



BELGIAN BIODIVERSITY PLATFORM

Highlights Report

2019



Biodiversity.be



FOREWORD

*Dr Hilde Eggermont,
Coordinator of the Belgian
Biodiversity Platform*

Globally, 2019 is seen as an important milestone towards the 15th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) that will take place in October 2020 in Kunming, China. This will be a key moment for global biodiversity governance, as world leaders will gather to discuss and agree on how we can conserve biodiversity and guarantee the viability of our planet. The goal is to adopt 'A New Deal for Nature and People' that, taking the Paris Climate Agreement as an example, will set concrete goals and targets to protect and restore nature by 2030. Ambition is set high, as the challenge ahead is massive.

Indeed, the science is clear. In 2019, the Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) launched the long-awaited 'Global Assessment', the new global synthesis of the state of biodiversity and nature's contribution to people, and the first ever that is intergovernmental. The report showed that nature is now declining at an unprecedented rate in human history. If we continue with our business-as-usual habits of production and consumption, we face the breakdown of our natural ecosystems, the collapse of our food and water supplies, and the extinction of up to one million species within a decade. The report showed that loss of biodiversity is not only an environmental issue, but also a development, economic, security, social and moral issue as well.

The picture may appear quite bleak at this point, but the IPBES Global Assessment story is also one of hope: we still have a window of opportunity to act and mitigate the negative impacts that we have had on nature and on our planet. This window is closing fast, but with deep systemic changes in policy, society and our economy,

we can still reverse the current trends and secure our life-supporting safety net. And there are indeed some positive signs on the horizon, such as the 'European Green Deal' that should lead Europe to become climate-neutral by 2050. Lauded as Europe's "man on the moon moment", the European Green Deal sets high ambitions for the future of Europe and the whole planet. For the very first time, the conservation and restoration of biodiversity is appearing as one of the priority areas in this political agenda. Linkages between biodiversity and climate change are being recognised. New initiatives are on the rise, such as a European Partnership on Biodiversity – that will build on the current BiodivERsA Partnership strongly supported by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform. All the more reason to put our shoulders to the wheel, and look forward to the upcoming year!

With this 2019 Highlights Report, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform would like to showcase how the team has contributed to get biodiversity higher on the national, European and global political agenda, and to the much needed transformative change. Discover the wide portfolio of our science-policy interfacing activities, our continuous support to Open Data and much more!

*Dr Hilde Eggermont,
Coordinator of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform*

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The [Belgian Biodiversity Platform](#) is a science-policy interface providing services to the Belgian scientific community engaged in biodiversity research, policy-makers and practitioners. Our activities are structured around three main axes:

- Knowledge Brokerage
- Topical Knowledge Incubation
- Open Data

KNOWLEDGE BROKERAGE

In 2019 we acted as knowledge broker by providing evidence-based knowledge for decision-making, by working on research programming, by providing support to international initiatives, and by responding to requests related to biodiversity from policy and society.

TOPICAL KNOWLEDGE INCUBATION

In 2019, we acted as topical knowledge incubator by offering scientists, policy-makers, practitioners and other stakeholders, the opportunity to incubate and enrich their knowledge with other experts on the following topical issues: Invasive Alien Species, Biodiversity & Health, and Ecosystems & Society.

OPEN DATA

In 2019, we further promoted open access to biodiversity data. We actively mobilised biodiversity data from Belgian scientists in a diversity of scientific institutes; we provided data cleaning services, tools and methodologies; as well as guidance on biodiversity informatics standards. Furthermore, we also provided strategic input to global initiatives related to biodiversity data.

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**KNOWLEDGE
BROKERAGE**

PROVIDING EVIDENCE-BASED KNOWLEDGE

RESEARCH PROGRAMMING AND FUNDING

SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

RESPONDING TO REQUESTS FROM POLICY AND SOCIETY

PROVIDING
EVIDENCE-BASED
KNOWLEDGE

through the
Intergovernmental
Science-Policy Platform
on Biodiversity and
Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

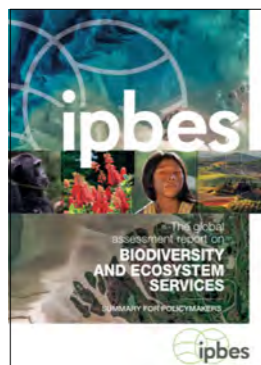


IPBES

The Intergovernmental science-policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) is an intergovernmental organisation established to improve the interface between science and policy on issues related to biodiversity and ecosystem services. Its four main functions are 'assessing knowledge', 'policy support', 'capacity building', and 'knowledge generation'. It provides decision makers with policy-relevant options, based on the best available knowledge. The Belgian Biodiversity Platform acts as IPBES Belgian Focal Point (IPBES NFP) and Head of Delegation to Plenary meetings. It also coordinates the European and Central Asian network of organisations engaging in IPBES (below referred to as the [ECA-Network](#)).

7TH IPBES PLENARY MEETING

The Plenary is the governing body of IPBES. It is made up of the representatives of IPBES member States (currently 134) and usually meets once per year. The 7th IPBES Plenary meeting (IPBES-7) took place in Paris from 29 April to 4 May 2019. The Belgian Delegation was led by the IPBES Belgian Focal Point, Hilde Eggermont and was supported by Hans Keune, Sander Jacobs and Jorge Ventocilla (Belgian Biodiversity Platform) and representatives of federal and regional institutes. The Belgian Biodiversity Platform led the agenda item related to the Review of IPBES on behalf of the EU. A major output of the IPBES-7 was the launch of the [IPBES Global Assessment](#), the new global synthesis of the state of biodiversity and nature's contributions to people, and the first ever that is intergovernmental. This *Global Assessment of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services* was carried out by about 150 selected experts from all regions of the world, assisted by 350 contributing authors. More than 15,000 scientific publications were analysed as well as a substantive body of indigenous and local knowledge. The assessment provides a broad overview of the relationship between economic development trajectories and their impacts on biodiversity. With this assessment, IPBES has called for deep systemic changes on a global scale to reverse the current trends and secure a sustainable future.



IPBES Global Assessment
report on biodiversity and
ecosystem services



IPBES-7 meets for its final day at UNESCO Headquarters.
Photo by IISD/ENB | Diego Noguera

Before, during and after the Plenary, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform promoted IPBES outputs in the media. We prepared and shared press releases and organised interviews with scientists. The media coverage in Belgium was particularly successful this year, with over 50 press articles (and around 10 radio shows) covering the IPBES Global Assessment news in May 2019, in French and Dutch-speaking media. Many newspapers and TV shows headlines were based on the press releases prepared for the occasion: "One million species under extinction".

Furthermore, during the IPBES Plenary, Hilde Eggermont was elected as alternate Bureau member for Julia Marton Lefèvre, elected Bureau member for the *Western European and Others Group* (WEOG). The Bureau oversees the administrative functions of IPBES, and provides strategic guidance. Being alternate Bureau member, Hilde Eggermont supports the elected WEOG Bureau members in day-to-day work as needed, and acts as liaison with the *Working Party on International Environmental Issues* (WPIEI) Biodiversity meeting in Brussels on a monthly basis.



*through the
Intergovernmental
Science-Policy Platform
on Biodiversity and
Ecosystem Services (IPBES)*



BELGIAN UPTAKE EVENT

One of the roles of the IPBES Belgian Focal Point is to ensure that IPBES deliverables are known and taken up by a wide range of stakeholders. On 8 January 2019, the Research Institute for Nature and Forest ([INBO](#)) in collaboration with the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, organised the mini-symposium *"Policy for biodiversity and ecosystem services: threats become opportunities"*. The goal of the symposium was to brainstorm on concrete economic and policy solutions to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and avoid negative ecological, economic and social effects for Flanders. The event was a follow-up of the IPBES Belgian Uptake Event of the 'European and Central Asia Regional Assessment' organised by the IPBES Belgian Focal Point on 1 October 2018. On 20 December 2019, the IPBES Belgian Focal Point joined forces with the Belgian Ecosystems and Society ([BEES](#)) to organise another IPBES Belgian Uptake Event: the *BEES Christmas Market* which took place at INBO. During this event, three workshops were organised to assess the need and feasibility of a national assessment, following the IPBES example. Throughout the year, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform also presented IPBES at several occasions (e.g. *meetings organised by Brussels Environment, Université Catholique de Louvain, University Hasselt and Ghent University*) raising awareness on IPBES amongst Belgian stakeholders and experts.

CONTRIBUTION TO IPBES ASSESSMENTS

Besides recruitment of experts by the IPBES Belgian Focal Point and the review of deliverables, several experts of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform also directly contributed to specific assessments under the IPBES Work Programme as authors and *Coordinating Lead Authors (CLA)*. The latter produce designated sections or parts of chapters by overseeing and undertaking an expert evaluation of the best available knowledge from literature or other fully-justified unpublished sources.

Sonia Vanderhoeven, Biodiversity Expert of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform contributed to the IPBES assessment on invasive alien species as lead author of the Chapter

5: *"Management: Lessons learned"*. Furthermore, Sonia Vanderhoeven acted as Leader to the Section 2: *"Evidence based decision making"* and as Contributor to both the Section 4 on *"Review of key tools and technologies"*, and the Section 6 on *"Context specific challenges, knowledge gaps and uncertainty"*. Sander Jacobs, Biodiversity Expert of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, further contributed as *Coordinating Lead Author* to the methodological assessment on the *"Diverse conceptualisation of multiple values of nature and its benefits"* (also known as the *"Values assessment"*). Sander Jacobs organised the review of the first order draft of this assessment by gathering comments from Belgian experts. Furthermore, Sander Jacobs was nominated to assist with the scoping of the thematic assessment on the *underlying causes of biodiversity loss and the determinants of transformative change and options for achieving the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity* (also known as the *"Transformative Change assessment"*).

SUPPORT TO NATIONAL AND SUB-NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS

In 2019, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform continued its support to the *WWF Living Planet Report*, with Hilde Eggermont and André Heughebaert being part of the LPR Board and Stakeholder Committee respectively. The report made good progress, and will be launched in May 2020. We also supported sub-national assessments such as the *Flemish NARA Report* by being part of the NARA Steering Committee since March 2019.

ACTIVE INPUT TO THE ECA-NETWORK

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform co-coordinates the *Europe and Central-Asia Network of organisations engaging in IPBES (ECA-Network)*. Throughout 2019, the ECA website, hosted by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, was updated with resources such as relevant publications related to IPBES and results of consultations at national level. Several exchanges of best practices were shared among members through the internal mailing list of the network, as well as during face-to-face meetings (e.g. *capacity building workshop in Baku in December 2019*) and presentations.

*through the
Intergovernmental
Science-Policy Platform
on Biodiversity and
Ecosystem Services (IPBES)*



through the National Focal Point of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)



The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is the world oldest and largest environmental network. The Union has a unique membership composed of governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, as well as Indigenous People's Organisations. It harnesses the experience, resources and reach of its more than 1,300 Member organisations and the input of more than 15,000 experts. The Belgian Biodiversity Platform acts as [IUCN Belgian Focal Point](#), and performs several strategic functions in the work of the Union.

IUCN NATIONAL FOCAL POINT

In 2019, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform provided regular updates to IUCN members and the Belgian scientific community on activities launched by IUCN. As in previous years, the IUCN Belgian focal point also contributed to regular interactions and exchange of best practices with other National Focal Points / National Committees in Europe through the 'Working Group of Regional and National Committees'. In 2019, we also prepared the membership application of the *Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS)*. Subsequently, RBINS was successfully admitted as new IUCN member by the end of 2019. In Belgium, two other members ([VITO](#) and [ULB-Coopération](#)) applied for IUCN membership, testifying renewed interest in IUCN and its work.

STRATEGIC INVOLVEMENT IN IUCN

In her capacity as elected Councillor from 2016 to 2020, Hilde Eggermont, coordinator of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, was active in several committees and working groups related to the IUCN Council, which is IUCN's principal governance body setting strategic direction and providing oversight and policy guidance for the work of the Union. In 2019, Hilde Eggermont chaired the *Council Task Force on the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework* set up to ensure a substantial and highly influential input of IUCN in the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, and to secure coherence with the upcoming *IUCN Global Programme 2020-2024* and *IUCN World Conservation Congress* which will take place in June 2020 in Marseille, France.

Hilde Eggermont was also selected to become member of the *Motions Working Group* which facilitates and provides guidance on the motions¹ submitted by the Members. Dr Eggermont was also selected to be part of the *Congress Preparatory Committee* established by the Council to provide strategic guidance for the preparations of the *IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020*. Early 2019, Hilde Eggermont also became the Chair of the *European Policy Advisory Group* providing advice to the Director of the *IUCN European Regional Office* in Brussels on matters relating to EU policy. In 2019, the activities were mainly focusing on the reform of the *Common Agricultural Policy*, and the development of the *post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework*. This also led to the organisation of a topical reception focusing on biodiversity policy after 2020, set up by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform in the *Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences*, together with the *IUCN European Regional Office* and the *Finnish Presidency of the Council of the EU*. As Councillor, Hilde Eggermont also contributed to the *Regional Conservation Forum* organised by the *IUCN National Committee of the Netherlands* from 1 to 3 July 2019 as part of the Union-wide preparation for the *IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020*. This included participation in a high-level panel debate and several presentations on the work of the *IUCN Council* of relevance to the European members. Besides the strategic importance, the above functions also improve the visibility of Belgium as State Member of the Union and allow us to get a better understanding of the possibilities to impact and co-develop the *IUCN Global and Regional Programme*.

By the end of 2019, Jorge Ventocilla, Biodiversity Expert of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform started to coordinate input from Belgian IUCN members into the motions process, and Hilde Eggermont started to prepare her nomination for 2nd term Councillor (2020-2024), with elections to take place during the *World Conservation Congress 2020*.

¹ Motions are the mechanism by which IUCN Members influence third parties and guide the policy and Programme of IUCN.

through the National Focal Point of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)



through BiodivERsA
Partnership



Acting as Vice-Chair to BiodivERsA, Hilde Eggermont assisted in the coordination of [BiodivERsA](#), a pan-European network of agencies and ministries funding and programming research on biodiversity, ecosystem services and nature-based solutions. In 2019, substantial efforts were directed to the preparations of a possible co-funded Partnership on Biodiversity – a new tool under [Horizon Europe](#), the next research and innovation framework programme of the European Commission. In addition to bilateral exchanges with potential members and partners, the preparations also included to co-organisation of a Strategic Workshop to discuss the Biodiversity Partnership with stakeholders at large, co-organised by BiodivERsA and the European Commission. The Belgian Biodiversity Platform provided substantial support to the organisation of this workshop which took place from 13 to 14 November 2019 at the *Palais des Académies* in Brussels.

BIODIVERSA DATABASE

Throughout the year, Lise Goudeseune, Biodiversity Expert of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform and André Heughebaert, IT Manager provided continuous support to the update of the [BiodivERsA database](#) that compiles information about past and current funding programmes on biodiversity in Europe, research organisations, and project leading researchers active in biodiversity research. The database is currently referencing 11,334 biodiversity projects since 2005.

Lise Goudeseune conducted an analysis of the BiodivERsA database summarised in the [brochure](#) entitled "*The BiodivERsA database: a mapping of research on biodiversity and ecosystem services in Europe over 2005-2015*". The document presents the state of the art of the funding landscape and the temporal and geographical trends of biodiversity research in Europe.



Brochure on the analysis of the BiodivERsA database

ACTIVITIES WITHIN ERANET COFUND ACTIONS BIODIVERSA3, THE COFUND ACTION ON SOIL BIODIVERSITY & GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURES (2015-2020)

In 2019, several activities were led by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform in the context of the BiodivERsA3 cofund action.

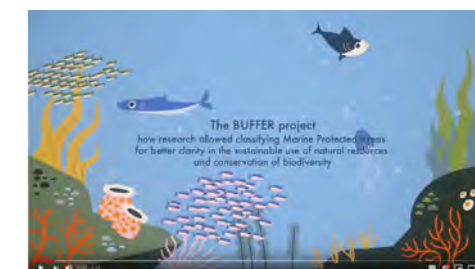
From 2 to 3 April 2019, we organised a *Citizen Science workshop* at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences in Brussels. Attended by around 30 participants, Lise Goudeseune used the input received during the workshop to produce a *Citizen Science Toolkit*. The toolkit aims at guiding biodiversity researchers through existing tools, resources, and publications on citizen science and to showcase examples of successful projects integrating citizen science approaches. The toolkit will be available to the public in 2020.

From 12 to 13 November 2019, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform co-organised the BiodivERsA 2015-2016 funded projects *Final Conference* at the *Palais des Académies* in Brussels. The conference was the occasion for participants to discover the [major research results](#) of the 26 projects funded under the 2015-2016 BiodivERsA call¹, as well as the expected impacts for society and policy.

In 2019, Lise Goudeseune coordinated the contest for the *BiodivERsA Prize for Excellence and Impact*. The prize is awarded on a yearly basis since 2018 to showcase the achievements of BiodivERsA-funded projects that have produced excellent science with concrete impacts for policy and/or society. This year, it resulted in the production of an animated video presenting the research results of the winner: the [BUFFER project](#) ("Partially protected areas as buffers to increase the linked social-ecological resilience"). BUFFER was funded under the 2011-12 BiodivERsA call on "*Biodiversity dynamics: developing scenarios, identifying tipping points and improving resilience*". The [video](#) was produced with the input of researchers of the BUFFER team and the BiodivERsA secretariat.

¹ The 2015-2016 BiodivERsA call was entitled "*Understanding and managing biodiversity dynamics to improve ecosystem functioning and delivery of ecosystem services in a global change context: the cases of soils and sediments, and land- river and sea-scapes (habitat connectivity, green and blue infrastructures, and naturing cities)*".

through BiodivERsA
Partnership



[Video on BUFFER](#), a BiodivERsA-funded project focusing on how partially protected areas act as buffers to increase resilience.



BIODIVSCEN, THE COFUND ACTION ON BIODIVERSITY SCENARIOS (2017-2022)

In 2019, several activities were led by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform in the context of the BiodivScen cofund action.

In May 2019, we provided support to a partner of BiodivERSA: the *Research Council of Norway (RCN)* for the organisation of a *Research & Innovation workshop* which took place in Helsinki from 15 to 16 May 2019, and gathered approximately 40 participants. The workshop gathered both BiodivScen projects and businesses working on converging topics. The objective was to discuss and find synergies to support potential collaborations. The Belgian Biodiversity Platform also contributed to the report of the workshop which will be published early 2020.

On 14 May 2019, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform co-organised a *Data Management workshop* together with the *Academy of Finland (AKA)*. Following the workshop, Lise Goudeseune, together with BiodivERSA partners and members of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, worked on the elaboration of a [Guidance document on data management, open data, and the production of Data Management Plans](#). This document intends to guide research project teams through the writing and development of their Data Management Plan, with a focus on making their data and publications as open as possible.



BIODIVCLIM, THE COFUND ACTION ON BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE (2019-2024)

Early 2019, the BiodivERSA Partnership applied for an [ERA-Net COFUND Action on Biodiversity & Climate Change](#) launched by the European Commission. Hilde Eggermont coordinated the proposal with the support of BiodivERSA partners. The proposal was granted in June 2019 and Hilde Eggermont has been in charge of its coordination since then. The COFUND Action includes a cofund call for

proposals on ["Biodiversity and Climate Change"](#), for over 26 million Euros, as well as a large set of additional activities to valorise the outcome produced by the projects. The tentative budget of Belgian partners (Belspo, FWO and FNRS) for the Biodiversity & Climate Change call amounts to *circa* 1.5 million Euros. The call was launched in September 2019.

CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

This year was an important step in the preparation of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, the so-called [New Deal for Nature and People](#) under the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD). Hilde Eggermont, Coordinator of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, was co-pilot for this item at the 23rd meeting of the *Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical & Technological Advice (SBSTTA-23)*. Furthermore, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform took part in several related expert meetings at EU level.

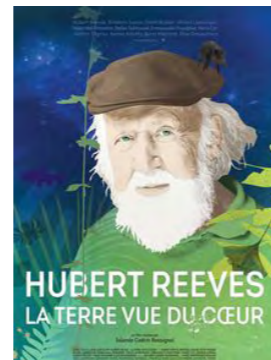
Pierre Huybrechts, Communication Officer of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, provided support to the organisation of an Info Day on [digital sequence information](#) (DSI) on 9 May 2019 in Brussels. The event intended to provide information on the state of play on DSI mainly in the CBD context. It also allowed to discuss the key issues that need to be addressed, based on first-hand experience from researchers and the industry on how DSI is used. Pierre Huybrechts also attended a meeting focusing on the communication strategy of the CBD in the framework of post-2020 organised in the margin of SBSTTA-23.



through *Les Ateliers de la Biodiversité*



In 2019, the *Service Public de Wallonie* organised the [Ateliers de la Biodiversité](#), a series of workshops to raise awareness on biodiversity and identify the crucial issues to be tackled by public authorities and stakeholders. During these workshops, concrete recommendations were elaborated by the participants with the view of using them as a basis for an Action Plan for biodiversity in Wallonia. Sonia Vanderhoeven, Biodiversity Expert of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, led the Scientific Committee appointed by the *Service Public de Wallonie*. The Scientific Committee was in charge of providing an analysis of the recommendations emanating from the *Ateliers de la Biodiversité* and proposing a set of additional recommendations that were not identified by the participants of the workshop.



Movie projected during one of the workshops

through the *European Knowledge and Learning Mechanism for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services* (EKLIPSE)



The '*European Knowledge and Learning Mechanism for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*' (EKLIPSE) is an EU-funded project that aims to respond to questions related to biodiversity so that any decision-maker, practitioner or other stakeholder (CSO, NGO...) can make evidence-based decisions. Jorge Ventocilla, Biodiversity Expert of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, represents our organisation in EKLIPSE as co-coordinator and co-host of the Secretariat, as well as partner of this project.

THE PROOF OF CONCEPT CONFERENCE

We provided support for the organisation of the *EKLIPSE Proof of Concept Conference*, which took place on 23 and 24 January 2019 at the *Palais des Académies* in Brussels. The goal of the conference was to present EKLIPSE to external stakeholders and invite them to become host for the mechanism beyond the life of the project end (in 2020). During the conference, [Alter-Net](#) expressed interest in taking over the mechanism. Since then, the EKLIPSE team has been working

in close collaboration with *Alter-Net* to ensure a smooth transfer of the mechanism both from a technical and from a legal perspective.



Participants to the EKLIPSE Proof of Concept conference

RESTORATION REQUEST

In 2018, EKLIPSE launched its third open call for knowledge. One of the selected request was the following question introduced by BiodivERsA: "What is hampering the effectiveness of existing approaches that aim to restore biodiversity and ecosystem function and services?" As member of the EKLIPSE Secretariat, Jorge Ventocilla facilitated the work of the Experts Working Group to elaborate a response to this request. The report was finalised in October 2019 and the results were presented to BiodivERsA. In their report, the Experts Working Group highlighted the disconnect between policy levels: although restoration is one of the targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy, at the local level, restoration is not perceived as a priority. Furthermore, there are many challenges related to restoration when it comes to actual implementation: different legislations contradict each other; land ownership is not always clear; and stakeholders have various interests (e.g. leisure, agriculture, industry, etc.) One of the key recommendations of the Experts Working Group is to involve all interested parties from the beginning of restoration projects to ensure implementation. The Experts Working Group also called for monitoring and evaluation following restoration projects in order to better measure the actual effects of restoration.

through the *European Knowledge and Learning Mechanism for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services* (EKLIPSE)



through the European
Knowledge and Learning
Mechanism for Biodiversity
and Ecosystem Services
(EKLIPSE)



EU POST-2020 BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

As part of the movement among the biodiversity community to participate in the development of the *EU post-2020 Biodiversity Strategy*, Alter-Net and EKLIPSE co-organised [the EU Biodiversity Strategy beyond 2020 conference](#) from 17 to 19 June 2019 at the Augustinian Monastery of Ghent in Belgium. The conference was attended by around 200 participants and intended to gather and refine a collection of key messages for the post-2020 Biodiversity strategy from the scientific community. The key messages are action oriented statements composed of a title, a recommendation for the European Commission; a rationale, justification, context; and links with the EU 2020 biodiversity strategy. Following the conference, EKLIPSE, Alter-Net, NGOs and other interested parties have been further working on these key messages. These will be finalised early 2020.



Themes of the conference "EU Biodiversity Strategy beyond 2020"

IDENTIFICATION OF KNOWLEDGE GAPS AND EMERGING ISSUES

In 2019, Jorge Ventocilla produced two reports for the European Commission, as deliverables of the EKLIPSE project under the Work Package focusing on *jointly identifying knowledge gaps and emerging issues*.

A first report finalised in March 2019 is entitled "*Recommendations on how current knowledge gaps and emerging issues can reach policy agendas and training toolkits*". The aim of this report is to provide a better understanding of how emerging issues make their way from society

or research to policy agendas. The report, based on the analysis of three EKLIPSE case studies, provides information on how emerging issues are translated (or not) into policy needs, and why. The report also includes general recommendations on how current knowledge gaps and emerging issues can reach policy agendas. Based on the elements of this report, two training workshops will be organised in 2020.

A second report finalised in September 2019 is entitled "*Set of Research Recommendations on current knowledge gaps and emerging issues*". To elaborate this report, Jorge Ventocilla read through all the EKLIPSE reports and identified knowledge gaps and emerging issues from each report, thereby providing the European Commission with a condensed list of knowledge gaps and emerging issues for each topic addressed by EKLIPSE.

CONTRIBUTION TO AN EKLIPSE REQUEST

Hans Keune, biodiversity expert of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, has been contributing to an [EKLIPSE expert group](#) responding to a request entitled *Which types and components of urban and peri-urban blue/green spaces have a significant impact on human mental health and mental well-being?* This request was introduced by the *French Ministry in charge of the Environment (MTES)* in 2016. With this expert group, Hans Keune collaborated on a systematic literature review on the link between green and blue infrastructures and mental health in an urban context, in consultation with the World Health Organisation.

through the European
Knowledge and Learning
Mechanism for Biodiversity
and Ecosystem Services
(EKLIPSE)



2

**TOPICAL
KNOWLEDGE
INCUBATION**

INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES

BIODIVERSITY & HEALTH

ECOSYSTEMS & SOCIETY

INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES

through the Belgian Forum on Invasive Species

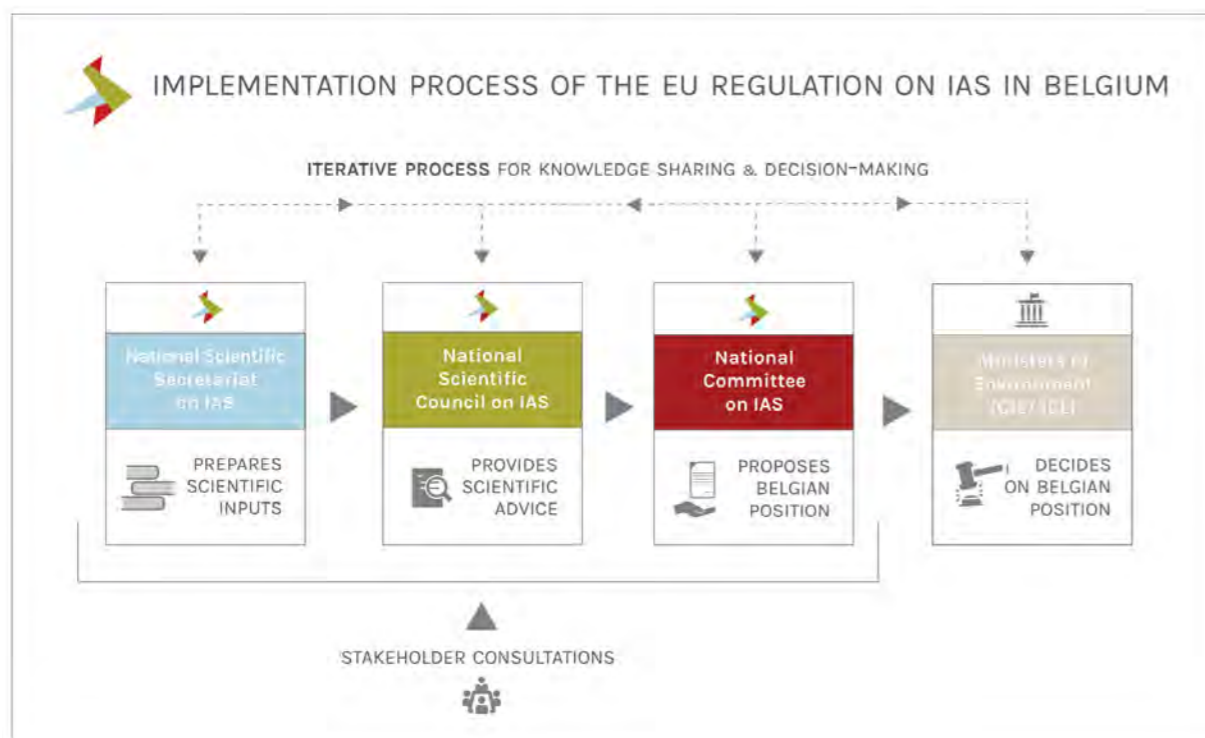


ias.biodiversity.be

Since its inception in 2006, the *Belgian Forum on Invasive Species (BFIS)* initiated and facilitated by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform has been active in creating links between research, policy and practitioners. For the past few years, some experts of the BFIS have partly shifted their focus towards the implementation of the *EU Regulation on IAS* in Belgium.

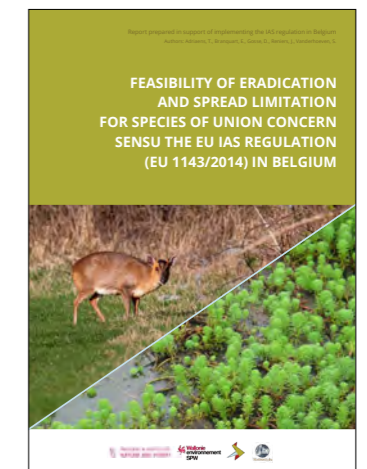
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU REGULATION ON IAS IN BELGIUM

Since January 2015, the *EU Regulation on invasive alien species* has entered into force. It establishes rules to prevent, minimise and mitigate the adverse effects of invasive alien species. Throughout 2019, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform's expert on Invasive Alien Species (IAS), Sonia Vanderhoeven, has been actively involved in the structures implementing the EU Regulation on IAS in Belgium, i.e. the *Scientific Council on IAS*, the *Committee on IAS* and the *National Scientific Secretariat on IAS*. The latter also received communication support from the Belgian Biodiversity Platform for the development of their website in three languages.



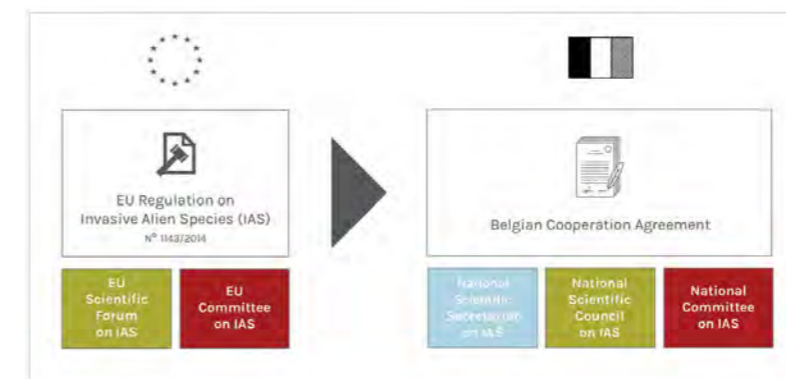
Implementation process of the EU Regulation on IAS in Belgium in which the Belgian Biodiversity Platform actively participates.

In 2019, Sonia Vanderhoeven co-authored a [report on manageability assessment](#) of invasive species in Belgium. This was a direct follow-up of last year's collaboration with the *National Scientific Secretariat on IAS*, the *Research Institute for Nature and Forest (INBO)*, and the *Department of the Study of natural and agricultural environment (DEMNA)* that worked on conducting knowledge syntheses, mobilised experts on IAS at Belgian level, and co-organised a workshop to discuss the manageability assessment. The report following these activities "*Feasibility of eradication and spread limitation for species of Union concern sensu the EU IAS Regulation in Belgium*" will be used by the competent authorities to take measures on the species of EU concern*. The report presents the invasion scenarios and management strategies for Belgium, not only for assessing feasibility of species eradication but also their spread limitation.



Manageability assessment report published in 2019.

REVIEW OF EU RISK ASSESSMENTS



Summary of EU and Belgian entities established to implement the EU Regulation on IAS

In order to implement the EU Regulation on IAS and coordinate these efforts at EU level, the *EU Scientific Forum on IAS* and the *EU Committee on IAS* were established. In her capacity as member to the EU Scientific Forum, Sonia Vanderhoeven participated in the review of EU risk assessments. In 2019, she was involved in meetings to evaluate 16 risks assessments that were based on proposals emanating from the European Commission. The role of Sonia Vandherhoeven was to evaluate these proposals by assessing whether these risk assessments were fit for purpose regarding the inclusion of species in the Union List.

*The list of "invasive alien species of Union Concern" or "Union List" includes the species that are subject to restrictions and measures set out in the Regulation. These include restrictions on keeping, importing, selling, breeding and growing. Member States are required to take action on pathways of unintentional introduction, take measures for early detection and rapid eradication of these species, and to manage species that are already widely spread in their territory.

INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES

through the Belgian
Forum on Invasive Species



ias.biodiversity.be

PATHWAY OF INTRODUCTION OF IAS IN BELGIUM

The introduction of exotic species, for trade or biocontrol reasons, is covered by several different legal frameworks that require monitoring the entry of organisms into a defined territory. At present, there is no biodiversity-specific database in Belgium or in the European Union that allows the traceability of detailed information on exotic species entry, with the exception of the CITES database. The lack of biodiversity-specific framework that could generate data on the commercial and non-commercial flows of exotic species is an important obstacle to the proper implementation of national import control policies like the regulation on invasive alien species. The Belgian Biodiversity Platform has recently tested the feasibility of developing such a unified framework from existing data sources. In particular, we have identified the different steps needed to complete the task, the added-value of such list for border control checks and the limitations to proper development.

TRIAS

TriAS is a Belspo-funded project (2017-2020) focusing on building an open data-driven framework to support policy on invasive species. In 2019, activities within the project were further developed and two related publications were released: "[Improving Darwin Core for research and management of alien species](#)" and "[Empowering Citizens to Inform Decision-Making as a Way Forward to Support Invasive Alien Species Policy](#)".

LIFE PROPOSAL 'RIPARIAS'

In 2018, Sonia Vanderhoeven took part in the elaboration of a LIFE Proposal: «*Reaching Integrated and Prompt Action in Response to Invasive Alien Species*» (RIPARIAS). The project's main goal is to translate national management objectives into concrete actions. The submission of the concept note resulted in the pre-selection of the project in 2018 and a full proposal was submitted in 2019. Despite the high ranking of the project, the concept note had to be re-submitted in June. The new full proposal will be submitted to the European Commission in February 2020.

COST ACTION

The COST Action CA17122 is a research network funded by COST (*European Cooperation in Science and Technology*). The Action addresses multidisciplinary research questions in relation to developing and implementing citizen science and advancing scientific understanding of alien species dynamics. In 2019, Sonia Vanderhoeven participated in this COST Action's workshops and facilitated several activities.

MANAGING IAS: LESSONS LEARNED

On 18 December 2019, the *Belgian Forum on Invasive Species* and the *RAPID Life Project* co-organised a networking event on the management of invasive species in Europe. The event was organised at *Brussels Environnement* and was attended by over 250 participants. The morning session was intended for member states to share their experience in the implementation of the EU Regulation. The afternoon session was composed of a series of presentations by LIFE projects focusing on IAS. They shared information on the difficulties they encounter in working trans-border and the potential solutions to overcome these hindrances.

SUSTAINABLE WILDLIFE TRADE

On 3 and 4 December 2019, the *Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment* and the *Belgian Biodiversity Platform* co-organised a two-day *One World One Health Conference* on the impacts of wildlife trade at global and local level. The conference focused on two specific trades occurring in Belgium: the bushmeat trade, and the trade in exotic reptiles and in amphibians. The Belgian Biodiversity Platform was in charge of the organisation and facilitation of working group discussions on both topics. Our organisation also provided substantial communication support, hosted the website of the conference, and led the production of two videos: one on [bushmeat](#) and one on the [trade of reptiles and amphibians](#). The conference outputs resulted in key recommendations for a more sustainable trade of wildlife. The Belgian Biodiversity Platform will develop a policy brief based on these recommendations. The brief will be published in 2020.



[Video on bushmeat](#)



[Video on the trade of reptiles and amphibians](#)

through the Belgian
Community of Practice
on Biodiversity & Health
(COPBH)



Facilitated by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform since 2011, the *Belgian Community of Practice on Biodiversity & Health* (COPBH) works on assessing, improving and mainstreaming the current state of knowledge on biodiversity and health; contributes to integrated knowledge and to integrated policy and practice actions.

BELGIAN NETWORKS

In 2019, the COPBH co-organised two major networking events that led to the official launch of the *One Health Belgium* network, and the Flemish *Netwerk Natuur en Gezondheid*. The launching event of the *Netwerk Natuur en Gezondheid* took place on 21 March 2019 at the HoGent campus in Melle, and was attended by 84 participants representing 35 partner organisations. The launching event of the *One Health Belgium* network took place on 5 November 2019 at Sciensano in Tervuren and was attended by 95 participants.

For both networks, using a bottom-up approach is central. Hence, a survey was sent to the participants prior to the meeting to assess their expectations towards the network. Both events were also similar in format: the meetings started with presentations on the network and its objectives, followed by a keynote presentation for inspiration, and by brief plenary presentations given by representatives of organisations interested to be involved in the network. After the plenary, break-out sessions were organised for participants to share ideas on what they expect from the network, and how they can contribute to it.



Launch event of the *Netwerk Natuur en Gezondheid* on 21 March 2019 at the HoGent campus in Melle.

The [One Health Belgium network](#) has an overarching framework and approach towards nature–health linkages, integrating human health, animal and ecological health. Originally, *OneHealth* focused mainly on nature-based health risks. This is largely due to the fact that *OneHealth* stems from veterinary and human health sciences, mainly collaborating on infectious diseases. Currently, *One Health*, as well as the *One Health Belgian* network, are also open to nature-based health benefits such as stress reduction and physical health benefits. The network was launched as an initiative of Frank Koenen, Operational Director of [Sciensano](#) and Hans Keune, Biodiversity Expert of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform. A coordination group was established in preparation of the launch event, incorporating representatives from Sciensano, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, the [Federal Public Service Health Food Chain Safety and Environment](#), the [University of Liege](#), the [University of Hasselt](#), and the [University of Antwerp](#).

The [Netwerk Natuur en Gezondheid](#) mainly focuses on the benefits of nature on health. The network is coordinated by Beno Geertsma, Policy Officer for [Natuurpunt](#) who is supported by a coordination team made of representatives from the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, [BOS+](#), [INBO](#), [Natuur en Bos van de Vlaamse overheid](#), [Natuurpunt \(CVN\)](#), [Regionale Landschappen](#), [University of Antwerp](#) Leerstoel zorg en natuurlijke leefomgeving, and the [Vlaams Instituut Gezond Leven](#).

Both networks' websites are hosted by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, and can make use of tools that were already set by our Community of Practice: the [projects map](#) and the [experts registry](#).

BELGIAN SUPERIOR HEALTH COUNCIL

In 2019, Hans Keune, biodiversity expert of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, actively engaged in the [Belgian Superior Health Council](#), which is an independent advisory body that produces scientific advisory reports aiming at providing guidance to decision-makers and health professionals. The *Belgian Superior Health Council* is constituted of permanent and temporary Expert

through the Belgian
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BIODIVERSITY & HEALTH

through the Belgian
Community of Practice
on Biodiversity & Health
(COPBH)



Committees. Hans Keune was rapporteur of a temporary Expert Committee working on the links between nature and health in the urban context. As the Chair of the Committee had to resign for personal reasons, Hans Keune took over the role of Chair in 2019. Together with the other experts of the group, Hans Keune worked on a review of international literature on the topic and assessed the quality of the scientific evidence. The Expert Committee also listed and ranked some key recommendations emanating from international literature. Currently, the Expert Committee is collecting information on the same topic focusing on the Belgian territory and stemming from Belgian research projects. Based on the international and Belgian literature review outcomes, two end-user consultations will be launched: one in the healthcare sector, one in the urban planning sector. The goal will be to assess whether the scientific knowledge currently available on the links between nature and health in the urban context are sufficiently known and used in these sectors, and to compose the advice from the committee in support of better uptake of knowledge about nature health linkages in the urban contexts in both sectors. A final report will then be elaborated, compiling the knowledge gained from both literature reviews and the consultations.

CONTRIBUTION TO GLOBAL INITIATIVES

Following the final conference of the *Network for Evaluation of OneHealth (NEOH)* which took place in September 2018, Hans Keune further worked with the NEOH team to establish the network as the [European Chapter of Ecohealth International](#), a Trust established to foster the health and wellbeing of humans, animals and ecosystems.

Hans Keune also contributed to an [handbook on integrated approaches to health](#). The latter is the product of an interdisciplinary effort by NEOH to provide science-based guidance for the evaluation of One Health and other integrated approaches to health. It provides an overview of concepts and metrics from health and life sciences, social sciences, economics, and ecology. The handbook is intended for practitioners, researchers, evaluators as well as funders of integrated approaches to health.



RETHINKING BIODIVERSITY GOVERNANCE

The *Rethinking Biodiversity Governance* network works on re-thinking international environmental agreements and conservation strategies to improve a more effective governance, as biodiversity decline is still not halted, despite all international governance initiatives of the past decades. Hans Keune participates in this network. Currently, an international book on transformative change is being prepared by the network. For this book, Hans Keune coordinates the composition of a chapter on 'defining nature'.

The Belgian Ecosystems and Society community (BEES) is the informal network of Belgian ecosystem services experts since 2012. The BEES-community is facilitated by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform. It contributes to improve ecosystem-society interactions by facilitating collaboration, coordination and communication among and between scientists, administrators, policy makers and practitioners in Belgium.

THE BEES DOCU & DEBATE

On 17 October 2019, BEES organised a projection/ debate at ULB in Brussels, on the theme of citizen engagement and science. The event was attended by 35 participants and sparked a debate on the position of science and scientists in relation to activism/ commitment and *vice versa*. The documentary shown to the participants told the story of the inhabitants of the Belgian village Couvin who successfully took to activism and direct action against the building of a dam in the three valleys of l'Eau Noire in the seventies. Today, l'Eau Noire is one of Belgium's biodiversity hotspots. Benjamin Hennot, the filmmaker, gave more background to this untold story of citizen engagement. The screening was followed by a debate on the different and sometimes conflicting postures and personal choices scientists have. The debate was mediated by Ewoud Vandepitte, researcher from *UAntwerp* on the climate movements.

ECOSYSTEMS & SOCIETY

through the Belgian
Ecosystems and Society
Community of Practice
(BEES)





THE BEES CHRISTMAS MARKET

The sixth [BEES Christmas Market](#) gathered researchers and practitioners working on the broad topic of ecosystems and society in Belgium. Research institutes and academic groups, administration projects and local initiatives on nature, forestry, agriculture, ecosystem services, environmental justice, green economy etc. meet in a personal and relaxed atmosphere, learning from each other and strengthening the community. This year, the BEES Market took place on 20 December 2019 and was co-organised by the *Belgian IPBES Focal Point* (coordinated by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform). The event was hosted by INBO at the *Herman Teirlinck building* in Brussels. Over 100 participants discovered the 15 stands of ongoing projects and initiatives. Furthermore, parallel workshops were held to explore the knowledge gaps and policy needs for a national assessment following IPBES example.



Participants to the BEES Christmas Market on 20 December 2019

INVOLVEMENT IN EUROPEAN AND GLOBAL INITIATIVES

BEES represents Belgium in several European and global initiatives related to ecosystem services. BEES acts as a critical check, contributing to policy or practice relevance of the outputs or activities of these projects and networks. BEES also facilitates inputs from the broader network into the international initiatives, through reviews and communication.

Sander Jacobs provided active input in the *Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystem Services (MAES) Working Group* meetings in which he channeled feedbacks from Belgian stakeholders. He also co-organised an intensive exchange workshop between the Natural Capital Accounting stakeholders, *MAES* and the initiating *EU-Biodiversity Partnership* on 19 September 2019. The workshop had over 80 international participants and was co-organised with the [EU MAIA project](#) on natural capital accounting and the *European Commission's DG for Research and Innovation*.

Related to this, Sander Jacobs, BEES coordinator and biodiversity expert of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, links the BEES Community and specifically the initiatives on natural capital accounting, to the United Nations Statistical Division ([UNSD](#)), which has set up a forum of experts to review the *System of Environmental Economic Accounting / Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EEA)*. Sander reviewed several technical papers from a science-policy-practice perspective, and facilitated reviews from other Belgian experts.

BEES is also involved in the *Programme on Ecosystem Change and Society (PECS)* of *Future Earth*. In December 2019, *Leuphana University* in Lüneburg, Germany hosted a workshop to edit and publish a collaborative issue on place-based socio-ecological research. The BEES-perspective brought policy/ practice relevance and an 'applied' view into academic approaches for several of the papers that were discussed.

BEES acts as the *National Chapter* of the global *Ecosystem Services Partnership (ESP)* network. BEES members are involved in several aspects of ESP participation, organisation and governance. Sander Jacobs co-leads the *Valuation Thematic Working Group*. In 2019, he was re-elected as *ESP Steering Committee co-Chair*.



3

OPEN
DATA

OPEN DATA

DATA MOBILISATION & PUBLICATION

DATA ACCESS & USAGE

CAPACITY BUILDING

STRATEGIC INPUT

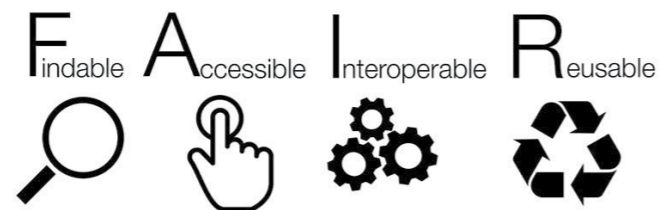
OPEN DATA

through EOSC



OPEN DATA & FAIR PRINCIPLES

In 2019, we continued to promote Open Data through our daily activities, and we took a key role in major European and international initiatives. In particular, André Heughebaert, IT Team Manager, became a member of the *FAIR Working Group* of the *European Open Science Cloud (EOSC)*. EOSC is a federation of existing research e-Infrastructures at European, sub-regional and country level. The ambition of EOSC is to set-up an Open Science Cloud by exposing all possible research digital objects (data, services and publications) from Europe, across all research domains. The *FAIR Working Group* set-up by EOSC will advise the *EOSC Executive Board* by providing recommendations related to FAIR principles (*Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable*). As member of this Working Group, André Heughebaert was involved in the drafting of EOSC Persistent IDentifiers (PID) Policy, released in December 2019.



On 21 November 2019, André Heughebaert participated to the *Open Science Seminar* organised by *BelSPO*, the *Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles*, and the *Department of Economy, Science and Innovation (EWI)*. The information session intended to inform the Belgian research community of new developments in the field of Open Science, particularly pertaining to EOSC.

From 22 to 25 October 2019, the [Biodiversity Next](#) conference took place in Leiden, Netherlands. Over 700 participants from 76 countries attended the conference entitled "*Buidling a global infrastructure for biodiversity data. Together.*" The speakers shared their insights on how to advance biodiversity science through the intersection between science, data, infrastructure, and policy. The conference was a major event in the field of open data for biodiversity. Dimitri Brosens, *Data Acquisition Manager*



Watch the [video of the conference](#)

for the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, was a member of the Programme Committee, which was responsible for the conference programming, including the overall selection of topics, plenary and breakout sessions planning, selection of keynote speakers, and abstracts submission and review processes. During the conference, Dimitri Brosens was also active on the different forum of conversations set up for the occasion (including discussions on [better data](#); [better policies](#); [better practices](#); [better science](#); and [wild ideas](#)).

Maxime Coupremagne, *Data Acquisition Manager for the Belgian Biodiversity Platform*, acted as facilitator and reporter in the working group discussing data protection and blurry data.



Maxime Coupremagne presenting the results of the session on blurry data.

DATA MOBILISATION & PUBLICATION

In 2019, our Open Data team worked on mobilising and publishing data from a series of Belgian data owners. The workflow inherent in data mobilisation and publication may vary from one data owner to another, but the overall process consists of similar steps (from sharing information on open data to providing technical support for the data publication). In this highlights report, we will present one major dataset that the Belgian Biodiversity Platform helped publishing: the Dolichopodidae of Portugal.

OPEN DATA

through Biodiversity Next





DATASET ON DOLICHOPODIDAE OF PORTUGAL

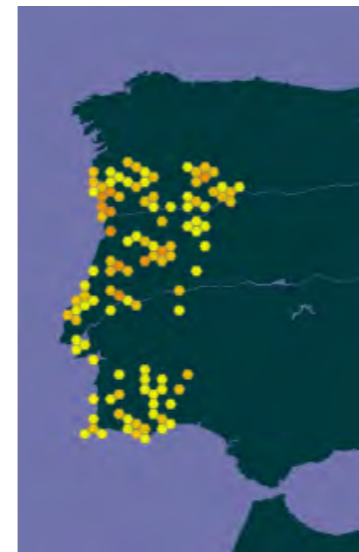
In 2019, we published an [occurrence dataset on Dolichopodidae of Portugal](#), comprising 2,131 occurrences of 145 different species. This dataset is the first comprehensive account on the Dolichopodid fauna (Diptera: Dolichopodidae) of Portugal and is the result of multiple surveys by primarily Portuguese researchers between 2009 and 2016. Dr Marc Pollet, President of the *Royal Belgian Society for Entomology (KBVE-SRBE)*, and Research Manager at the *Research Institute for Nature and Forest (INBO)* received technical support from Dimitri Brosens, *Biodiversity Data Acquisition Manager for the Belgian Biodiversity Platform*, to facilitate the publication of the data. The published dataset provides, for every species, information on its occurrence in Portugal.



Dolichopus diadema (male), photo by ©Rui Andrade.

Dimitri Brosens provided support to retrieve, unify and standardise the dataset to Darwin Core, sampling event dataset type containing a sample core and an occurrences extension. The data files were then uploaded to the INBO IPT and documented with metadata. The [dataset](#) was then published and registered with GBIF.

Following the publication of this dataset, a [research paper](#) entitled "*Dipterological surveys in Portugal unveil 200 species of long-legged flies, with over 170 new to the country (Diptera: Dolichopodidae)*" was published in *Zootaxa* (4649 (1): 001-069).



[Explore the dataset on GBIF website](#)

11 provinces
17 districts
82 municipalities

172 localities
202 locations
217 sampling sites

2,131 occurrences
of 145 different species
with 5,805 specimens

Composition of the dataset on
Dolichopodidae of Portugal
published on GBIF



"Rather than including the thousands of species records in text format, I decided to publish the dataset to GBIF so that the data can readily be discovered and re-used by peers or other Diptera enthusiasts. Dimitri Brosens has been a true advocate of data sharing for many years. He was most helpful throughout the entire process, and I am delighted about the final result. This has been my first GBIF dataset and will not be the last!"

Dr Marc Pollet,
President of the *Royal Belgian Society for Entomology*



Muscidideicus praetextatus (male), photo by ©Rui Andrade.

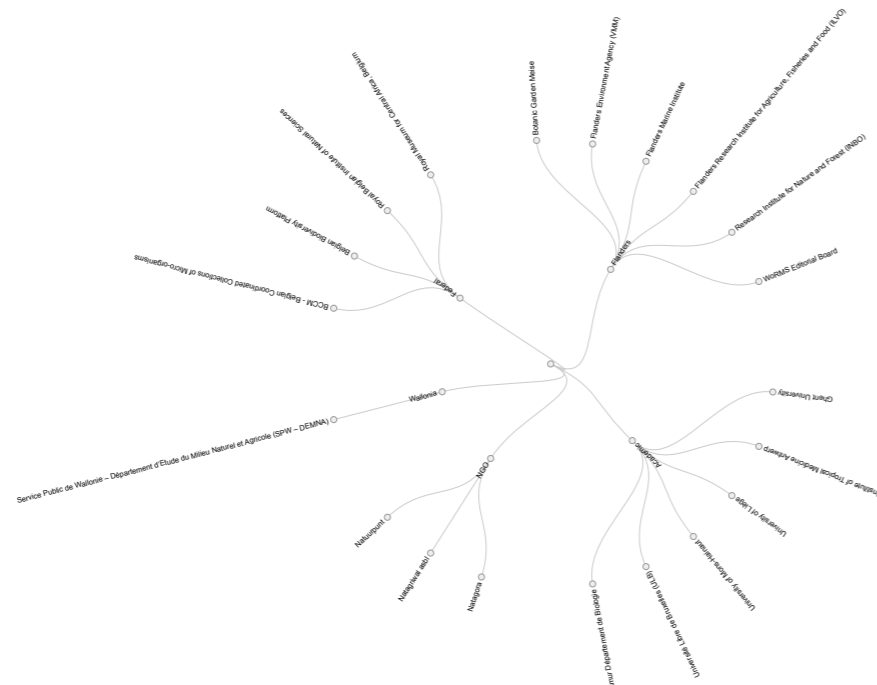
DATA
MOBILISATION
AND PUBLICATION

through the Global
Biodiversity Information
Facility (GBIF)



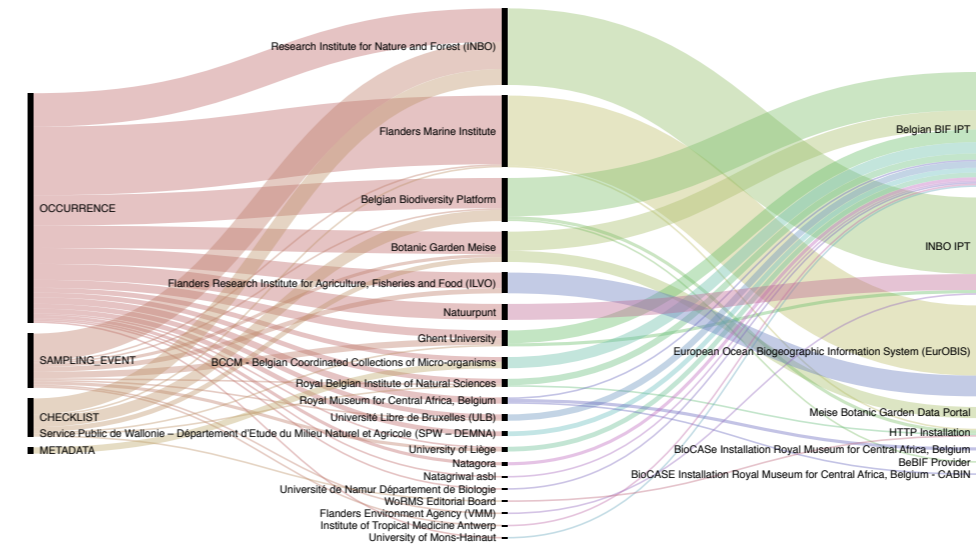
In 2019, Julien Cigar, System Administrator of the IT team, updated the [customised web portal on African mammalia](#) which was initially developed for experts on African rodents in 2007. The 2019 update was considerable as the taxonomic range of the African Rodentia database was expanded to include African mammal orders. African Mammalia brings together the extensive specimen and tissue collections of the *Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA)*, the *Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS)* and the *University of Antwerpen (UAntwerpen)* providing taxonomical, ecological, geographical and genetic information, as well as measurements and data on parasitic and viral infections. In 2019, over 3500 observation specimens were added to the database, as well as more than 1600 new photographs and around 1500 new DNA sequences. Furthermore, a data paper entitled "[Shrews \(Soricidae\) of the lowland forests around Kisangani \(DR Congo\)](#)" was published on the Biodiversity Data Journal.

As GBIF Belgian Node, all our activities of data publication are integrated into the GBIF global data portal: see the [GBIF Belgium Summary page](#). A few graphs illustrating our 2019 publication efforts are presented here. This graph shows all Belgian Biodiversity Data Publishers grouped by category: Academic, Federal, Flanders, Wallonia, NGOs...:



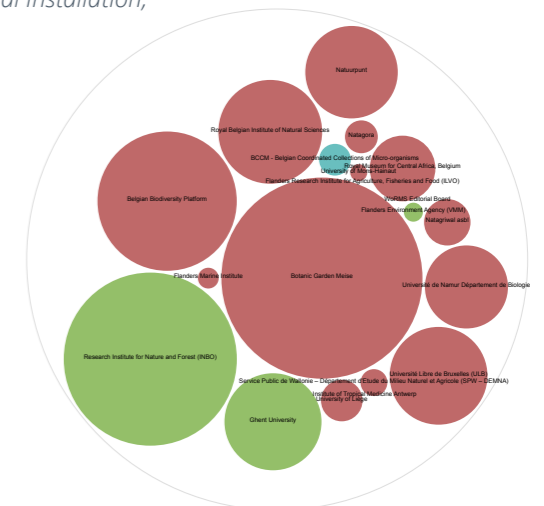
Dendrogram of Belgian Biodiversity Data Owners by category

This graph shows the 208 Belgian datasets by Darwin Core type (left), by publishing organisation (center) and by publishing installation (right). The flow sizes refer to the number of datasets, not the number of records:



Alluvion graph showing the Belgian datasets published through GBIF by: type of data (left hand); Publishing Organisation (center); Technical Installation, e.g. IPT (right hand). Flow sizes refer to the number of datasets.

This graph shows how often data owners are cited in peer-reviewed articles. Radius refers to the number of citations while colour indicates the DarwinCore type (red for Occurrences, green for Sampling event, purple for Checklists, and blue for Metadata). The three most cited publishers are the *Botanical Garden of Meise*, the *Research Institute for Nature and Forest (INBO)* and the *Belgian Biodiversity Platform*.



Datasets owners per citations. Red: Occurrences, Green: Sampling event, Purple: checklists, Blue: Metadata

BIODIVERSITY RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES

In 2017, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform launched a mapping exercise of Biodiversity Research Infrastructures (BRI), in the framework of BiodivERsA. The work was further continued in the Belgian context with a survey launched in 2018 and resulting in the elaboration of a [report](#) on the *Access and Use of Biodiversity Research Infrastructures in Belgium*. In 2019, a [listing of BRI](#) available and useful for Belgian researchers was published on the Belgian Biodiversity Platform website.

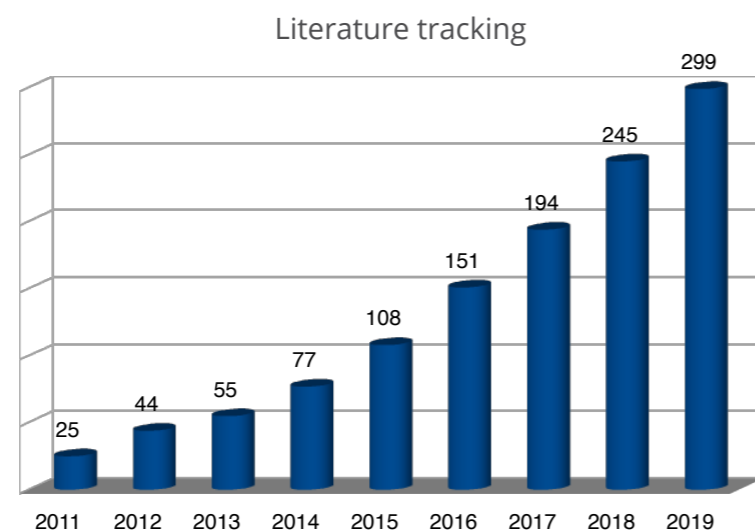
through the Global
Biodiversity Information
Facility (GBIF)



DATA ACCESS & USAGE

In September 2018, the *Service Public de Wallonie DG03 - DEMNA* launched a call to develop a taxonomic backbone, i.e. a single, synthetic management classification covering all names of species the DEMNA is dealing with. The Belgian Biodiversity Platform applied and won the call. In 2019, our work consisted in developing the taxonomic backbone using phonetic algorithms. The taxonomic backbone now allows DEMNA to integrate name based information from different resources and nomenclators that previously did not use the same reference name. This backbone allows taxonomic search in a consistent way and provides means to crosswalk names from one source to another. In 2019, we focused our work on developing the taxonomic backbone for plants and lepidopteras. For plants, we used a taxonomic reference developed for the North of France, while for lepidoptera, we used the one developed by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform in 2018 for the [Catalogue of Lepidoptera of Belgium](#). More taxonomic groups will be added in the database in the coming years. This data will then be published on the GBIF data portal.

We have seen an increase of data usage over the years as the number of peer reviewed scientific papers with Belgian authors referring to GBIF mediated data has increased since 2011.



Number of peer reviewed scientific papers with Belgian author(s) referring to GBIF mediated data. Source: [GBIF.org country page](https://www.gbif.org/country/belgium)

CAPACITY BUILDING

Workshop on establishing GBIF Nodes in the Pacific

From 4 to 9 August 2019, Dimitri Brosens (*Data Acquisition Manager for the Belgian Biodiversity Platform*) acted as GBIF Mentor in the *Biodiversity Information for Development (BID)* workshop on how to establish a GBIF Participant Node. The workshop took place at the *University of the South Pacific* in Suva, Fiji. It was attended by 15 participants coming from countries of the South Pacific (Fiji, Vanuatu, Tonga, Solomon Islands). This workshop intended to build the capacity of these countries to establish a GBIF Participant Node through a series of practical exercises. In doing so, the activities of these countries conducted under the BID programme would become sustainable in the future. One of the direct result of the workshop was that the Kingdom of Tonga became a GBIF voting participant.

GBIF workshop on data use in Bosnia-Herzegovina

From 4 to 6 December 2019, Dimitri Brosens (*Data Acquisition Manager for the Belgian Biodiversity Platform*) acted as GBIF Mentor in the data use workshop held in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina. The workshop was attended by 16 participants coming from seven countries. This workshop contributed to enhance the capacity of the project teams in the Balkan area by demonstrating how mobilised primary biodiversity data can be used in the development of information products that feed into national policy-making processes. The workshop had a strong focus on the technical aspects of data use—in particular with respect to ecological niche modelling and the use of GBIF for *Red Listing* using the *IUCN Categories and Criteria*. Participants were also introduced to the decision making process and how these information products can be effectively integrated within it.



Workshop on Establishing a GBIF Participant node - Pacific

through the Global
Biodiversity Information
Facility (GBIF)





Training on data publication in Sofia, Bulgaria

From 14 to 15 March 2019, Dimitri Brosens gave a training on the management of data and collection. The workshop was held in Sofia, Bulgaria and was attended by 60 participants. It was co-organised by DiSSCo in the framework of [Mobilise COST Action](#). The workshop focused on data mobilisation, handling, cleaning and curation. Practical exercises were organised on data publication: they could train on exercises related to data capture, data transformation and cleaning and data publication. There were also sessions organised around project planning and management.

STRATEGIC INPUT TO GBIF

From 17 to 23 October 2019, the *GBIF Governing Board* took place in Leiden, the Netherlands, which included side events: *the Global Nodes Training* and the *Global Nodes Meeting*. The former was the opportunity for all Nodes managers to get trained on Strategic and Communication Plans while the latter concluded with the drafting of the *Nodes Strategy for 2020-2021*. There were several thematic and regional discussions during these meetings. As Chair of the *Nodes Committee*, Andre Heughebaert chaired the *15th GBIF Global Nodes meeting*. Updates on GBIF activities were provided to the *circa* 100 participants, followed by thematic group discussions on a diversity of topics, including on the future activities of GBIF.

André Heughebaert also chairs the *Nodes Steering Group* composed of one representative per region (around 10 people). Being the Chair of the Nodes Committee allows André Heughebaert to be at a key position in terms of GBIF Governance, implementation of the Strategic Plan and the annual Work Programme and the management of the budget. It is also essential to ensure effective communication between the Nodes managers and the Secretariat.

From 22 to 24 May 2019, the 11th *European GBIF European Nodes Meeting* took place in Oslo. The objectives of the meeting were for the GBIF European nodes to update each other on current and planned activities and collaboration opportunities, as well as to develop a strategy for the

European Nodes. There were several thematic discussions and a seminar about global and national biodiversity data portals also took place during the meeting.

I.T. MAINTENANCE AND SUPPORT

Throughout 2019, our IT Team continued republishing existing datasets with recent tools and standards and maintained 33 websites, aside from our main website. Keeping the Belgian Biodiversity Platform servers up and running and maintaining the underlying Open Source software up to date is vital to keep on providing all our services to the research community.



OUR TEAM

*In 2019, our team
was composed of:*



MANAGEMENT TEAM



Dr Aline VAN DER WERF
Manager



Dr Hilde EGGERMONT
Coordinator & Biodiversity Expert

SCIENTIFIC TEAM



Lise GOUDESEUNE
Biodiversity Expert



Dr Sander JACOBS
Biodiversity Expert



Dr Hans KEUNE
Biodiversity Expert



Dr Sonia VANDERHOEVEN
Biodiversity Expert



Jorge L. VENTOCILLA
Biodiversity Expert

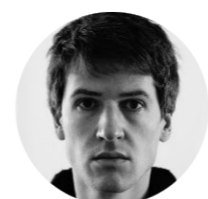
OPEN DATA TEAM



Ir André HEUGHEBAERT
IT Team Coordinator



Dimitri BROSENS
Data Acquisition Manager



Julien CIGAR
System Administrator



Maxime COUPREMANNE
Data Acquisition Manager



Nicolas NOE
IT Expert

COMMUNICATION TEAM



Angélique BERHAULT
Communication Coordinator



Pierre HUYBRECHTS
Communication Officer

OUR PARTNERS

In 2019, our partners included:



The Belgian Biodiversity Platform is grateful to our funder, the Belgian Science Policy Office ([BELSPO](#)) for supporting our work:



We are also thankful to our host institutes for hosting our team in their premises:

- The Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences ([RBINS](#))



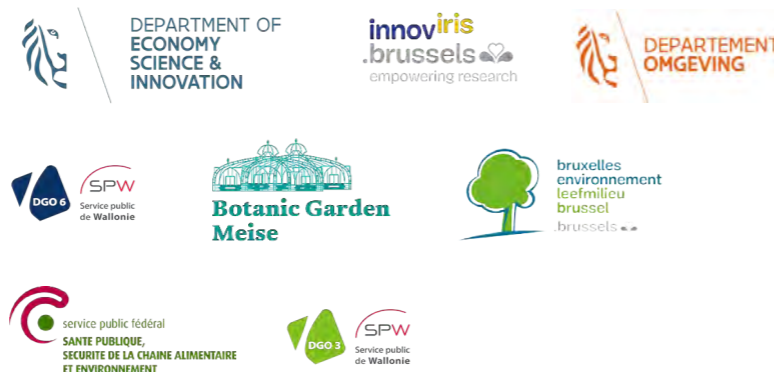
- The Research Institute Nature and Forest ([INBO](#))



- The Departement de l'Etude du milieu naturel et agricole ([DEMNA](#))



The initiatives mentioned above are also members of our Steering Committee, which is also composed of the following members. We would like to thank all of them for the strategic guidance they provide us with:



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©IISD/ENB-Diego Noguera: photo of the IPBES Plenary meeting
©Icons purchased on [The Noun Project](#)

*A report compiled and designed by Angélique Berhault,
Communication Coordinator of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform
Edited by Hilde Eggermont and the Belgian Biodiversity Platform team members*

