecosystem services community"); and to assess needs and challenges. The idea was to launch a similar survey within the public health research, policy and practice community to investigate the openness for an ecosystem services perspective in their field of expertise. Yet, due to technical difficulties with the data analysis and time constraints, there was no further progress in 2014. As a consequence, the survey results still have to be synthesized and communicated. Also, the activities of the ESP thematic working group ecosystem services came to a standstill in 2014. We plan to revitalise this in 2015, aiming to involve a broader diversity of partners.

Input EU H2020 Nature based solutions: To highlight the importance of the biodiversity & health linkage in the context of the upcoming EU H2020 call on Nature based solutions, several contacts have been initiated. Partly this was by means of individual contacts, partly this was done by taking part in an EU stakeholder consultation for the purpose of developing the call, and partly by preparing a text for Jurgen Tack who as member as the EU expert advisory group to the development of the call was in charge of this topical focus.

Publications:

- Belgian Biodiversity and Health Community of Practice Research Brief (2014), [*The need for enhanced capacity building in Belgium on biodiversity and health science and policy*](#) (contributor: HaK)
- Jos Gysels, Joke Flour & **Hans Keune** (2014), *Natuur op doktersvoorschrift*, In: Natuurpunt Focus, September 2014, Jaargang 13, nummer 3

Meetings:

- CoPBH coordination meetings, Brussels, Belgium; 16 January and 3 March 2014 (**HaK**)
- Hutton Institute seminar Biodiversity & Health, Aberdeen; 11 February 2014 (**HaK**)
- ANB brainstorm meeting on nature & health, Brussels, Belgium; 4 April 2014 (**HaK**)
- BBPF SBSSTA biodiversity & health meeting, Brussels, Belgium; 8 May 2014 (**HaK**)
- International workshop on ecosystem services and public health, York, UK; 8 April 2014 (**HaK**)
- ESP ES – health survey analysis meeting, Skype; 2 June and 27 June 2014 (**HaK**)
- Ecohealth conference, Montreal, Canada; 11-15 August 2014 (**HaK**)
- CoPBH meetings, Brussels, Belgium, 29 August and 24 October 2014 (**HaK, HiE**)

- BRAIN proposal meetings, Brussels + Skype; 7 November, 24 November, 8 December, 19 December 2014 (**HaK**)
- Nutrition and Biodiversity meeting, Brussels, Belgium; 26 November 2014 (**HaK**)

3.3.1.3. TASK - Animation of the CoP on Invasive Alien Species

Web address: <http://ias.biodiversity.be/>; see also Section 3.2.1.2. on Harmonia/Pandora.

Tools developed by the Forum in recent years have been considerably successful. During 2014, numerous initiatives were implemented at regional, federal and European levels in which the expertise of the forum was instrumental. **SoV** ensured the consistent and coherent use of BFIS (Belgian Forum on Invasive Species) data and tools amongst different initiatives:

- COST Action: '*Alien Challenge, A European Information System for Alien Species*', with 30 participating countries; estimated overall budget 116 Million €; **SoV** is the Belgian representative in the management committee and takes part to different actions of the working groups.
- '*Framework for the identification of invasive alien species of EU concern – October 2014*'. Coordinator: Helen Roy - Centre for Ecology & Hydrology. Budget unknown.
This study has reviewed existing risk assessment methodologies, developed minimum standards and assessed the compliance of available risk assessments with those minimum standards. The Harmonia+ protocol developed by the platform through the Alien Alert project was evaluated among 33 protocols and received considerable attention. It was recognized as a new and promising risk assessment method, being considered as one of the key players going forward. **SoV** and **BrD** ensured providing relevant information and **SoV** helped in developing the final report.
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/invasivealien/docs/Final%20report_12092014.pdf
- To the request of the ICE/CIL, **SoV** was asked to lead a scientific working group in order to assess the Belgian implications at the Belgian level of the implementation of the new EU regulation on IAS. The final report merging the scientific and legal aspects will be sent to the Ministers by the beginning of 2015.

Publications:

- Roy H, Schonrogge K., Dean H, Peyton J, Branquart E, **Vanderhoeven S.**, Copp G, Stebbing P, Kenis M, Rabitsch W, Essl F, Schindler S, Brunel S, Kettunen M, Mazza L, Nieto A, Kemp J, Genovesi P, Scalera R, Stewart A (2014) Invasive alien species – framework for the identification of invasive alien species of EU concern. European Commission (ENV.B.2/ETU/2013/0026).
- **Vanderhoeven S**, Adriaens T, **D'hondt B**, Van Gossom H, Vandegehuchte M, Verreycken H, **Cigar J**, Branquart E A science-based approach to tackle invasive alien species in Belgium – the role of the decision support tool ISEIA and the Harmonia information system. Submitted. *Management of Biological Invasions*.

Meetings:

- **D'hondt B, Vanderhoeven S**, Roelandt S, Mayer F, Versteirt V, Ducheyne E, San Martin G, Grégoire J-C, Stiers I, Quoilin S, Branquart E (2014) *Harmonia*⁺: a risk-screening procedure for alien species. Oral presentation, Symposium *Aliens on the Horizon*, March 2014, Brussels.
- **D'hondt B, Vanderhoeven S**, Roelandt S, Mayer F, Versteirt V, Ducheyne E, San Martin G, Grégoire J-C, Stiers I, Quoilin S, Branquart E (2014) *Harmonia*⁺: a risk-screening procedure for alien species. Oral presentation, 4th International Symposium on Weeds and Invasive Plants, May 2014, Montpellier.
- **D'hondt B, Vanderhoeven S**, Roelandt S, Mayer F, Versteirt V, Ducheyne E, San Martin G, Grégoire J-C, Stiers I, Quoilin S, Branquart E (2014) *Harmonia*⁺: a risk-screening procedure for alien species. Poster, Science for the new regulation, April 2014, Ghent.
- **D'hondt B, Vanderhoeven S**, Versteirt V, Ducheyne E, Tack W, Branquart E (2014) Mapping the risk of emerging alien species in the Benelux territory. Poster, Science for the new regulation, April 2014, Ghent.
- **D'hondt B**. *Harmonia*⁺: a risk-screening procedure for alien species. Alien Challenge Working Group Meeting. By COST Action TD1209, April 2014, Rhodes. Invited expert; oral presentation.
- **Vanderhoeven S., D'hondt B**, Adriaens T., Branquart E. The ISEIA and Harmonia+ protocols : five years of prioritization practice in Belgium. Neobiota 2014 conference, Antalya Turkey; oral presentation.
- **Vanderhoeven S**. Annual meeting of the COST Action TD1209, November 2014, Antalya, Turkey.
- **D'hondt B**. Steering committee member for 'Opmaak van een prioriteiten- en beoordelingskader voor het beheren van invasieve uitheemse soorten'. Commissioned by Vlaamse Overheid – Agentschap voor Natuur en Bos. Assigned to Antea Belgium nv, 2014.
- **D'hondt B, Vanderhoeven S**. Risk Assessment workshop for Invasive Alien Species of European Union Concern: setting the minimum standards. March 2014, Brussels. Invited experts.
- **Vanderhoeven S., Branquart E**. Science-based risk assessment of NNS in Belgium. SEFINS project, 22-23 September 2014, Norwich, UK. Invited keynote speaker, oral presentation.

3.3.2. – Objective 4: To inventorise and analyse biodiversity related research and resources on topical issues in Belgium

3.3.2.1. TASK – Identifying new topical and policy relevant issues in biodiversity research; and organisation of the (bi)annual Platform conference

Citizen Science

End of 2013, the Platform (**KrA**) started to explore “Citizen Science” as a potential new issue of interest to the Belgian research community (e.g., it is now included in selection criteria for calls issued by EC), and the contribution that the Platform could make to support this new development, within the

lines of its Strategic Plan. Results of this analysis are presented in an internal report/concept note. The main conclusion so far is that the Platform could provide a few, selected services: (i) the Platform could facilitate the publication of policy relevant citizen science biodiversity data provided that these data are already validated by other parties; ideally, such data could be linked to ongoing Platform activities (like IAS); (ii) the Platform could facilitate the interfaces visualising these data; (iii) the Platform could propose information sessions to raise awareness about the relevance of citizen science to the Belgian scientific community. Launching new citizen science projects, however, is quite complex as it does not only involve identifying European funding sources, but also true engagement of citizens, data validation and uploads. Some of these aspects fall beyond the competences of the Platform, and would need a wider consortium of institutions to be involved. Further exploration of this topic and its importance in feeding biodiversity policies is scheduled for the coming year.

Meetings:

- Conference on Citizen Sciences in Europe, Brussels, Belgium; 22 September 2014 (**KrA**)
- EU-BON: Citizen Sciences Stakeholder Round table, Berlin, Germany; 27 November 2014 (**KrA**)
- Citizens' Observatories: Empowering European Society, Brussels, Belgium; 4 December 2014 (**KrA**)

Conservation Research Matters Initiative

The [Conservation Research Matters Initiative](#) is based on the strong involvement of the diverse conservation stakeholders in Belgium (researchers, policy, practitioners, private sector, funders, NGOs and civil society). Thanks to their engagement in a national conservation survey and consecutive expert conference (both organised and lead by the Platform), some 800 research recommendations have been developed for the field of conservation research. Additionally, some 300 challenges met by stakeholders while working on conservation issues were reported to us. In 2014, the methods and outcome of this process have been published in the [Conservation Research Matters report](#); this report has been widely distributed among conference participants and other relevant entities. The statistics of the survey are now publicly accessible via the [Beryl database](#), specifically developed by the Platform for this purpose. Due to the interruption of the contracts of KrA and SoV, the organisation of several smaller follow-up meetings and information sessions has been postponed to 2015 (see Workplan 2015 for details)

Publication:

- **Kristina Articus-Lepage, Estelle Balian, André Heughebaert, Hilde Eggermont, Aline Van der Werf & Sonia Vanderhoeven**, 2014. Conservation Research Matters Initiative. Belgian Biodiversity Platform [Report](#), 42pp.

Meeting:

- Conservation Research Matters: the approach and tools. Consultation meeting with Adrian Peres, DG Research of the EU Commission, February 2014 (**KrA, EsB, AnH, SoH**)

New Platform Service: The Early Career scientist network

End of 2014, the Platform (**KrA**) has established an early career scientist network/[mailing list](#) to keep predoctoral and postdoctoral fellows as well junior faculty members informed about our events and special trainings. The objective is to welcome early career scientists to our events, as these are good opportunities to enlarge their networks, and to stay informed about national and international science policy activities. In addition, we would like to offer specific early-career scientists trainings regarding science-policy, data and communication (see Workplan 2015 for more details).

In addition, we also actively participated in early career scientist initiatives organised by the German NeFo Platform, like the SPI event at CBD-COP12 (South Korea)

Meetings:

- How can science add value to global biodiversity governance? Discussing the effectiveness of SPIS. Young Scientist Side Event at CBD-COP12, South Korea; 14 October (Invited speaker: **HiE**)

Our next biannual conference: “Empowering Biodiversity Research”

During 2014, the Platform explored to possibility to organize its next biannual conference on the field of “biodiversity informatics”. To that end, several meetings have been organized involving relevant partner institutes (INBO, VLIZ, RBINS, RMMCA, Botanic Garden Meise, UCL; meeting reports available upon request) with which the Platform will team up. The topic seems to be timely, and the interest of partner institutes is very high. The meeting is now scheduled for 21 May 2015 (Palace of Academies), and will inform biodiversity researchers on the many tools, initiatives and networks that we have been developing over the past years in the compelling world of biodiversity informatics. A series of follow-up activities/workshops is also foreseen, again in collaboration with the aforementioned institutes (see Workplan 2015 for more details).

Meetings:

- “Empowering Biodiversity Research” organisation committee meetings, 10 July and 30 September 2014 (**AnH, HiE, AvdP, NaY, NiN** ; organizer : **DiB**)

Nature-based solutions

Nature-based solutions (NBS) refer to the use of nature for tackling challenges such as climate change, water and food security, public health provision, and disaster risk management, encompassing a wider definition of how to conserve and use biodiversity in a sustainable manner. By going beyond the threshold of many traditional biodiversity conservation principles, this concept intends to additionally integrate societal factors such as poverty alleviation, socio-economic development and efficient governance principles. Along with the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the nature-based solutions concept has been emerging in the EU policy landscape, calling for renewed needs of knowledge and actions. However, many scientists, stakeholders and policy-makers require a better

understanding of the concept, its framing conditions, its added-value with respect to existing measures, and the associated challenges ahead. The Platform was involved in several initiatives to help remediate this situation. Most notably, we have organised a strategic foresight BiodivERsA workshop (11-12 June; see also 3.4.2.6; **HiE & EsB**) on NBS. The workshop was attended by a wide range of participants (project PIs, funders, NGOs, policy makers) who discussed the concept, outlined framing conditions, defined a new typology of NBS, and identified research needs relevant to the implementation of NBS at Pan-European scale. We are currently working on a peer-reviewed paper presenting the outcomes of this workshop. The Platform (**EsB, FIP, PiH**) was also involved in analysing the results of the e-consultation jointly organised by EC and EPBRS; and participated in several nature-based solutions meetings and events (see below).

Meetings:

- Deltares/WSTTP/IUCN Workshop: Implementation of green infrastructures: how to make it a success, CEFIC Brussels; 2 June 2014 (**HiE**)
- BiodivERsA Nature-based solutions workshop, Brussels, Belgium; 11-12 June 2014 (**HaK, SoV, KrA, BrD**; organizers: **EsB & HiE**)
- EU Parliament Event (EP Intergroup CCBSD) - Nature-based solutions: Innovation potential for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe, Brussels, Belgium; 30 September 2014 (**HiE, HaK, FIP**)
- E-Consultation on EU Research & Innovation policy promoting nature-based solutions, 12 November 2014, organized by EC and EPBRS (**FIP, EsB, HiE, HaK**)

3.3.2.2. TASK - Performing analyses of the effectiveness of biodiversity research and related policy tools in topical areas

This task and the one related to the animation of the CoPs (3.3.1.) are highly intertwined. See above for specific contributions.

In 2014, the Platform has been actively involved in the follow-up committee of the selected BRAIN projects of the 2013 Call: FORBIO Climate (Adaptation of biodiverse forests in the face of climate change; follow-up by **KrA**); AFRIFORD (Genetic and paleoecological signatures of African rainforest dynamics: pre-adapted to change; follow-up by **HiE**); and vERSO (Ecosystem Responses to Global Change: a multiscale approach in the Southern Ocean; follow-up by **HiE**). In addition – given our involvement in BiodivERsA (see 3.4.2.6.), we are also closely following up on BiodivERsA funded projects. This year, particular attention was paid to the 2011-2012 Call projects (interim reports by **HiE**), and the 2012-2013 Call projects on Invasive Alien Species (by **SoV**)

Meetings:

- FORBIO Follow-up meeting, Brussels, Belgium; 7 November 2014 (**KrA**)
- AFRIFORD Follow-up committee meeting, Brussels, Belgium; 28 November 2014 (**HiE**)
- For BiodivERsA related meetings, see 3.4.2.6

3.3.2.3. TASK - Advice on biodiversity strategies, research priorities, and production of policy briefs

Supporting activities by the Platform for national policy processes included the co-organisation of a scoping exercise on project proposal “Honey bees, indicator of health and the environment”, together with FPS Health, Food chain safety, Environment (13 June 2014).

The Platform also helped drafting the text for the next BiodivERsA call entitled: “Understanding and managing biodiversity dynamics to improve ecosystem functioning and delivery of services in a global change context. The cases of soils and sediments; and land-, river- and sea-scapes”. This call will be co-funded by the European Commission, and have an indicative global budget of more than 30 million euro. The official launch of the call is planned in May 2015, with a closing date in early November 2015. Within BiodivERsA (see 3.4.2.6 for more details), we furthermore advised on the prioritisation of call topics in BiodivERsA’s rolling agenda (<http://www.biodiversa.org/70>); and helped drafting two policy briefs on BiodivERsA funded projects (<http://www.biodiversa.org/policybriefs>) (HiE).

Finally, as mentioned earlier (see 3.3.1), we produced a [BEES Policy brief](#), and [CoPBH Research Letter](#); and contributed to various Nature-based solution events and initiatives (HaK; see 3.3.2.1.)

Meetings:

- FOD-BBPf scoping exercise on “Honey bees, indicator of health and the environment”, Brussels, Belgium; 13 June 2014 (co-organizers: HiE, HaK, BrD, DiB)
- For BiodivERsA related meetings, see 3.4.2.6; For NBS related meetings, see 3.3.2.1.

Reports

- FOD-BBPf scoping exercise on “Honey bees, indicator of health and the environment”, Brussels (13 June, Brussels); report on Research Needs, 4 pp. (HiE, HaK, BrD, DiB)

3.4. Work Area 3: Improving biodiversity science-policy interactions

3.4.1. Objective 5: To interface between the Belgian biodiversity research community and relevant national and international scientific, policy organisations and initiatives

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform is involved in several SPI activities according to its approved strategic plan for 2013-2016. At the Belgian level, many of these activities are initiated, supported and developed by the CoPs (see section 3.3.1). The CoPs use a variety of means such as meetings; workshops; animation of working group; initiation of joint projects; electronic consultations etc., in order to facilitate networking, exchange of expertise and social learning. As shown from previous annual reports, the Platform has also been very active at European and international level through its engagement in a diversity of initiatives (see also 3.4.2.), e.g. through the elaboration of research

priorities and policy documents for European institutions, the organisation of information and training meetings using participatory approaches etc. After over 10 years of experience, time has come for the BBPF to assess, whenever possible, the impact of its SPI activities at regional, federal and international levels. This exercise should be conducted with a solutions-oriented approach, and could offer answers to the challenges of conducting SPI activities (e.g.: trade-offs between the limited mandates of elected political representatives and the longer timeframe of research; how to translate complex scientific knowledge into clear political messages etc.). It should also propose options for further SPI activities, taking into account current and upcoming challenges.

To respond to this need, a task-force has been set up in 2014 to identify the Platform's best practices viewed over past 2(-4) years in terms of science-policy processes at national, European and International level; and to propose a list of guiding principles and steps forward aiming to increase the efficacy and visibility of SPIs in Belgium. A draft concept note has been developed (**BrD, FIP**), but due to changes in personnel – the majority of actions proposed have not yet been started, except for the development of KPIs; and some concrete actions within the CoP BEES and IAS (see 3.3.1.1 and 3.3.1.3.) such as the drafting of policy briefs, and success story paper(s).

3.4.1.1. TASK - Participation in CCIEP steering group Biodiversity Convention and Nature

During 2014, the Platform (**HiE**) continued to contribute to the activities of the CCIEP steering group “Biodiversity” and several of its thematic consultation sub-groups.

Meetings:

- SG Biodiversity RBINS, Brussels; 10 February 2014; 12 May 2014 and 4 December 2014 (**HiE**)

3.4.1.2. TASK - Serve as Belgian representative to GBIF (participation in GBIF governing board and regional meetings, BE position in GBIF GB etc); animate a contact group of stakeholders

During 2014, the Platform further supported the development of Belgian positions on issues to be discussed at the GBIF Governing Board meetings by organizing relevant consultation meetings of a Belgian GBIF contact group. The Platform also represented the Belgian GBIF network at the European Nodes, and GBIF GB meetings. Here, **AnH** acts as Regional Node representative for GBIF European Nodes. His role implies preparing and attending the Nodes Steering Committee meetings, bringing the voice of the European Nodes, and reporting to them. In 2014, the Platform was in charge of organizing the 6th EU GBIF Node Meeting

Meetings:

- 6th GBIF European Nodes Meeting, Brussels, 7-10 April 2014 (**HiE**; organisers: **AnH, JuC, NiN**)
- GBIF- 21st Governing Board, New Delhi; 4-10 October 2014 (**AnH**)

3.4.1.3. TASK - Activities for SMEBD and PESI

As mentioned in our 2014 Workplan, any new activities of **SMEBD** (the Management of Electronic Biodiversity Databases; <http://www.smebd.eu>) are now taken up by Aaike De Wever, coordinator of Biofresh/Aquarea, as it fits the goals of FADA (but see the Platform's role: 3.2.1.2). There were no specific contributions to **PESI** (A Pan-European Species directories infrastructure: <http://www.eu-nomen.eu>), but we stay open for any request for validation and publication of Belgian (species.be) and regional species lists (pending status of BeDIC, RBINS).

3.4.2. Objective 6: To promote the engagement of Belgian experts in scientific and technical support activities of biodiversity-related conventions and initiatives

3.4.2.1. TASK - Act as Belgian node and secretariat for EPBRS

The Platform acts as Belgian node for EPBR, assures the secretariat of the EPBRS and takes care of diffusion of relevant information through the website <http://www.epbrs.org> hosted by the Platform's IT team. The major activities of the Platform as EPBRS secretariat conducted in 2014 include contributions to:

- the development of a proposal answering the call H2020-SC5-2015 on: "An EU support mechanism for evidence-based policy on biodiversity & ecosystems services". This is now referred to as the "Edinburgh process". The Platform contributed to the first drafts and contributed to several Skype call conferences and to the preparation meeting held in Brussels in March 2014 (**EsB**).
- the e-consultation on Nature-based solutions co-organised by EC and EPBRS on November 12th as a collaborative online dialogue making use of a tool developed by the Belgian company <http://www.synthetron.com/how-synthetron-works/>. The Platform especially conducted the first phase of the results analysis (**EsB, FiP, PiH**)

Meetings:

- Edinburgh process drafting advancement meeting, Brussels, 31 March 2015 (**EsB**)
- EPBRS Steering Committee, Brussels, meeting 2 April 2015 (**EsB, HiE**)

3.4.2.2. TASK - Act as Belgian node for DIVERSITAS/FUTURE EARTH

The Platform acts as a Belgian node for DIVERSITAS, and is in charge of diffusion of information to, and feedback from the Belgian scientific community. In 2014, the programme has merged with other global change programmes (IGBP, IHDP, WCRP) under FUTURE EARTH⁵. No specific activities have been carried out in 2014.

⁵ <http://www.diversitas-international.org/activities/future-earth-1/future-earth-and-diversitas>

3.4.2.3. TASK - Promote engagement of Belgian scientists in IUCN

In December 2014, the Platform (**KrA**) invited the IUCN Brussels office, the head of IUCN Science and knowledge of the IUCN headquarter, and the Belgian governmental members (IUCN paying members) to a first meeting to discuss the possible set-up and added-value of an IUCN national committee. The meeting also supported the exchange and collaboration between IUCN and the Platform. Further discussions are planned in 2015.

Meetings:

- Meeting between IUCN and Belgian members, Brussels, Belgium, 9 December (**AvdW**, **PiH**; organiser: **KrA**)

3.4.2.4. TASK - Host National Focal Point for IPBES

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform is taking a leading role in coordinating IPBES-related tasks for Belgium (one of the founding members of IPBES). It hosts the IPBES National Focal Point (**HiE**) and animates several Belgian scientific networks in support of the IPBES work (see CoPs, section 3.3.1). In 2014, the Platform was involved in (1) the implementation of the 2014-2018 Work Programme, by recruiting experts for the task forces and expert groups for 8 different deliverables (calls issued in January and May; yielding a total of 8 selected experts); (2) co-organisation of the second Pan-European stakeholder consultation meeting (Basel, September) together with the national biodiversity platforms of Switzerland, Germany, UK and France; the meeting brought together more than 80 participants from 33 countries to discuss on the draft IPBES Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and the scoping documents for the regional assessments (separate report available upon request); (3) interaction between IPBES and CBD-COP12 (October, South Korea – see 3.4.2.5) by piloting the IPBES dossier; (4) participation in EU expert meetings, and meetings of the Working Party on International Environmental Issues (WPIEI) in preparation of the 3rd IPBES Plenary scheduled for January 2015 (Bonn); (5) organisation of Belgian coordination meetings to prepare the Belgian positions for IPBES-3 (as HoD); and (6) revision of documents (scoping documents for the regional assessments; and stakeholder engagement strategy). HaK also acted as 'Expert Reviewer' for the 'Preliminary guide regarding diverse conceptualization of multiple values of nature and its benefits, including biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services (deliverable 3 (d))'. In addition, (7) we also set up an IPBES-NFP website (www.biodiversity.be/ipbes), and (8) organised two IPBES awareness events in Belgium: an IPBES information day (16 May; webstreamed and attended by 70+ participants) and IPBES booth at the BEES Xmas market (see 3.3.1.1.). During these sessions, we provided key information on IPBES to Belgian scientists and other relevant stakeholders to better understand its objectives, governance and procedure, and the wider policy landscape in which it will evolve. Such activities should also allow Belgian scientists to better evaluate their role in implementing the 2014-2018 IPBES Work Programme.

Meetings:

- 2nd IPBES Pan-European stakeholder consultation to support the intersessional process of IPBES, Basel, Switzerland; 22-23 September 2014 (co-organization Swiss Platform; NEFO –

Netzwerk-Forum zur Biodiversitätsforschung Deutschland; FRB France; JNCC Defra; Belgian Biodiversity Platform: **HiE and HaK**)

- FRB Climat et biodiversité: rencontre avec les experts français de l'IPBES et du GIEC, FRB, Paris; 6 November 2014 (**HiE**)
- EU Expert meeting on IPBES. Brussels, Belgium; 9th December 2014 (**HiE**)
- IPBES-3 Belgian Coordination meetings; 5 December and 19 December 2014 (organiser: **HiE**)
- WPIEI Biodiversity, Brussels, Belgium; on 3 February 2014; 10 December 2014 for IPBES matters (**HiE**)
- IPBES Information Day for Belgian Stakeholders, BelSPO, Brussels; 16 May 2014 (organisers: **HiE, HaK, EsB, AnB**)

Reports:

- 2nd Pan-European IPBES Stakeholder Consultation Meeting Report, Basel, Switzerland; 22-23 September 2014, 20 pp. (contributors: **HiE and HaK**)

3.4.2.5. TASK – Supporting the National Focal Point for SBSTTA and CBD

The Platform (**HiE**) was actively involved in SBSTTA-18 (23-28 June 2014, piloting the dossier on Synthetic Biology and IPBES), its preparatory meeting in Vilm (5-9 May 2014; leading the topic on Biodiversity and Health) and the subsequent CBD-COP12 (6-17 October 2014; as pilot for the IPBES dossier and co-pilot for Synthetic Biology). Besides contributing to the negotiations at Belgian and EU level (i.e. Belgian coordination meetings; and EU coordination meetings of the Working Party on International Environmental Issues – Biodiversity (WPIEI Biodiversity), we also involved the Belgian scientists by setting up an e-consultation on the emerging topic “Synthetic Biology”, in collaboration with Didier Breyer (Biosafety Expert at the Belgian Scientific Institute of Public Health) and colleagues. The outcome was effectively used to draft the Belgian positions for SBSTTA-18 on this topic (**DiB & HiE**).

In addition, together with the CBD-National Focal Point Belgium (Hendrik Segers) and BNF-Germany (Horst Korn), **HiE** organised the first informal meeting of the European SBSTTA-Focal Points (11 December 2014, Brussels). The main purpose of the meeting was to develop proposals to improve the effectiveness of the SBSTTA with regard to its role and procedures, especially in the light of new developments such as IPBES and the new Subsidiary Body of Implementation of the CBD. Some 30 participants from 19 different countries and the EU in their individual capacity as biodiversity science and/or policy experts participated. The meeting was open to all EU SBSTTA-NFP, other SBSTTA-NFPs and interested experts in and outside of the EU. As it was very well received, follow-up initiatives are being considered for 2015.

Meetings (not listing COP12 Belgian Coordination meetings):

- E-Consultation set up meeting with team Didier Breyer, Brussels; 7 March 2014 (organizers; **DiB & HiE**)
- European Expert Meeting in Preparation of the Seventeenth Meeting of SBSTTA (SBSTTA-18), Island of Vilm, Germany; 5-9 May 2014 (**HiE**; lead for Biodiversity & Health)
- 18th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Affairs of the Convention of Biological Diversity, Montreal, Canada; 23-28 June 2014 (**HiE**; pilot of Synthetic Biology & IPBES)
- CBD-COP12, Twelfth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Pyeonchang, South Korea; 6-17 October 2014 (**HiE**; pilot for the IPBES dossier and co-pilot for Synthetic Biology)
- The first informal meeting of the European SBSTTA-Focal Points, Brussels, Belgium; 11 December 2014 (co-organizer: **HiE**)
- WPIEI Biodiversity, Brussels, Belgium; on 11 April 2014; 3 June 2014; 10 December 2014 for SBSTTA-CBD matters (**HiE**)

Reports:

- **Segers, H.** and pilots (a.o. **HiE**), 2013. Belgian report on the 18th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Montréal, Canada, 23-28 June 2014.
- Horst Korn, Hendrik Segers and **Hilde Eggermont**, 2014. Report on the first informal meeting of the European SBSTTA-Focal Points, Brussels, Belgium, 11 December 2014; 10 pp.

3.4.2.6. TASK - Support the BelSPO engagement in the BiodivERsA ERA-net

BiodivERsA is part of the European Research Area Network (ERA-NET) scheme of the European Commission's (EC) FP7. Now in its second four-year phase (2010-2014), BiodivERsA2 brings together a network of 21 funding organisations from 15 European countries to promote and coordinate effective pan-European research on the conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity. During this project phase, BelSPO is involved as partner in WP1 "Strengthening and expanding the network: integrating new partners and improving processes" and WP2 "The European biodiversity research landscape and science-policy integration", and it leads WP5 "Communication and outreach". The Platform hosts the BiodivERsA website (<http://www.biodiversa.org>) and database webportal (<http://www.biodiversa.org/database>) and carries out various tasks on behalf of BelSPO. Below, we highlight a few major activities conducted/completed in 2014. Please see BelSPO's 3rd Periodic BiodivERsA Report (submitted November 2014, **HiE**) for further details.

Coordination/implementation of the communication strategy (HiE, AnH, JuC, AnB/PiH)

More specifically, we coordinated/contributed to the production of several major publications (listed below); and ensured dissemination activities at the following (non-BiodivERsA) conferences:

We created web products to increase BiodivERsA's visibility, and the impact of its work:

- Update of the BiodivERsA online collaborative platform (<http://wiki.biodiversa.org>)
- BiodivERsA database (<http://data.biodiversa.org>), created and updated by BeISPO, currently holds information on 122 organisations that fund biodiversity research, 605 annual calls within 216 different funding programmes (including the biodiversity-relevant European FP6 and FP7 programmes, and BiodivERsA ERA-net calls), 6546 research projects, 2860 research organisations, and 5879 persons. Those data span the 2000-2014 time window and currently cover 17 countries. In September 2013, we released the first booklet⁶ presenting an analysis of the competitive funding landscape for biodiversity research and ecosystem services in Europe (collaboration between BeISPO and FRB). In 2014: (1) The Joint Ownership Agreement was approved by a majority of consortium members, and the database was consequently launched (March 2014); (2) we released a second booklet⁷ (collaboration between BeISPO and FRB). In this second database brochure, we studied 4159 abstracts of projects funded by 15 national funding agencies that are main competitive funding sources for research on biodiversity and ecosystem services at the national scale in Europe, or by the European Commission. Based on a semantic analysis of the texts of these project abstracts, the main goals were to: (i) Test the existence of any coherent temporal trends (over the 2004-2011 period) in the type of research funded at the European level in this domain, i.e. when aggregating information from many national funding agencies across Europe; (ii) Analyse the changes in the type of biodiversity research funded, identifying the main research topics that are decreasingly and increasingly supported over the 2004-2011 period; (iii) Compare the type of biodiversity research funded between different national agencies that program and fund research in European countries.

We ensured website updates to meet the needs identified in the communication strategy, and to provide attractive content. We also assisted in the development of two new [policy briefs](#) (on the LINKTREE and PEATBOG projects), and the [Stakeholder Engagement Handbook](#).

Analyse research agendas and identify knowledge gaps and research priorities (EsB, HiE)

A first step consisted of comparing and analysing the international and European policy and strategies to identify current main research orientations and needs; this step was already initiated in 2013. In 2014, this report was further updated with results of two leading events organised in 2013 to further explore research priorities in Europe: the European Platform for Biodiversity Research Strategy

⁶ Eggermont H., Le Roux X., Heughebaert A., Balian E. and BiodivERsA partners 2013. The BiodivERsA database: Analysis of the competitive funding landscape for research on biodiversity and ecosystem services in Europe. BiodivERsA report 33pp.

⁷ Gambette P., Eggermont H. & Le Roux X (2014) Temporal and geographical trends on the type of biodiversity research funded on a competitive basis in European countries. BiodivERsA report 33pp

(EPBRS) workshop “Investing in innovative research for nature and our livelihoods: strengthening the research strategy to reinforce the ERA on Biodiversity” organised in Brussels on April 11-12 2013, and the Alter-Net conference “Science underpinning The EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy” organised in Ghent on April 15-18 2013. In addition, we included the results from the BiodivERsA strategic foresight workshop organised on June 11-12 2014 in Brussels: “Nature-Based Solutions in a BiodivERsA context”.

On 11-12 June 2014, we organised a strategic foresight (horizon scanning) workshop that aimed to further investigate key future challenges and policy needs for biodiversity research at European level. The workshop focused on the concept of Nature-based solutions and provided an opportunity for BiodivERsA project scientists, and programmers and funders of research members of BiodivERsA (including several Ministries) to (i) Learn more about nature-based solutions through discussions with policy makers and a range of stakeholders (NGOs, businesses, practitioners, etc.); (ii) Assess to what extent nature-based solutions have already been addressed in BiodivERsA-funded research projects; (iii) Discuss how these nature-based solutions could be further investigated in the field of interest of participants. Such an exercise could produce lists of potential research priorities that could be considered by BiodivERsA’s strategic agenda. A separate report on the workshop outcomes (including discussions on the framing the emerging concept of nature-based solutions, and identification of research priorities) was submitted early September 2014 and a peer-reviewed paper is now under preparation.

Governance & Calls (HiE, AvdW)

In 2014, we have played an active role in the governance of BiodivERsA (as member of the Executive Board), contributed significantly to the proposal of BiodivERsA3 (granted by EC in November 2014) and related meetings (e.g. with Netbiome consortium; Belmont Forum), and helped preparing for a sustainable future (cf. negotiations with EC regarding a JPI-like tool).

Publications (downloadable from www.biodiversa.org)

- “The 2012-2013 call for proposals: Invasive species and biological invasions”, 22 pp. (Contributors: **HiE, SoV**)
- BiodivERsA Newsletters of February 2014; July 2014 (Contributor: **HiE**)
- Updated BiodivERsA Leaflet (Contributors: **PiH, HiE**)
- Stakeholder Engagement Handbook digest (Contributors: **AnB, PiH, HiE**)
- Gambette P., **Eggermont H.** & Le Roux X (2014) Temporal and geographical trends on the type of biodiversity research funded on a competitive basis in European countries. BiodivERsA report 33pp.
- **E. Balian, H. Eggermont, X. Le Roux** (2014): International and European Biodiversity policy and research strategies: an overview of priority research thematic for biodiversity research; Updated BiodivERsA report, 29 pp
- **E. Balian, H. Eggermont, X. Le Roux** (2014): Outputs of the Strategic Foresight workshop “Nature-Based Solutions in a BiodiversA context”, Brussels, 11-12 June 2014. BiodivERsA report, 45 pp.

- BiodivERsA Policy Brief #3: Nitrogen pollution and climate change reduce carbon storage and biodiversity of peatlands (PEATBOG project) – 4pp. (contributor: **HiE**)
- BiodivERsA Policy Brief #4: Adaptation of trees and forests to climate change (LINKTREE project) – 4 pp. (contributor: **HiE**)

Meetings (only in-person meetings are listed, not phone or skype meetings)

- Executive Board & General Assembly, Vienna, Austria; 24-26 February 2004 (**EsB, HiE, AvdW**)
- Communication Strategy Workshop, BelSPO & FRB, Brussels, Belgium; 21 May (**AnB, HiE, AnH**)
- Executive Board, FRB, Paris, France; 13 May 2014 (**HiE**)
- DELTARES-IUCN workshop: Implementation of green infrastructures: how to make it a success, Brussels, Belgium, 2 June 2014 (**HiE**)
- BiodivERsA Executive Board Meeting, General Assembly and 2012-2013 Project Kick-off meeting, Paris, France; 1-3 Oct (**HiE, SoV, AvdW**)
- For Nature-Based solutions meetings – see 3.3.2.1.

3.4.2.7. TASK - Contribution to the Network of Knowledge (NoK; KNEU project)

The overall objective of the Biodiversity Knowledge (KNEU) project (EU FP7 project “KNEU”, 2011-2014, EC contribution to RBINS: € 20,116) is to develop a recommended design for a scientific biodiversity Network of Knowledge (NoK) to inform policy-makers and other societal actors. In this project, the Platform (RBINS) is leading WP1, Task 1.1: on mapping the knowledge landscape to identify the most influential knowledge hubs and to understand the current flows of knowledge within Europe and in WP1-Task 1-4 on reviewing technological approaches to implement self-sustaining tools providing access to knowledge hubs on biodiversity.

The Platform was involved in the organisation and facilitation of a European Parliament event on April 1st 2014 to promote BiodiversityKnowledge proposed model for a Network of Knowledge on biodiversity in Europe. Some draft publication was developed on the Netmapping exercise in collaboration with UFZ KNEU team but was not yet finalised.

Meetings organised/attended:

- KNEU Governance Meeting, UFZ-Helmholtz, Brussels, Belgium; 31 January 2014 (**EsB, HiE**)
- EU Parliament Event - Towards a consolidated network of knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem services in Europe, Brussels, Belgium; 1 April 2014 (**EsB, HiE**)

3.5. Communication and diffusion of information (AnB, PiH)

The day-to-day 2014 communication activities included a regular update of the Platform website (contents wise), regular news and events update (on a weekly basis), and creation of 5 [newsflashes](#) in 2014 (bringing the total to 59). The web statistics of 2014 show that the revamp and weekly update of the website – requested by the evaluators - led to a sensitive increase of the number of users on

our website: throughout 2014, we had a total of 42630 unique visitors (see 3.6). This is a ca. 163 % increase of unique visitors compared to 2012, and a 84 % increase compared to 2013. This clearly shows an increasing interest in our websites (and activities). AnH and PiH jointly reflected on a new tree structure for the Platform website to ensure more direct linkage to specific content and lighter layout. This will result in content and layout updates, as well as significant changes in the hierarchy of information, ergonomics and user-friendliness. The process is ongoing but suffers from delays as the website management requires frequent updates.

The above ensured the Platform to be considered as a relevant and reliable source of information. By doing so, the objectives 1, 2 and 3 of the Communication Plan⁸ were partly met.

New communication tools for Platform branding: To better explain the services we can provide to our audiences and increase our visibility, the Platform has created [three promotional movies](#). The movies explain the main activities of the Platform and the challenges faced by its members. The first movie focuses on the need for decision makers for easier access to biodiversity data and the role of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform as a science-policy interface. The second movie explains the importance of creating a dialogue between policymakers and scientists by animating CoPs. The third movie highlights the international science-policy activities, the transdisciplinary approaches and the various implications for scientists and decision makers.

A poster presenting Platform activities was elaborated and printed. The format used for print allows for the re-use of the poster for several years. It was displayed at all our meetings, and at the National Biodiversity Strategy Networking event (19 May, Brussels) and BEES Xmas market (17 December, Gembloux)

Support to the Platform's biodiversity experts: A series of 2014 communication activities focused specifically on the objectives 1, 3 and 4 of the Communication Plan by providing support to Platform biodiversity experts. This includes providing expertise on text edition, layout work (e.g. layout of the Conservation Research Matters report; the BiodivERsA Stakeholder Engagement Handbook and corresponding digest; the revised BiodivERsA leaflet), web design (e.g. the IPBES NFP website was launched in 2014; and the Biodiversity & Health website was revamped) and logo design. The communication officer also provided support to the various meetings and events organized by the Platform.

The communication officer also attended a 2-day training on how to develop communication strategies on behalf of BiodivERsA. The knowledge gathered by the communication officer was transferred to the Platform team and to the BiodivERsA communication team during a 1-day training

⁸ Objectives of the Communication Plan:

Objective 1: Valorise Belgian biodiversity research by promoting and enabling the publication of, and access to, biodiversity data on the world wide web, through dedicated data portals

Objective 2: Inventorise biodiversity related research and resources in Belgium

Objective 3: Promote communication and discussion amongst scientists, and between scientists, policy makers and stakeholders on topical issues in biodiversity research

Objective 4: Serve as an interface between the Belgian biodiversity research community and relevant national and international scientific and science-policy organisations and initiatives.

given by the Platform communication officer; as well as in a *Memo on how to develop a communication strategy for an organisation/ for a project*. This memo could also be used as a framework for the elaboration of an updated Platform communication strategy.

In addition, the *Memo on how to organize Platform events* was elaborated. This memo helps on sharing knowledge one develops in organising events and is intended to be further edited in the coming years to keep on sharing one's knowledge with others in the Platform.

In 2014, the Platform staff was approached by the press several times but expressed their difficulties in not knowing how to deal with journalists. The communication officer therefore worked on a *Memo on how to communicate with the press*. This memo presents the ins and outs of media ways of working as well as practical tips on how to respond to difficult questions asked by journalists. A contacts list of journalists was also created in order to spread Platform news/ press releases more efficiently when needed.

The communication officer also wrapped up guidelines for policy brief writing. The document presents a series of suggestions (set up in collaboration with the communication officer of IUCN, who helped drafting the BiodiveRsA policy briefs), that have to be adapted depending on the goals and target audience of each policy brief. The document could be further edited by the Platform after having conducted the coordination of several policy briefs and other science-policy activities.

The communication officer also launched an internal survey to assess the benefits of the workspace (so called 'Happy Friday') and analysed the results as to improve the Platform's internal communication. Finally, the communication officer also actively took part in BIOPOLS meetings (RBINS) by providing suggestions regarding communication.

Administrative tasks: Substantial administrative support was provided by the communication officer to the Platform with CM reports, reports of ad-hoc meetings, participation in ad-hoc strategic discussion, draft of concept notes and other administrative documents. All documents have been archived on our internal Wiki (Elgg)

Publications (meeting reports and project specific deliverables not listed)

- Belgian Biodiversity Platform Newsflashes 55 to 59, year 2014 (**AnB**, **PiH** and Platform colleagues)
- Memo on how to develop a communication strategy for an organisation/ for a project (**AnB**)
- Memo on how to communicate with the press (**AnB**)
- Policy Brief guidelines (**AnB**)

Video:

- Three Platform promotional movies : <http://www.biodiversity.be/>

Trainings:

- Weekly evening classes of graphic design at St Luc from September 2013 to June 2014 (**AnB**).
- Weekly classes of Dutch until February 2014 at OFO/IFA (**AnB**)
- One-day training on mind-mapping at OFO/IFA (**AnB**)
- Two-day training on how to develop communication strategies (on behalf of BiodivERsA) at Eurocommunications (**AnB**)

3.6. Transversal activities offered by the Platform's IT team

Besides providing support to core activities (e.g. tools for CoPs; Platform mailing lists; BiodivERsA communication), spin-off projects (e.g. AntaBIS support) and external projects (e.g. technical advice for Biofresh), the IT team also greatly facilitates the Platform's communication and networking activities. Most importantly, the IT team is hosting and managing several websites, as listed below. Web use statistics are listed in Table 1. In addition, we also decided to open source all IT tools that the Platform has developed so far.

- Platform website: <http://www.biodiversity.be>; and Internal Wiki (Archive): <http://home.bebif.be/elgg>
- Forum websites:
 - BEES community website (<http://www.beescommunity.be>)
 - Website on Invasive Alien Species in Belgium (<http://ias.biodiversity.be>) including Harmonia; and Alien Alert (Harmonia+, Pandora, Pandora+)
 - Community of Practice Biodiversity – Public Health (<http://www.biodiversity.be/health>)
 - IPBES National Focal Point website (<http://www.biodiversity.be/IPBES>)
 - EPBRS website (<http://www.epbrs.org/>)
- Conferences related:
 - 2010 Positive Vision for Biodiversity
 - 2011 [Biodiversity and Public Health](http://www.biodiversity.be/health/) (<http://www.biodiversity.be/health/>)
 - 2013 Conservation Research Matters (www.biodiversity.be/conservation)
 - 2013 Beryl database in connection to the Conservation Research Matters initiative (<http://projects.biodiversity.be/beryl/>)
- Information portals:
 - Belgian Data portal (<http://data.biodiversity.be/>)
 - BeCRIS website (<http://biobel.biodiversity.be>)
- Project websites and dedicated portals:
 - BiodivERsA database (<http://www.biodiversa.org/database>)
 - AntaBIS (<http://www.biodiversity.aq/>)
 - FADA (<http://fada.biodiversity.be/>)
 - Bio-GR (<http://www.bio-gr.eu/>)
 - Belgian IFBL portal (<http://projects.biodiversity.be/ifbl>)
 - Saproxyls beetles from Belgium (<http://projects.biodiversity.be/beetles>)
 - Ants of Paraguay (<http://projects.biodiversity.be/ants>)
 - African Rodentia (<http://projects.biodiversity.be/africanrodentia>)

- African Moths (<http://www.afromoths.net/>) and Gracillariidae (Lepidoptera) (<http://www.gracillariidae.net>)
- ENBI (4 projects, 6 websites) (<http://projects.bebif.be/enbi/>)
- Pictorial beetles collection of RBINS (<http://projects.biodiversity.be/openuprbins>)
- CongoRiver Expedition 2010 (<http://home.bebif.be/cr/>)
- More technical:
 - GIT repositories
 - Data Provider Software: IPT, Tapir, BioCASE
 - MailMan mailing lists: GBIF Europe, BiodivERsA, BelgianBIF, EarlyCareerScientists, InvasiveSpecies, Newsflash, Ipbes
 - Trac ticketing
 - Redmine (project management)
 - Statistics

Table 1: Web usage statistics (from 1 January to 16 December 2014)

2014 Statistics	Unique visitors	Visits	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
Main*	41,681	94,043	357,891	658,627	64.20
BEES	26,795	44,981	152,689	191,716	3.49
BiodivERsA	30,545	61,100	251,397	865,000	95.04
BioBEL	2,523	5,322	32,388	53,452	0.69
Projects	16,863	25,908	189,196	1,023,314	74.72
IAS	15,888	23,088	129,529	780,662	44.47
Afromoths	9,099	22,663	204,889	378,229	8.09
Gracillariidae	4,449	10,182	57,615	107,581	2.09
Biofresh	8,028	11,355	85,716	571,953	69.69
FADA	4,389	6,369	35,796	142,756	16.26
AntaBIF	2,896	6,284	15,440	41,519	1.20
Bio-GR	1,594	2,411	77,168	165,562	1.59
EPBRs	4,629	11,408	24,504	75,930	66.31
BelgianDataPortal	1,066	1,991	8,768	24,801	0.46
Total	170,445	327,105	1,622,986	5,081,102	448.30

3.7. Scientific services rendered by Platform personnel

- Member of the Editorial Board for the journals “Dataset papers in Ecology” (**SoV**)
- Branch editor for “Belgian Journal of Zoology” (**HiE**)
- Co-Advisor PhD Gijs de Cort (Patterns and causes of East African hydroclimate variability over the past 2000 years: a multi-proxy analysis of the climate archive preserved in lake sediments), Research Group Limnology UGent (2012-2016); Co-Advisor Chironomid-based applications Els Ryken/Dirk Verschuren/Yoeri Torsy, Research Group Limnology (**HiE**)
- Co-promoter at UCL for the Master Thesis “Services écosystémiques des forêts : analyse exploratoire des bénéfices et des risques pour la santé. Etude réalisée dans trois sites forestiers en Belgique” (Promoteurs : S. Vanwambeke et H. Keune – Lecteur : E. Lambin) (**HaK**)
- Review of “BIODIVERSITY, ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND HUMAN WELLBEING: ANALYSIS OF LINKAGES AND PATHWAYS” for Environment, Development and Sustainability (**HaK**)
- Review of “Process Evaluation of Implementing Knowledge Management Tools in Public Health” for Knowledge Management Research & Practice (**HaK**)

Scientific Publications:

- Abebe G., Mengistou S., Eggermont H., Verschuren D, 2014. Chironomid distribution along a pollution gradient in Ethiopian rivers, and their potential for biological water quality monitoring. African Journal of Aquatic Science DOI: 10.2989/16085914.2013.870525
- Pfeifer M., V. Lefebvre, T.A. Garden, H. Eggermont et al., 2014. BIOFRAG - a new database for analysing BIODiversity responses to forest FRAGmentation. Ecology and Evolution DOI: 10.1002/ecc3.1036.
- Habel, J. C., H. Eggermont, S. Günter, R. Mulwa, M. Rieckmann, L. P. Koh, S. Niassy, J. W. H. Ferguson, G. Gebremichael, M. Githiru, W. W. Weisser and L. Lens. 2014. Towards more equal footing in north–south biodiversity research: European and sub-Saharan viewpoints. Biodiversity and Conservation 23:3143-3148.
- **Brosens D**, Breine J, Van Thuyne G, Belpaire C, Desmet P, Verreycken H (submitted) VIS – A database on the distribution of fishes in inland and estuarine waters in Flanders, Belgium. ZooKeys @@: @–@. doi: 10.3897/zookeys.@@.8556.