



Superior Health Council

The Belgian Superior Health Council assesses the influence of nature on human health

The [Belgian Superior Health Council](#) assesses the relation between nature and health in urban areas in Belgium. In November 2017 a group of experts was initiated to advise the Council about how contact with nature can have a positive effect on human health, but also about how contact with nature sometimes can have a negative effect on human health. At the end of 2018 the 'Green and blue cities: nature and health in an urban setting' project aims to deliver advice to Belgian federal and regional authorities. Simultaneously the Council aims to deliver concrete recommendations to stakeholder groups and citizens.

There is quite some scientific knowledge about the health benefits of nature. People can relax in a natural environment, nature can support recovery from illness and in an urban environment nature can to some extent lessen the negative health consequences from air pollution and climate change. Nevertheless, not all contact with nature is healthy. E.g., in a natural environment, insects can transmit diseases.

To explain scientifically how nature – health linkages work, is far from easy. The Superior Health Council will focus on urban residents, and assess how nature in and nearby the urban area influences their health. This influence will not be equal for all – old or young, man or woman, poor or rich, native or immigrant. Those differences will also be taken into account by the Council.

The advice should result in practical recommendations regarding:

- How to develop and strengthen nature in the urban context beneficial to human health;
- Policies to strengthen equitable distribution of such benefits for health over various social groups;
- Ways of behaviour of people that are living in urban areas to foster their health with a focus on nature within urbanized regions in Belgium;
- Environmental policies to develop and maintain nature outside the urban areas in Belgium in order to foster individual and public health of the people living in the nearby urbanized region;
- Promoting education and health care to support people from a young age onwards in contact with nature beneficial to their health.

For more information about the assessment process or if you have suggestions, please contact

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