



BELGIAN BIODIVERSITY PLATFORM

# Highlights Report

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# 2020



Biodiversity.be

## FOREWORD



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

*We will remember 2020 as a disruptive moment in history. The COVID-19 pandemic has acted as an accelerant for many entrenched issues across the world, which is highlighting injustice, systemic inequality, and growing disconnection between humans and nature. It was not the '2020 super-year for biodiversity' we expected. Many meetings, including the 8th IPBES Plenary and the CBD COP15 during which Parties would agree on the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, were moved to 2021.*

*Still, 2020 also brought new opportunities - bringing biodiversity and conservation to the forefront of many discussions. It learned us the importance of holistic thinking, with a greater focus on resilience, safeguards and buffers. We also learned to embrace new technologies that can help to reduce our carbon footprint and improve biodiversity status. Furthermore, the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 ('Bringing Nature Back Into Our Lives') got adopted as part of the EU Green Deal - putting great emphasis on enlarging the network of Protected Areas, restoring degraded ecosystems and sustainably managing them by 2030, making biodiversity considerations an integral part of the EU's economic growth, and tackling the drivers of biodiversity loss including through EU's global action. The high ambition that speaks from the strategy is a clear sign that the EU wants to lead the charge in the ongoing negotiations in the run-up to the COP15.*

*Despite the challenges, the BBPf still managed to make a significant contribution to the biodiversity science-policy interface with participation to the 8th IPBES Plenary, the launch of the WWF Living Planet report Belgium, the preparations for the European Biodiversity Partnership, our work on topical issues (such as invasive alien species, biodiversity & health, and biodiversity & climate change), activities in the context of EKLIPSE (for example focusing on ecological restoration, and on transformative change), participation to many events on site and online, production of several tools to increase the impact of research (such as the BiodivERsA citizen science toolkit, the Handbook on Scenarios and Models, policy briefs and project movies) as well as our participation to the European Open Science Cloud.*

*Discover these and more in this 2020 Highlights report. Wishing you a happy reading!*

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



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## Our Mission

“Decision making on biodiversity issues is ground on sound evidence and takes place through collaboration between actors”

## INTRODUCTION

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform (BBPf) is a science-policy interface body funded by the Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO) and is supported by a Cooperation Agreement between the federal and concerned federated authorities. Within the field of biodiversity, it acts as a broker between policy, science and practice at various levels: global, European, national and subnational. Biodiversity is a matter that falls under the competence of several different federated entities in Belgium. Therefore, it is dealt with by several decision-making processes that operate in parallel with a certain level of collaboration between entities.

The three main working areas to accomplish our mission include:

### KNOWLEDGE BROKERAGE

- Providing evidence-based knowledge for decision-making
- Promoting academic excellence and societal impact of research
- Responding to requests related to biodiversity from policy and society

### TOPICAL KNOWLEDGE INCUBATION

We act as a topical knowledge incubator by offering scientists, policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders the opportunity to incubate and enrich their knowledge with other experts on the following topical issues:

- Invasive Alien Species
- Ecosystems & Society
- Biodiversity & Health
- Nature Conservation
- Biodiversity & Climate Change

### OPEN DATA

Through our activities of biodiversity data mobilisation, we:

- Encourage researchers to make use of Biodiversity Informatics tools and standards
- Provide guidance on biodiversity informatics standards
- Publish biodiversity data online on a global data portal and also provide advice on data usage

In this report, we showcase selected 2020 accomplishments in each of our working areas. We have also included excerpts from our 20-year Anniversary Report and our 2020 Platform External Evaluation executed every four years by a team of international experts. For more information on the 2020 Evaluation report of the Platform please contact Divija Jata ([d.jata@biodiversity.be](mailto:d.jata@biodiversity.be)).

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**KNOWLEDGE  
BROKERAGE**



## THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PLATFORM ON BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

The Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) aims to strengthen knowledge foundations for better policy through science, for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development. Its work on capacity-building supports a better and effective use of science in decision-making at all levels. IPBES was established as a global science-policy interface in 2012 and it has the tasks to "synthesize, review, assess and critically evaluate relevant information and knowledge generated worldwide by governments, academia, scientific organizations, non-governmental organizations and indigenous communities".

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform hosts the IPBES Belgian focal point and oversees the coordination of Belgian experts and stakeholders within the IPBES work programme.

## THE 6<sup>TH</sup> PAN-EUROPEAN STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION TO IPBES (PESC-6)

The Pan-European Stakeholder Consultations (PESC) aim to bring together IPBES stakeholders from Europe and Central Asia, providing capacity and supporting their engagement in IPBES. It provides a forum for collecting inputs on ongoing processes and deliverables. PESC builds capacity through presentations on IPBES processes and hands-on workshops reviewing IPBES documents. These consultations are organised on a regular basis by the European and Central Asia network of IPBES national focal points and national platforms, i.e., the ECA network.

On 5 and 6 October 2020, the ECA network and collaborators organised the 6<sup>th</sup> Pan-European Stakeholder Consultation (PESC-6). The meeting was supposed to take place in Belarus, but due

to COVID-19 it was organized as an online session. It offered an overview of science-policy interfacing and stakeholder engagement opportunities within Europe (most notably: the Open-ended Network of IPBES Stakeholders, ONet; the ECA network; the European Knowledge and Learning Mechanism on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, EKLIPSE) and enabled a review of the First Order Draft (FOD) of the IPBES Invasive Alien Species (IAS) assessment.

The meeting welcomed a total of 70 participants from across 19 countries worldwide, on both days. At least one Chair and several Coordinating Lead Authors (CLAs) and Lead Authors (LAs) of the IPBES IAS assessment were present during the working sessions to answer questions and exchange with the participants. Participants worked in groups and reviewed the different chapters of the IAS assessment, providing specific and general comments. Additions to the draft assessment were noted and submitted to the IPBES Secretariat as the official PESC review.

## EXPANSION OF THE EUROPEAN AND PARTICIPATION IN IPBES ASSESSMENTS

In addition to our formal role as IPBES National Focal Point which includes mobilization of Belgian experts in the IPBES work, two of our BBPf experts actively participated in the writing of ongoing assessments. For example, this year, the Platform (through Sander Jacobs) has made a substantial contribution to the IPBES Values Assessment. As Coordinating Lead Author of Chapter 3, we have brought together and coordinated experts from all over the globe and from different disciplines -including non-scientific and indigenous knowledge - to put together a second order draft for review by governments. We have also edited, together with the other chapter lead, a first draft for the summary for policymakers. This knowledge has been (and will further be) feeding back to the Belgian experts through publications, lessons and webinars, as well as through invited keynotes. Lessons learned on the organisational and governance aspects of IPBES assessments are directly applied in the Belgian context.

Similarly, the Platform (through Sonia Vanderhoeven) contributed as Lead Author to the IPBES Assessment on Invasive Alien Species.



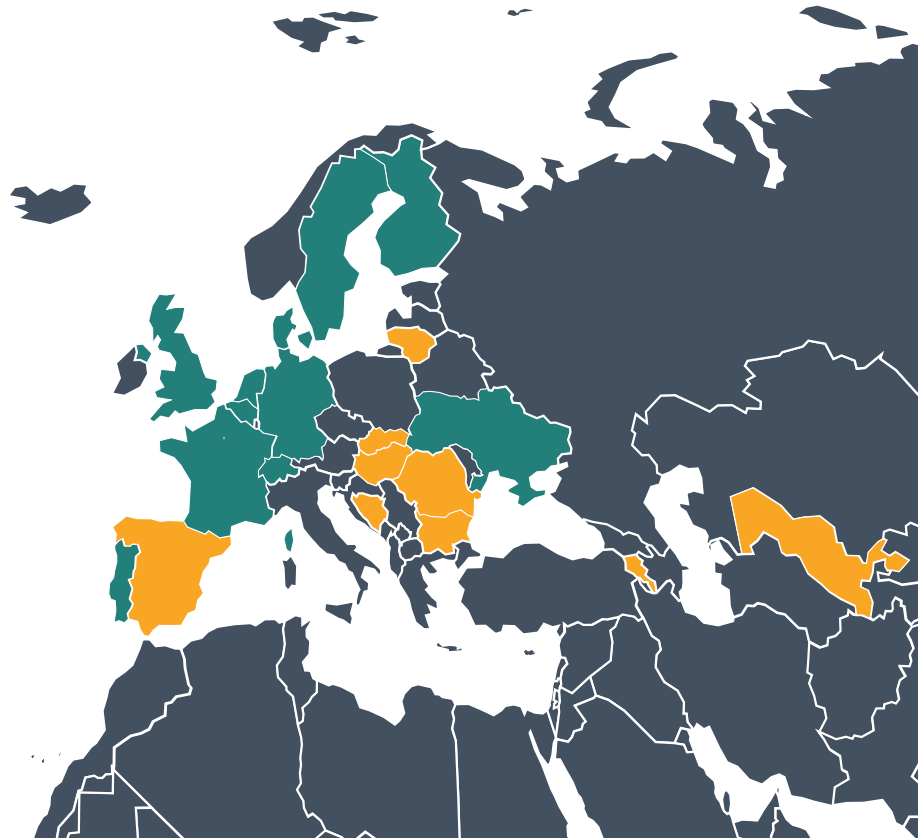
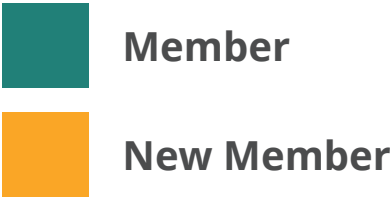
*through the  
Intergovernmental  
Science-Policy  
Platform on  
Biodiversity and  
Ecosystem Services  
(IPBES)*



# EXPANSION OF THE EUROPEAN AND CENTRAL ASIA NETWORK OF ORGANISATIONS ENGAGED IN IPBES (ECA NETWORK)

The ECA network is the Europe & Central Asia Network of national focal points and national platforms engaged in IPBES. Its goal is to support the national biodiversity platforms, and provide a common space for sharing knowledge and lessons learned regarding IPBES. The network is coordinated by the BBPf, in close connection with the IPBES Technical Support Unit on Capacity Building. In 2020, the ECA network has been significantly expanding!

This year we are very pleased to announce that nine new countries have joined the network, many of them from Eastern Europe & Central Asia: Armenia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, and Uzbekistan. This brings the network to a total of 19 national biodiversity platforms / focal points.



# THE INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURE

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform hosts the IUCN Belgian Focal Point. We reinforce engagement of Belgian IUCN members and stakeholders in the IUCN global and regional programmes, and raise awareness about IUCN tools, standards and products. Through our engagement in the IUCN Working Group for National Committee Development, we also exchange best practices and national experiences with other IUCN national committees across West and East Europe, North and Central Asia.

In 2020, our contributions in this Working Group focused on the further establishment of an Interregional Committee and conducting a members' survey on COVID-19. The survey inquired about the role of IUCN in the post-COVID-19 reality and its visibility during the crisis.

This year the Belgian IUCN National Focal Point also facilitated, and welcomed two new IUCN members: Flemish Institute for Technology Research (VITO) and the Institute for Nature and Forest (INBO)

Considering the exceptional circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020 had been postponed to 2021. Still, several items were subject to an e-vote in 2020 for which the BBPf – as Head of Delegation – ensured the coordination of Belgian positions.



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







## WWF LIVING PLANET REPORT BELGIUM

As part of what was considered a super year for biodiversity, the 2020 WWF Living Planet Report for Belgium was released. The report presents a state of play of Belgium's biodiversity based on average change in population sizes of 283 species of birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and insects for the period 1990-2018.

The Living Planet Index, the core indicator of this report, reveals on average a slightly increasing trend for biodiversity in Belgium during this time. This work was produced as a collaboration between WWF, Natagora, Natuurpunt, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform and the Royal Belgian Institute for Natural Sciences. These five organisations have joined forces and gathered more than twenty university experts, public institutions, and conservation organisations from all three regions and the federal level. These key actors in biodiversity protection worked together for almost two years and ensured the scientific quality of this unique report.



[Download full report](#)

*"It is clear that the Platform has a presence in almost all the relevant bodies of biodiversity related science-policy mechanisms at the EU and international level. The effort to be centrally placed is commendable and as panel members, we can bear witness to the fact that the Platform is widely known and respected".*

~ Belgian Biodiversity Platform Evaluation Report, 2020

## BIODIVERSA

BiodivERsA is a network of 39 agencies and ministries from 25 European countries programming and funding pan-European research on biodiversity and ecosystem services on a competitive basis. BiodivERsA funds medium-sized projects that demonstrate academic excellence but also deliver a clear societal impact. In that context, the partnership also strongly promotes and supports stakeholders' engagement, science-policy-society interfacing, and dissemination of BiodivERsA-funded research. Belgian members in the network include the Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO), the Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO) and the Fonds de la recherche scientifique (FRS-FNRS). On behalf of Belspo, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform implements tasks for BiodivERsA and also coordinates the network.

In November 2020 we provided support to the release of the BiodivERsA [Citizen Science Toolkit](#) which aimed at researchers and scientists working in the fields of biodiversity or environmental sciences, with an an interest in involving citizens in their research projects. This toolkit focuses on:

- Getting a better overview and understanding of what is Citizen Science
- Figuring out all the benefits of adopting Citizen Science approaches
- Having access to a list of the most relevant publications and most useful tools for Citizen Science
- Discovering many examples of Citizen Science projects and testimonies from researchers

The Toolkit was developed by a working group including scientists and Citizen Science experts, following the Citizen Science workshop organised in Brussels in April 2019.

Together with the Belmont Forum, the Platform worked on the production of a BiodivERsA handbook on the use of Biodiversity Scenarios in support of decision-making. The handbook is intended for any individual interested to learn about biodiversity scenarios, and in particular participatory scenario design and the use of







biodiversity scenarios in decision-making. It builds on a variety of sources (literature, expert and non-expert consultations, interviews) to provide a general understanding of biodiversity scenarios, concrete examples of their use, and a directory of relevant resources to go further on the topic.

The handbook includes:

- Different types of scenarios that relate to decision-making
- Key features, pitfalls, and best practices in developing and using scenarios of biodiversity and ecosystem services
- Illustrative examples, case studies, and lessons learned on participatory biodiversity scenarios and their use, drawn from research projects funded by BiodivERsA, Belmont Forum, and others
- Further reading, tools and resources on the topic of (biodiversity) scenarios

The complete Handbook is [available to download](#) along with the directory of resources on biodiversity scenarios.

In May 2020 The Belgian Biodiversity Platform & BiodivERsA led the production of the [INVAXEN project](#), along with project researchers and the video production company, Squarefish. The INVAXEN project was funded under the 2012-13 joint call for research proposals on invasive species and biological invasions. It studied the biology, ecology, and behaviour of the highly invasive African clawed frog (*Xenopus laevis*) which is of increasing concern in Europe. It also examined its impact on local populations and its invasive potential. Their observations allowed the project to develop models to predict future invasion patterns in different areas of the world.



In December 2020, in collaboration with BiodivERsA, we contributed to the publication of a new policy brief "How natural forest expansion in Europe can offer cost-effective benefits to people" based on the findings of the [SPONFOREST](#) project. The project investigates

the role that natural forest expansion can play as a cost-effective nature-based solution to restore and conserve biodiversity and ecosystems more effectively.

In particular, the brief calls for a better recognition of natural forest expansion in policy and management contexts, to better seize and manage opportunities it provides to contribute to multiple policy and management objectives, for instance in the context of the future EU Forest Strategy. The brief is part of a series of policy briefs under production building on results of projects funded through BiodivERsA in 2015-16.

## EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIP ON BIODIVERSITY

In 2020, the BBPf (on behalf of Belspo) and the French Foundation for Biodiversity (FRB) have been coordinating the preparatory work for the European co-funded Partnership on Biodiversity. Being the successor of BiodivERsA, this Partnership will be part of Horizon Europe and it will run over 7 years (2021-2028). Co-developed by BiodivERsA, DG Environment and DG Research & Innovation of the European Commission, the Partnership aims to be an ambitious instrument with five overarching objectives:

- Improve monitoring of biodiversity and ecosystem services across Europe by setting up transnational harmonized monitoring schemes;
- Generate science-based, actionable knowledge to tackle the biodiversity crisis and the drivers of biodiversity loss;
- Reinforce the evidence base for the development, deployment and assessment of tools such as Nature-based solutions;
- Make the business case for biodiversity;
- Ensure efficient science-based support for biodiversity policy making in Europe

To give visibility to these new developments, the BBPf participated in the R&I days of the European Commissions (several talks and panels), and also assisted in the roll out and chairing of Partnership information sessions. It also participated to the World Biodiversity Forum in Davos, presenting a keynote on the new developments for biodiversity research, globally and in Europe.

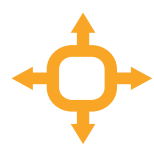
Learn more about the [European Partnership on Biodiversity](#)





## TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE WORKSHOP

As part of our work for EKLIPSE, the Platform facilitated a request from the European Commission (DG R&I) on: “What can researchers offer to understand Transformative Change and to translate it into actions, goals, targets and pathways for the Global Biodiversity Strategy to 2030?”



### What is transformative change?

A fundamental, system-wide reorganization across technological, economic, and social factors, including paradigms, goals and values<sup>1</sup>

The background report authored by transformative change experts provides a pathway to move away from theory. It considers reports and text from the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), IPBES, United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), European Environment Agency (EEA), and others on transformative change and the post 2020 process. The report proposed 6 steps and a number of sectors with the most transformative potential. Its aim was to identify how transformative change can be made more tangible and to illustrate how this might be done in practice to seize the opportunities for enabling action on the ground. This report was used as a background document for a virtual workshop on the same topic organised by the European Commission and the Croatian presidency, which was attended by representatives from over 50 countries, and which sought to identify how transformative change can be leveraged at the level of global biodiversity governance.

The BBPf acted as Secretariat focal point for this EKLIPSE activity. The Platform identified and selected experts, the facilitated the expert working group and provided experts with insight on the nuances of the CBD and the post 2020 process. We also edited the final background report so that it would be accessible to a wide audience of non-experts.

In parallel, the Platform played an important role in the workshop organisation, consultation, delivery and reporting. More information on the workshop and the discussions that took place are available in [the report](#).

Along with the workshop, an EKLIPSE podcast was produced in order to reach a wider audience, an output in which the Platform also played a significant role, particularly on the concept and the content.

<sup>1</sup>: IPBES (2019): Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science - Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. E. S. Brondizio, J. Settele, S. Díaz, and H. T. Ngo (editors). IPBES secretariat, Bonn, Germany. 1148 pages.

## RESTORATION REQUEST REPORT

Target 2 of the EU Biodiversity Strategy states that “By 2020, ecosystems and their services are maintained and enhanced by establishing green infrastructure and restoring at least 15% of degraded ecosystems”. In this context, during the second call for requests (CfR.2/2017) the EKLIPSE project received a request from BiodivERsA, focused on the identification of knowledge gaps in ecosystem restoration. This request aims to understand why current approaches to restoration are not as effective as possible, despite it being a commitment under the EU Biodiversity Strategy. Gaining a better understanding of the limitations to effective restoration can provide evidence to support more effective implementation, investments in restoration, and could help BiodivERsA identify areas on which to focus during its next call.

More specifically, the request focused on:

*“What is hampering the effectiveness of existing approaches that aim to restore biodiversity and ecosystem function and services?”*

Identifying constraints or barriers to effective restoration, including the identification of knowledge gaps restricting restoration approaches/actions, appropriate methodologies, optimal management, and effectiveness of interventions, are not restricted to a specific type of restoration or ecosystem. To respond to this request, EKLIPSE selected 12 experts from 8 European countries and Australia to form an Expert Working Group and produce a [report](#).

The Platform was the Secretarial focal point for this request. As Secretariat, the Platform facilitated and organised weekly meetings of the expert working group, oversaw the two streams of work: a Delphi analysis of the barriers to implementation and an assessment of available knowledge. The Platform organised the stakeholder consultation on the outputs, was the main interface between the expert working group and the requester, and prepared the report summary. This work also fed into the production of a podcast that allows for better understanding of the issue by the general public and sharing the results with a wider audience.

Once the request was completed, the Platform was also involved in the production of an open access journal manuscript detailing the methods and results of the expert working group.



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**TOPICAL  
KNOWLEDGE  
INCUBATION**



through the Belgian  
Federal Public  
Service for Health,  
Food Chain Safety  
and Environment



## INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES

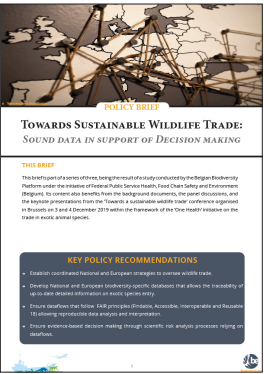
The Belgian Biodiversity Platform works on science-policy processes of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) through:

- Facilitating a Belgian Community of Practice on invasive alien species
- Actively participating in the implementation of the EU Regulation on IAS in Belgium
- Being a partner in Belgian initiatives related to invasive alien species
- Contributing to publications on invasive alien species

## DEAD OR ALIVE: LAUNCH OF THREE POLICY BRIEFS RELATED TO WILDLIFE TRADE

These policy briefs are the result of a collaborative work carried out under the initiative of the Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment (Belgium) within the framework of the 'One Health' initiative on the trade in exotic animal species. Its content is based on the background documents, panel discussions, and keynote presentations from the 'Towards a sustainable wildlife trade' conference organised in Brussels on 3 and 4 December 2019.

Each policy brief presents the current state of knowledge in the field across a variety of disciplines and highlights key recommendations emanating from the conference. In addition, a series of actions are also proposed in appendices, as well as a glossary of the main concepts associated.



Available for download:

[The case of bushmeat](#)

[The case of reptiles and amphibians](#)

[Sound data in support of decision making](#)

## TRACKING INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES (TrIAS)

TrIAS is a Belspo-funded project (2017-2020) focusing on building an open data-driven framework to support policy on invasive species. In 2020 we continued the elaboration of the Belgian checklist of alien species, which now serves as official reference for Belgium in the Global Register for Introduced and Invasive Species, and currently counts almost 2800 known alien species for the Belgian territory. This checklist will evolve as knowledge improves. Occurrence data are associated with these species, which has made it possible to identify the species currently emerging for the Belgian territory, some of which will be the subject of risk analyses by the end of the project.

## RIPARIAS

In 2020, the BBPf finalised the elaboration of a LIFE Proposal: «Reaching Integrated and Prompt Action in Response to Invasive Alien Species» (RIPARIAS). The project has been selected for European funding and will be co-financed by the different authorities responsible for the management of invasive species in Belgium.



The BBPf will oversee the development of a decision support system that will allow the translation of national objectives into local actions at the river basin, with the help of the platform IT developers.

## BELGIAN INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES SECRETARIAT



2020 is the year in which the Belgian Cooperation Agreement on Invasive Species came into force. The highlight of the collaboration between the Scientific Secretariat and the platform this year was the development of the Belgian [website](#) on the European Regulation by the BBPf. This is a key tool regarding the implementation obligations for Member States under the EU Regulation.

through Tracking  
Invasive Alien Species  
TrIAS



through RIPARIAS  
Research Integrated  
and Prompt Action  
in Response to  
Invasive Alien Species



through The Belgian  
invasive Alien Species  
Secretariat





## RETHINKING OUR COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE ON 'BELGIAN ECOSYSTEM SERVICES' (BEES)

After 6 years of the BEES (Belgian Ecosystem Services) Community of Practice, the BBPf decided to integrate the BEES CoP in the BBPf core activities, and those of the IPBES National Focal Point specifically. Indeed, the 'ecosystem services' topic has evolved from an emerging topic to a strongly mainstreamed topic in policy and scientific research programmes. Meanwhile, IPBES is now very prominent in the biodiversity landscape with BBPf hosting the National Focal Point, largely relying on the BEES CoP for input. It thus made sense to assess to re-organize and re-brand our activities to maximize impact, still ensuring proper space for informal exchanges between experts of all kinds, out of their office space. The new name of the CoP 'Belgian Ecosystems and Society' (still abbreviated as BEES) also makes clearer the relation with new concepts such as 'Nature's Contributions to People'<sup>2</sup> that are better capturing the diverse values of biodiversity.

## COVID-19 SURVEY

The on-going COVID-19 crisis is a stark reminder of the importance of the relationships between biodiversity and human health. The health of animals, ecosystems and humans are closely interlinked, and when one is out of balance, others follow suit. Fighting the health crisis is a top priority today, but to avoid new systemic shocks of environmental, health or other nature, we need a broader vision and a long-term strategy that addresses socio-economic, environmental and health challenges together and can make the post-crisis society and economy more resilient, sustainable, and fair. During crisis management many things are still unclear and learning by doing is saved for later.

In the Summer of 2020, the Belgian One Health network (BEOH), coordinated by the BBPf, conducted a survey within the One Health community. The questionnaire covered experiences with COVID-19, lessons learnt from early warnings, and perspectives on the EU Green Deal. The information collected from the survey was collated and here we present some overall lessons from the COVID-19 crisis.

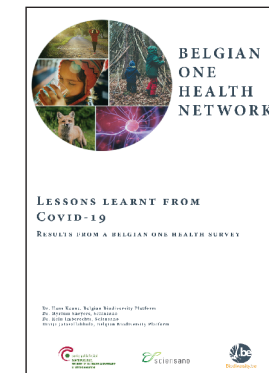
<sup>2</sup>: Nature's contributions to people (NCP) are all the contributions, both positive and negative, of living nature (i.e. diversity of organisms, ecosystems, and their associated ecological and evolutionary processes) to the quality of life for people - <https://ipbes.net/glossary/natures-contributions-people>.



There were 45 responses to the survey, from participants across a wide range of backgrounds including One Health, Agriculture, Social Sciences etc. Most have been involved in COVID-19 work within the areas of science and policy. All participants know about the EU Green Deal, particularly the thematic areas of Biodiversity, Farm to Fork, Adaptation to climate change strategy, and Circular Economy Action Plan.

### Key lessons from the survey:

- Need for better inter- and transdisciplinary collaborative arrangements
- Awareness raising is important
- Governance should be well-coordinated
- enhanced scientific capacity is needed in all sectors
- promote engage and communication



### EID (emerging infectious disease) approach

BEOH urges the importance of overcoming too narrow (silo) approaches, such as a purely clinical/ medical approach to infectious diseases. Europe was ill-prepared: BEOH underlines the need for an EU rapid response emergency plan. We can enhance preparation with scenarios defined in advance and better informed staff regarding (new) crisis management. Belgium and its neighbouring countries need better action plans with local implementation targeted at early containment.

### [Download the health survey results](#)

"From the Sixth National Report of Belgium to the Convention on Biological Diversity (2019), we can conclude that the engagement of the Platform in international mechanisms is substantial. The EU-mechanisms, showcased by the work within EBPRS, BEES, EKLIPSE for example, are relevant and outstanding. We believe that the work of the Platform creates part of the backbone of Belgian engagement and influence at the EU and international levels".

~ Belgian Biodiversity Platform Evaluation Report, 2020

## BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

In 2020 the Belgian Biodiversity Platform assessed the need for science-policy interfacing tools/approaches/capacity in the topical area of Biodiversity and Climate Change.

This initiative came as a recognition that the climate change and biodiversity crises require an ambitious and coordinated response, and that several initiatives and policy processes could benefit from



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closer engagement among biodiversity and climate change research communities, and with policy actors. Addressing biodiversity loss and climate change as separate risks compromises our ability to successfully halt climate change, while preserving ecosystems and meeting other Sustainable Development Goals.

Climate change and biodiversity loss share several root causes that are linked to unsustainable modes of production and consumption (e.g., in agri-food systems or energy production) (IPBES, 2019). This is reflected in subsidies that are harmful to biodiversity, with a massive share concerning subsidies to fossil fuels. Moreover, climate change and biodiversity loss interact to create and compound harms to people's lives, livelihoods, wellbeing, and rights.

We invited stakeholders to take part in a survey to help us identify how as a science policy interface we can best support such a community. We had 39 participants from a wide range of backgrounds including academia, government, NGOs etc. Over two third of participants were interested in engaging with such a community. Suggestions for possible roles of the Platform included:

- Serving as a bridge, to provide closer collaboration between stakeholders and experts
- Knowledge brokerage and networking, through facilitation of networking events dedicated to knowledge exchange on specific climate and biodiversity topics
- Facilitating communication, interpretation and dissemination of data including better integration of regional and national level actors
- Research and pilot projects around nature-based solutions, trade-offs, co-benefits and synergies for climate and biodiversity

Going forward we aim to bring these ideas to life by initiating networking events bringing the communities of biodiversity and climate change actors closer.

For more information visit the [webpage](#) on this topical issue.

Finally, the BBPf also gave a keynote on the interplay between biodiversity, ecosystem services and climate, during the Green Week (online event organized by VITO).

## TOGETHER FOR BIODIVERSITY



For the first time in Belgium, 39 organisations and biodiversity experts, have decided to join forces and create the movement Together for Biodiversity. Researchers, international NGOs, environmental associations, natural parks, museums and botanical gardens, zoos, local entities and actors, Walloon, Brussels, Flemish and federal authorities share the same conviction.

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform is pleased to be a part of this movement. Together with our partner organisations we hope to encourage the study, conservation, protection, and promotion of Biodiversity in Belgium.

For more information on this movement please visit:

French: [#EnsemblePourLaBiodiversité](#)

Dutch: [#SamenVoorBiodiversiteit](#)

**#Samen  
VoorBiodiversiteit**

## EOS PODCAST ON BIODIVERSITY

EOS Wetenschap had an interview with the BBPf Scientific Coordinator talking about biodiversity. The podcast covers the basics on biodiversity, main causes of biodiversity loss, what we can do ourselves as the general public, scientific evaluation of biodiversity and much more!

Listen to the podcast (in Dutch) [here](#). You can also read [the transcript](#) of the interview on our website in English.



By EOS





3

OPEN  
DATA



## OPEN DATA AND FAIR PRINCIPLES

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform continues to promote Open Data through daily activities, and we took part in major European and International initiatives. This includes the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), which reached an important milestone in July 2020, by becoming the EOSC association. The association is a private body of law with a public service mission under Belgian law. This is a major step towards the implementation of EOSC under the Horizon Europe Framework Programme and beyond. During 2020, the FAIR Workgroup has published key recommendations documents.



### Data Publication

By the end of December 2020, Belgium provided 12.811.851 occurrence records from 144 datasets, 1.148.859 checklist records from 25 datasets and 717.006 sample- event records from 121 datasets to the GBIF network.

The GBIF National Country report for Belgium (January 2021) indicates that 675.027 additional occurrences have been published over last 12 months. Belgian users made 3.599 download requests in 2020, compared to 2.734 in 2019. Belgian researchers contribute to 24 new peer- reviewed articles citing GBIF during 2020, compared to 16 new articles in 2019. In total 137 articles since 2008.

### Data Usage

Belgian Researchers contribute to 24 new peer-reviewed articles citing GBIF mediated data during 2020, and a total of 137 since 2008.

### Capacity Building

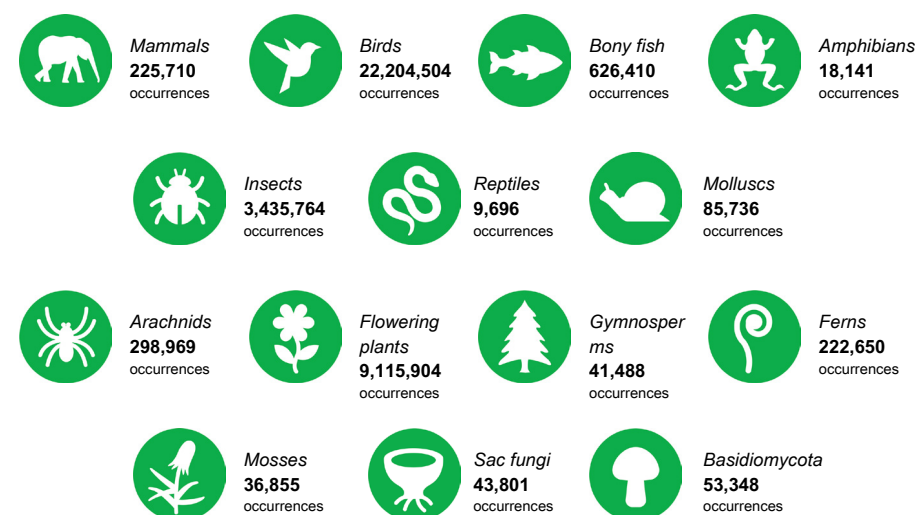
Mentoring project between GBIF nodes and CBD FPs in 8 African countries "Using the CBD Clearing-House Mechanism to strengthen biodiversity data acquisition and data sharing".

## ACTIVITY REPORT GBIF

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform functions as the Belgian delegation for GBIF, the international organisation that focuses on making scientific data on biodiversity openly available via the internet using web services. Researchers from Belgium contributed to **24** peer-reviewed articles citing GBIF and published **675,027** new occurrence records during 2020.



### Total data available for selected taxonomic groups in Belgium



On 17 December 2020, Belgian BIF has published a total of **41.260.314** records coming from **293** datasets:

- 4 Metadata datasets
- 143 Occurrence datasets
- 25 Checklist datasets
- 121 Sampling\_Event datasets

The Belgian data publishers (and number of published datasets) are VLIZ(113), INBO(63), BBP(28), BGMeise (15), ILVO (13), UGent(12), Natuurpunt(10), BCCM(7), RMCA (6), RBINS (5), ULiège (4), ULB (4), SPW-DEMNA (4), Natogora(3), ITM, Natagriwal, UMons, UNamur,VMM, Worms(1 each);

*"The Covid 19 pandemic, has led to all the international biodiversity meetings planned for 2020 being postponed to 2021, the pandemic is clearly yet another factor that will shape the shifting scene over the coming years. Scientific integrity, transparency, open access to sound scientific data and evidence-based policy choices frame the work of Platform and makes it perfectly placed for taking on an ever evolving agenda"*

~ Belgian Biodiversity Platform Evaluation Report, 2020

# PUBLICATIONS

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform (BBPf) made significant contribution to **31** scientific papers in 2020. Our team of scientists carries out research tasks and helps in organising the succesful delivery of a publication.

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS:

- ◇ Schröter, Matthias, Esra Başak, Michael Christie, Andrew Church, Hans Keune, Elena Osipova, Elisa Oteros-Rozas et al. **"Indicators for relational values of nature's contributions to good quality of life: the IPBES approach for Europe and Central Asia."** Ecosystems and People 16, no. 1 (2020): 50-69.
- ◇ Vanhove, Maarten, Jean Hugé, Luc Janssens de Bisthoven, Hans Keune, Anne Laudisoit, Séverine Thys, Erik Verheyen, and Nicolas Antoine-Moussiaux. **"EcoHealth reframing of disease monitoring."** Science 370, no. 6518 (2020): 773-773.
- ◇ Lauwers, Laura, Sonia Trabelsi, Ingrid Pelgrims, Hilde Bastiaens, Eva De Clercq, Ariane Guilbert, Madeleine Guyot et al. **"Urban environment and mental health: the NAMED project, protocol for a mixed-method study."** BMJ open 10, no. 2 (2020).
- ◇ White, Piran CL, Jean-françois Guégan, Hans Keune, Sian De Bell, Ilse R. Geijzendorffer, Tia Hermans, Anne-Hélène Prieur-Richard et al. **"Integrative policy development for healthier people and ecosystems: A European case analysis."** Area 52, no. 3 (2020): 495-504.
- ◇ Lauwers, Laura, Hilde Bastiaens, Roy Remmen, and Hans Keune. **"Nature's contributions to human health: a missing link to primary health care? A scoping review of international overview reports and scientific evidence."** Frontiers in public health 8 (2020): 52.
- ◇ Vanhove, Maarten PM, Séverine Thys, Ellen Decaestecker, Nicolas Antoine-Moussiaux, Jeroen De Man, Jean Hugé, Hans Keune, Ann Sterckx, and Luc Janssens de Bisthoven. **"Global change increases zoonotic risk, COVID-19 changes risk perceptions: a plea for urban nature connectedness."** Cities & Health (2020): 1-9.

- ◇ Reyserhove, Lien, Peter Desmet, Damiano Oldoni, Tim Adriaens, Diederik Strubbe, Amy JS Davis, Sonia Vanderhoeven, Filip Verloove, and Quentin Groom. **"A checklist recipe: making species data open and FAIR."** Database 2020 (2020).
- ◇ Davis, Amy, Tim Adriaens, Rozemien De Troch, Peter Desmet, Quentin Groom, Damiano Oldoni, Lien Reyserhove, Sonia Vanderhoeven, and Diederik Strubbe. **"Using Global Biodiversity Information Facility Occurrence Data for Automated Invasive Alien Species Risk Mapping."** Biodiversity Information Science and Standards 4 (2020): e59172.
- ◇ Booy, Olaf, Pete A. Robertson, Niall Moore, Jess Ward, Helen E. Roy, Tim Adriaens, Richard Shaw, Johan Van Valkenburg, Gabrielle Wyn, Sandro Bertolino, Olivier Blight, Etienne Branquart, Giuseppe Brundu, Joe Caffrey, Dario Capizzi, Jim Casaer, Olivier De Clerck, Neil E. Coughlan, Eithne Davis, Jaimie T. A. Dick, Franz Essl, Guillaume Fried, Piero Genovesi, Pablo González-Moreno, Frank Huysentruyt, Stuart R. Jenkins, Francis Kerckhof, Frances E. Lucy, Wolfgang Nentwig, Jonathan Newman, Wolfgang Rabitsch, Sugoto Roy, Uwe Starfinger, Paul D. Stebbing, Jan Stuyck, Mike Sutton-Croft, Elena Tricarico, Sonia Vanderhoeven, Hugo Verreycken, and Aileen C. Mill. **"Using structured eradication feasibility assessment to prioritize the management of new and emerging invasive alien species in Europe."** Global Change Biology 26, no. 11 (2020): 6235-6250.
- ◇ Cortina-Segarra, J., García-Sánchez, I., Grace, M., Andrés, P., Baker, S., Bullock, C., ... & Ventocilla, J. L. **Barriers to ecological restoration in Europe: expert perspectives. Restoration Ecology.** <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/rec.13346>



# 20 YEARS OF BELGIAN BIODIVERSITY PLATFORM (2000-2020)

This year the Belgian Biodiversity Platform looks back at the last two decades in which we have grown and have achieved many milestones. Find the full report [here](#).

## INTRODUCTION

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform was created with the objective of developing research strategies on biodiversity within the context of Belgium. Our Cooperation Agreement is set between Belgian federal and federated authorities (the federal government, the Communities, and the Regions). The Cooperation Agreement was put in place to allow for maximum ownership from, and impact for all collaborators in the complex political landscape of Belgium with regard to both biodiversity and scientific matters.

The key objective of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform’s structure is to be an anchor for the different science – policy – practice entities within the country.

The Platform provides services to the Belgian scientific community engaged in biodiversity research as well as to policymakers and practitioners. Our activities have rapidly evolved in relation to the needs of our stakeholders. We have also been prompt in reacting to the overall changing context of national, European and international biodiversity research and policy.

## EVOLUTION OF THE BELGIAN BIODIVERSITY PLATFORM



INCEPTION PHASE



FORMATION PHASE



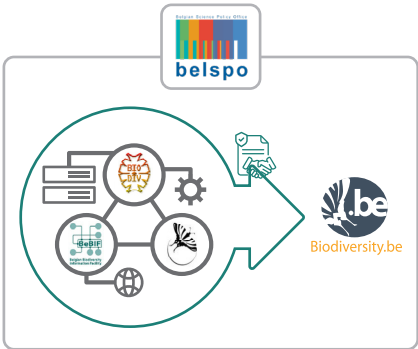
INCUBATION PHASE



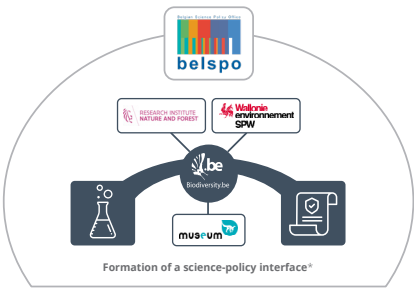
ACCELERATION PHASE

### INCEPTION PHASE (2000 - 2003)

BELSPo launched several initiatives for managing information on biodiversity, which primarily consisted of: Biobel, Belgium Biodiversity Platform and BeBIF. At the end of 2003, BELSPo conducted a prospective evaluation of the three initiatives in order to explore the feasibility of creating an integrated knowledge-based biodiversity information system. This gave rise to the creation of ‘Belgian Biodiversity Platform’ as we know it today.



### FORMATION PHASE (2004 - 2008)



In 2004, the formation of the Belgium Biodiversity Platform resulted in a composite structure posted in both federal and regional research institutions. The Platform actively contributed to the work of the European Platform for Biodiversity Research Strategy (EPBRS),

The Platform then started to develop policy supporting tools across different topics. This resulted in science-based metrics, guidelines for forest management, and Invasive Alien Species (IAS) risk assessment tools. Inspired by the GBIF strategy, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform was also actively promoting data publication.

Together with out external surroundings we evolved from acting as a facilitator between researchers and research programming administrations into a science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services

### INCUBATION PHASE (2009 - 2019)

In 2009, the focus of biodiversity research became strongly determined by the needs of the emerging policy landscape. During the incubation phase, our actions were divided into three main areas:

**Knowledge brokerage**

As intermediaries, we act as a bridge between policy makers, scientists and practitioners. We ensure that biodiversity research is disseminated in an understandable, accessible and usable manner.

**Topical knowledge incubation**

We offer scientists, policymakers, practitioners and other stakeholders the opportunity to develop their knowledge with other experts on topical issues.

**Open data**

We provide services related to the mobilisation, publication, access and use of biodiversity data in an open and free manner.

### ACCELERATION PHASE (FROM 2020 ONWARDS)

The overall context in which we will work will be determined by the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework that will serve as a universal framework for action on biodiversity, fully aligned to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

During this new phase, we intend to fully embrace the international call for mainstreaming biodiversity (i.e. ensuring that biodiversity and the services it provides are appropriately and adequately factored into policies and practices that rely and have an impact on it), for transformative change that that tackles the root causes of biodiversity loss, and for taking into consideration the multiple values of nature.

# OUR TEAM

## MANAGEMENT TEAM



Dr Aline VAN DER WERF  
Manager



Dr Hilde EGGERMONT  
Coordinator & Biodiversity Expert

## SCIENTIFIC TEAM



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Dr Sander JACOBS  
Biodiversity Expert



Dr Hans KEUNE  
Biodiversity Expert



Dr Sonia VANDERHOEVEN  
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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

## COMMUNICATION TEAM



Divija JATA  
Communication Officer



Pierre HUYBRECHTS  
Communication Officer



# PARTNERS



## BELGIAN SCIENCE POLICY OFFICE

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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A report compiled and designed by Divija Jata, Communication Coordinator  
& Leendert Plaetinck Communication officer of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform  
Edited by Hilde Eggermont and the Belgian Biodiversity Platform team members



