

THE WORK OF THE BELGIAN COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE ON BIODIVERSITY & HEALTH (COPBH)

RELATED TO THE COVID-19
PANDEMIC CONTEXT

www.biodiversity.be/5408



Biodiversity.be

2

CONTEXT



On the forefront of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform's work with Biodiversity and health is the **Community of Practice on Biodiversity & Health** (COPBH), which co-ordinated and facilitated the launch of the Belgian One Health Network.

We launched the Community of Practice on Biodiversity and Health in 2011 and we have, since then, developed a growing network of stakeholders at both Belgian and global levels. The COPBH focuses both on nature related human health risks and benefits. This has been done through:

1. THE CO-ORGANISATION OF NETWORKING EVENTS;
2. SCIENCE – POLICY – PRACTICE INTERFACE ACTIVITY
3. OUR EXPERT REGISTRY AND PROJECTS MAP

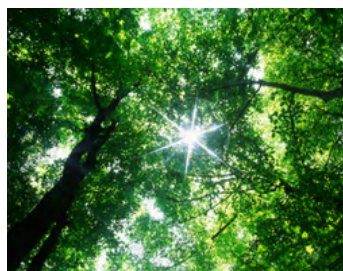
We have also worked as experts on the topic in several initiatives, such as the Invasive Alien Species and Wildlife Trade and participated in European and international projects related to biodiversity and health, such as IPBES, BiodivERsA and EKLIPSE . For further information on this, please consult the **dedicated page on COVID-19** from the Belgian Biodiversity Platform.

3

1. CO-ORGANISATION OF NETWORKING EVENTS

A. Conference on 'Biodiversity and Public Health' (2011)

A broadly supported generic outcome of our 2011 conference on 'Biodiversity and Public Health' highlighted the need for a Belgian Community of Practice on Biodiversity and Public Health.



Report of the 2011 Belgian Biodiversity – Public Health Conference
Belgian Biodiversity Platform



Therefore in February 2012, a policy brief was issued (Bauler et al. 2012) in which a variety of experts (science, policy, society) call for the support for the establishment of a Belgian Community of Practice on Biodiversity and Public Health.

Please find the event outcomes and the submentioned policy brief in the [conference report](#).

The conference event was coordinated by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform with support of a wide range of partners and funded by BELSPO.

4

B. European Onehealth / Ecohealth Workshop (2016)

The OneHealth/EcoHealth Workshop took place in Brussels, at BELSPO, on 6-7 October 2016. The workshop was co-coordinated with BELSPO, FPS Public Health & NEOH, while co-organized with several others.

A main conclusion of the event was that fostering better integrated transdisciplinary collaboration was vital. Following up on a 2015 State of Knowledge review of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the World Health Organization (WHO), that addressed the diversity and complexity of the interlinkage between biodiversity and human health, and building on a survey about One Health integration challenges organised as input for the workshop, five key integration challenges were identified:

1. Data integration
2. Interdisciplinary & cross-sectorial collaboration
3. Developing soft skills
4. Recognition of One Health actions and research
5. How can interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary research get published?



5

According to these results, a European OneHealth/EcoHealth Community of Practice could be created to support and nourish several networking initiatives and ideas that were discussed among participants. Such a group could also be of support to existing initiatives, such as the Network for Evaluation of One Health (NEOH). Concrete examples of such initiatives emerging from the workshop include:

- A network on transdisciplinary One Health education
- A network on the role of social science in One Health/EcoHealth
- A network that would help to translate research findings on the Environment-Microbiome-Health axis into policy making, with a view to make healthy ecosystems a cost-effective disease prevention healthcare strategy.

Different sessions took place, whose themes seem to be well in line with the current pandemic. Clicking on the sessions will lead you to the dedicated session webpages.

- [Nature Health Benefits](#)
- [Environmental and internal Microbiome](#)
- [Cross-pollinating agro-eco-human health perspectives](#)
- [Zoonotic Diseases](#)
- [Vectorial Diseases](#)
- [Evaluation and challenges/limitations of One Health](#)
- [Social science, transdisciplinarity and traditional knowledge systems](#)
- [Education & capacity building](#)

6



C. Natuur Op Verwijzing (2018)

On 4 October 2018, the University of Antwerp (UAntwerpen Chair Care & the Natural Living Environment) and the Province of Antwerp coordinated the network event “Natuur Op Verwijzing” (Translation : Nature on prescription), supported by the Belgian Community of Practice on Biodiversity and Health. The event was a follow-up to the European OneHealth/EcoHealth workshop organised in 2016.

The main objective of the event was to promote cooperation between the health and nature sectors as well as with other sectors, at regional scale in Flanders. The programme included lectures by scientists and policy makers, thematic workshops (i.e. Science of Nature & Health, Health Risks in Nature...) and a market where all kinds of initiatives (from research, policy and practice) could be presented.

More information on the [event website](#).

7

D. Launching of the Belgian One Health Network (2019)

The aim of the One Health Belgium network is to support collaboration, capacity building and communication among Belgian actors.

The launching event of this network took place on 5 November 2019 at Sciensano, in Brussels. It was co-coordinated with Sciensano & FPS Public Health and co-organized with several others.

During this event, the participants developed a list of actions to be implemented in Belgium. The central message of these recommendations was that there is a need to promote, facilitate and strengthen collaboration on biodiversity-health related issues in the fields of science, policy, and practice, with relevant national and regional stakeholders. There is also a need to mainstream biodiversity-health linkages effectively through holistic approaches across all sectors, as well as there is a need to compile information on relevant research, experiences and best practices; and to raise the awareness of society at large on biodiversity-health linkages.

Regarding future steps, special focus is being placed on three main activities for 2020, in line with the CBD Decision on Health and Biodiversity, also building on the outcomes of the breakout groups:

- Development/ improvement of a Belgian One Health expert database and OneHealth projects mapping
- Organisation of the next workshop in 2020
- Organisation of a survey on existing One Health knowledge and a One Health knowledge gap analysis

More information on the [event report](#) or on the [event website](#).



8

E. Launching of the Flemish Nature and Health Network (*Netwerk Natuur & Gezondheid*) - 2019



The Nature and Health Network (“Netwerk Natuur & Gezondheid”) consists of organisations and governments from different sectors in Flanders that want to bridge the gap between nature and health. The Network wants to bundle all initiatives (research, information days, good practices, ...), further develop them and make them more widely known.

The launch was co-organized with Natuurpunt, ANB, UAntwerpen Chair Care & the Natural Living Environment & the Province of Antwerp and several other core partners (see [website](#))

In addition, the network urges a better realisation of the policy principles 'health in all policies' and 'nature close by' in as many policy areas as possible (nature, health, spatial planning, architecture, sport, education, agriculture, ...), a better integration of the link between nature and health in training/education (medicine, spatial planning, architecture, ...) and in practice (landscaping, care provision, spatial planning, ...), among other things by combining budgets and coordinating objectives.

9

2. SCIENCE – POLICY – PRACTICE INTERFACE ACTIVITY



1. Inventory of Research Needs and Ideas, 2012

The inventory round of scientific research needs and ideas regarding biodiversity – public health issues resulted in a wide range of policy needs and research ideas.



2. Science-Policy Challenges For Biodiversity, Public Health And Urbanization: Examples From Belgium, 2012

This document illustrates the need to interface between different forms of knowledge and different actors from science and policy. Examples from Belgium showcase concrete cases of human-nature interaction.



3. The Need For Enhanced Capacity Building In Belgium On Biodiversity & Health Science And Policy, 2014

The research brief presents the growing international and national recognition of the importance of biodiversity & health; and aims to inform about the importance of enhanced capacity building in Belgium on Biodiversity & Health science and policy.



4. The need for European OneHealth/ EcoHealth networks, 2017

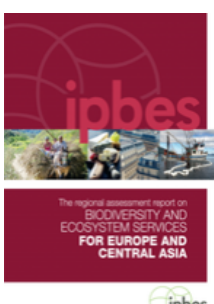
Elaborating from the European One Health/Ecohealth workshop that took place in 2016 and aimed to bring together different communities and explore collaborative potential, the creation of European networks focusing on the development of important OneHealth/EcoHealth perspectives was a direct output from the event discussions.

10



5. A One Health evaluation framework, In: Integrated approaches to health : a handbook for the evaluation of One Health, 2018

This handbook is the product of an interdisciplinary effort to provide science-based guidance for the evaluation of One Health and other integrated approaches to health.



6. Appendix 2.8: Contributions to physical, mental and social dimensions of health section. Appendix to IPBES: The IPBES regional assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services for Europe and Central Asia, 2018

The assessment examines the opportunities for sectoral policies and policy instruments; managing production, consumption and economic development; and ecological infrastructures and ecological technologies. It explores opportunities to promote food security, economic development and equality while avoiding land and aquatic degradation and conserving cultural landscapes.



7. The good, the bad and the ugly: Framing debates on Nature in a One Health community, 2019

This overview provides an inter- and trans-disciplinary analysis of the role of the framing of «nature» in One Health discourses as a barrier or a facilitator to collaboration between medical and veterinary spheres or environmental and social science, as revealed by the scientific literature. One finding is that the lack of reflection by scientists about the framing under which they operate appears as a major factor of misunderstanding between disciplines, and a barrier for inter- and trans-disciplinary solutions to improve management of health risks and benefits.



8. Biodiversity and Health in the face of climate change, 2019

There is a need to bring together researchers in the fields of health sciences, ecology, social sciences, sustainability sciences and other interdisciplinary sciences, as well as for cooperation between governments, companies and citizens. In this chapter, we introduce European networking initiatives aimed at building such bridges.

11



9. Integrated Approaches to Health: Concepts and Experiences in Framing, Integration and Evaluation of One Health and EcoHealth, 2019

During the European OneHealth/EcoHealth workshop held in October 2016 in Brussels, an important step was taken to combine the rich experience of the EcoHealth community with the ongoing work of One Health community. Parallels and complementarities became evident and many of the challenges and opportunities were discussed. In this Research Topic we seek to reflect the current debate on framing One Health and/or EcoHealth in terms of scope(s) and delimitations, integration challenges from a scientific, policy, sector and/or implementer perspective, and evaluation of such integrated initiatives.



10. Integrative concepts and practices of health in transdisciplinary social ecology, Socio-Ecological Practice Research, (2019)

We conclude that there is an urgent need for better, coherent and more deeply integrative health concepts, approaches and practices to foster the well-being of humans, other animals and ecosystems. Consideration of these concepts and practices has methodological and political importance, as it will transform thinking and action on both society and nature and specifically can enrich science and practice, expanding their scope and linking them better. We propose the term “transdisciplinary health” to denote the new approaches needed.



11. Integrative policy development for healthier people and ecosystems: a European case analysis, (2020)

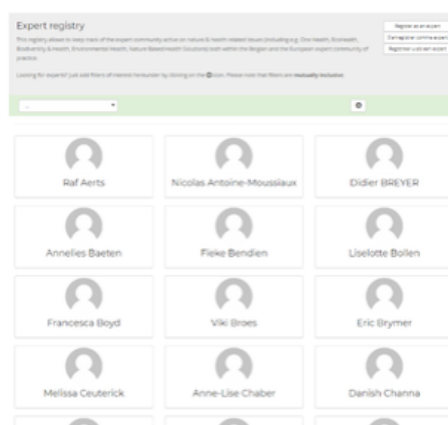
The driving forces behind some recent moves towards more integrative policy development and implementation show important differences between countries, reflecting the non-linear and complex nature of the policy-making process. We use these case studies to illustrate some of the key barriers to greater integrative policy development identified in the policy analysis literature. The authors also identify opportunities for greater policy integration and examples of good practice from different countries.

1. 2012 - Inventory of Research Needs and Ideas
2. Keune H. et al. (2013), Science–Policy Challenges For Biodiversity, Public Health And Urbanization: Examples From Belgium, In: Environmental Research Letters, Volume 8, Number 2 special issue “Biodiversity, Human Health and Well-Being”, doi:10.1088/1748-9326/8/2/025015
3. 2014 - The Need For Enhanced Capacity Building In Belgium On Biodiversity & Health Science And Policy
4. Keune H. et al. (2017), The need for European OneHealth/ EcoHealth networks. Arch Public Health 75:64
5. Rüegg Simon R., Häslér Barbara, Nielsen Liza Rosenbaum, Keune Hans, et al. (2018), A One Health evaluation framework, In: Integrated approaches to health : a handbook for the evaluation of One Health / Rüegg, Simon R. [edit.]; et al. - ISBN 978-90-8686-324-2 - Wageningen, Wageningen Academic Publishers, 2018, p. 38-85
6. Keune H., Kretsch C., Oosterbroek B. (2018) Appendix 2.8: Contributions to physical, mental and social dimensions of health section. Appendix to IPBES (2018): The IPBES regional assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services for Europe and Central Asia. Rounsevell, M., Fischer, M., Torre-Marín Rando, A. and Mader, A. (eds.). Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, Bonn, Germany
7. Antoine-Moussiaux N., Janssens de Bisthoven L., Leyens S., Assmuth T., Keune H., Zinsstag J., Hugé J., Vanhove M. (2019), The good, the bad and the ugly: Framing debates on Nature in a One Health community. In Sustain Sci (2019).
8. Keune H. et al. (2019), European Nature & Health network initiatives, In: Melissa Marselle, Jutta Stadler, Horst Korn, Katherine Irvine and Aletta Bonn (eds) Biodiversity and Health in the face of climate change, Springer
9. Rüegg, S. R., Buttigieg, S. C., Goutard, F. L., Binot, A., Morand, S., Thys, S., Keune, H., eds. (2019). Integrated Approaches to Health: Concepts and Experiences in Framing, Integration and Evaluation of One Health and EcoHealth. Lausanne: Frontiers Media. doi: 10.3389/978-2-88963-086-8
10. Assmuth T., ... Keune H., et al. (2019) Integrative concepts and practices of health in transdisciplinary social ecology, Socio-Ecological Practice Research, (2019), 1-20
11. White PCL, ..., Keune H., et al. (2020), Integrative policy development for healthier people and ecosystems: a European case analysis, Area DOI:10.1111/area.12618

12

3. EXPERT REGISTRY AND PROJECTS MAP

At the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, we are trying to bring together experts representing various fields from science and policy, in this case practitioners within the Nature & Health domain.



This **registry** allows to keep track of the expert community active on nature & health related issues (including e.g. One Health, EcoHealth, Biodiversity & Health, Environmental Health, Nature Based Health Solutions) both within the Belgian and the European expert community of practice. The registry also aims to facilitate open access to relevant data, maps, and other project outcomes. The registry maps the expert's background, areas of expertise and practice.

The Biodiversity & Health Community also wants to share experiences on the development and use of Biodiversity & Health concepts in science and practice all over the country. With this **Projects Map**, we present some examples of Belgian related projects and we welcome information on other Belgian health projects.

