



Biodiversity.be

Highlights Report 2022



Belgian Biodiversity Platform

For Science, Policy and Practice

With the support of BELSPO, Belgian Science Policy Office



FOREWORD

2022 was a year of renewed vigour on environmental action, with several highlights in the political scene. The United Nations Environment Assembly held in Nairobi concluded with 14 resolutions to curb pollution and protect and restore nature worldwide. The European Commission tabled a proposal for a EU Nature Restoration Law that will set multiple binding restoration targets and obligations, with the overall objective to have nature conservation measures covering at least 20% of the EU's land and sea areas by 2030, and all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050. End of 2022, the nations of the world also agreed on the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, setting ambitious targets to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 and beyond. We faced many complexities along the way, from the covid pandemic to the war in Ukraine, a stark reminder of the impact of war on our natural environment. Still, the package deal for nature was successfully concluded. The wide-ranging nature of the framework shows that nature and biodiversity is everybody's business.

Countries now need to return focus to the implementation. Belgium has started to prepare its update of the national biodiversity strategy whose implementation will strongly rely on facilitation of access to knowledge and data, capacity building, recognition of the interlinkages between the societal challenges we face, a strong science-policy interface, and promotion of stakeholder engagement across society.

Inspired by this momentum for nature conservation, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform continued its journey to strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity conservation. Our 2022 report presents an overview of our achievements in support of the development and implementation of more effective and coherent biodiversity policies and strategies, both nationally, at regional level and globally. Hosting the national focal points for several key initiatives (such as GBIF, IPBES, IUCN), leading the European Biodiversity Partnership (Biodiversa+) and supporting a plethora of national and subnational activities and institutional arrangements, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform continued to play its role in connecting the dots.

Enhancing research, policy, and action will remain central to the activities of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform in 2023. We hope this report will inspire you all to scale up efforts to protect the planet we call home.

We thank all those who have contributed to our activities and achievements, and look forward to the continued engagement and action!



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



*Divija Jata,
Operational 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”

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^[1] between the federal and concerned federated authorities. Within the field of biodiversity, it acts as a broker between policy, science and practice. Biodiversity is a matter that falls under the competence of several different federated entities in Belgium.

We have a distributed team of biodiversity experts, IT experts, and a communications officer managed by an executive secretary at BELSPO. The biodiversity experts are located at three host institutes: SPW-DEMNA, INBO, and RBINS, strategically chosen for their capacity to support the Platform's mandate and activities.

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform has had a successful 2022, further advancing on our strategy and workplan as described in 2021. As COVID-19 restrictions have lifted, the platform has been able to organize events and activities aimed at advancing its mission of promoting biodiversity research in Belgium and internationally. Our team has also grown with the addition of three new members, supporting the organization to expand our reach and impact.

The hosting of the GBIF governing board, the boosting of biodiversity data publication across the regions, our joint ventures with major nature NGOs (such as WCS and TNC) and the European Union, our continued support to evidence-based workflow and action on the ground (such as the LIFE project RIPARIS), our central role in the IUCN interregional committee, our strategic positioning of Biodiversa+ as the first European Partnership of its kind, and our advisory role in over 17 bodies..... This is just a snapshot of our achievements!

As a science policy interface, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform is dedicated to addressing a range of topical issues related to biodiversity. Our work spans eight key areas, including invasive alien species, biodiversity and climate change, One Health, and biodiversity conservation. Through its initiatives, the platform aims to support scientists, policymakers, and other stakeholders in their efforts to better understand and protect biodiversity.

With its growing team and diverse range of activities, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform is able to make an even greater impact in the years to come. By fostering collaboration and promoting the latest research, the platform is helping to advance our understanding of the importance of biodiversity and the urgent need to protect it.



The Belgian Biodiversity Platform Team at the beach of De Haan. Photo ©Lise Goudeseune

[1] Cooperation Agreement between the Federal State, Flemish Region, Walloon Region, Brussels-Capital Region, Flemish Community, French Community, and German Speaking Community – first phase 2015-2021; renewed in 2021



Strategic objective:

To provide capacity and infrastructures on biodiversity science, policy and practice



IPBES BELGIAN FOCAL POINT

IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) was established by member states (including Belgium) in 2012, to assess the state of the planet's biodiversity, ecosystems, and the essential services they provide to society. The IPBES functions as a platform to bridge the gap between the scientific community and policymakers by providing objective scientific information and expert knowledge to inform decision-making at local, national, and global levels.



The Belgian Biodiversity Platform acts as IPBES Belgian Focal Point. Our activities consist of engaging Belgian experts and stakeholders in the IPBES work programme, ensuring uptake of deliverables by policy makers, and leading the plenary negotiations for Belgium. More info on the IPBES Belgian focal point can be found at [on the website](#).

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

INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES ASSESSMENT

Sonia Verhoeven contributed as Lead Author in the Invasive Alien Species Assessment, which will be approved at the 10th Plenary session planned for September 2023. The BBPf also organized a Belgian expert meeting at INBO to contribute to the government review of the Summary for Policy Makers (first draft).

TECHNICAL SUPPORT UNIT

Biodiversa+, coordinated by BBPf, hosted strategic support to the IPBES Technical Support Unit on knowledge generation catalysis, including regional dialogues with research programmers and funders on the Global Assessment, and European and Central Asia Assessment.

INTERACTION WITH OTHER NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS

The Platform continues to exchange best practices with other national focal points, including in IPBES dialogues, the IPBES capacity building forum, and national events (such as the one organized by the Netherlands).

GREEN POST CORONA TALK

Organized by the Green European Foundation, Hilde Eggermont gave a speech on the [Green Post Corona Talk](#) focusing on the central role of IPBES in supporting the international response to the biodiversity crisis.



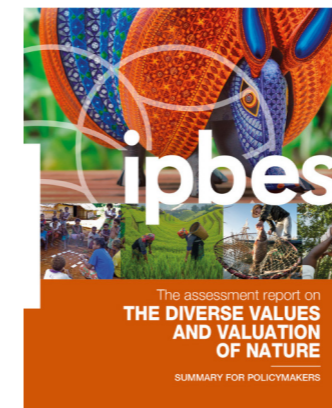
image: Green Post-Corona talks

9TH IPBES PLENARY

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform supported the 9th IPBES Plenary in several ways:

Communication on two new assessments

As head of the Belgian IPBES delegation and national focal point, BBPf communicated on the outcomes of the Plenary. Two new assessments: 'the Sustainable Use of Wild Species Assessment' and 'the Values Assessment' were released and widely communicated on by the Platform on our channels and within our host institutions.



the *Assessment Report on Diverse Values and Valuation of Nature* finds that there is a dominant global focus on short-term profits and economic growth, often excluding the consideration of multiple values of nature in policy decisions.

Contribution to the drafting of the assessment report through Sander Jacobs, Coordinating Lead Author of the assessment for the Chapter 3 Valuation Atlas.

The *Sustainable use of Wild Species assessment* found that 50,000 Wild Species meet the needs of Billions of people. Experts offer options to ensure sustainable use. The report emphasizes the need for sustainable management and use of wild species and calls for better governance and monitoring to ensure their conservation.



Scoping of the Business and Biodiversity assessment

The Plenary also adopted the scoping document of the Business and Biodiversity assessment which will create new opportunities for Belgian experts to be engaged in IPBES work.

IPBES and IPCC

The Plenary paved the way for a stronger collaboration between IPBES and IPCC across different levels. Earlier in the year, the BBPf had organized the very first (virtual) gathering of IPBES and IPCC national focal points, leading up to this successful outcome at IPBES-9.

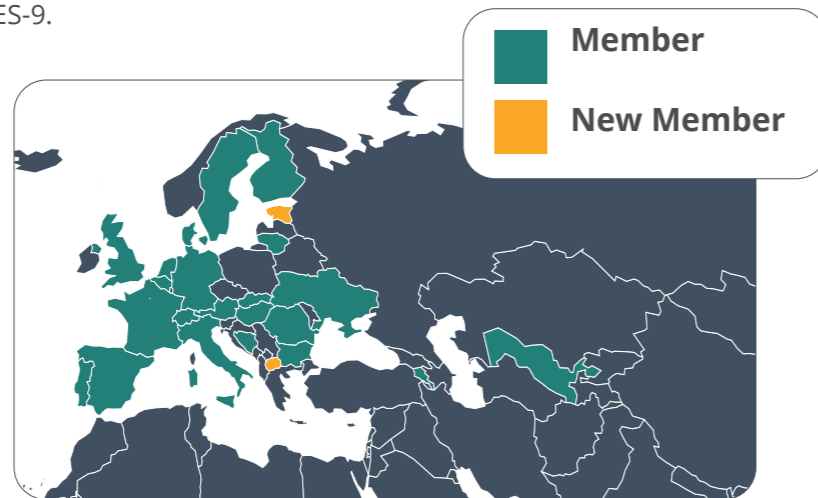
through the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)





ECA NETWORK

In 2022 there was further enlargement of the European and Central Asia network of organisations engaging in IPBES (ECA), coordinated by the BBPf. We welcomed two new members: North Macedonia and Estonia, raising the total number to 23 members. The platform also facilitated regular interaction between the ECA network members, both through the organisation of online events as well as a physical gathering during IPBES-9.



MEETING BETWEEN IPBES AND BELGIAN MINISTER FOR CLIMATE

The Platform facilitated a meeting between the **Belgian Minister for Climate, Environment, Sustainable Development & the Green Deal (Mme Zakia Khattabi)** and the **IPBES Executive Secretary (Mme Anne-Larigauderie)** at the IPBES Headquarters in Bonn, September 2022.

Discussions focused on the role of IPBES at the interface between biodiversity and climate change, the possible role of a European Observation Network in tracking progress towards the new targets, the pandemics report - and more!



Belgian Minister for Climate, Environment, Sustainable Development & the Green Deal Mme Zakia Khattabi meets IPBES Executive Secretary Mme Anne-Larigauderie
Photo: ©IPBES

"We must move beyond silos and develop a long-term, holistic policy that is good for the planet, our biodiversity and our health."

- Minister Zakia Khattabi, 2022

IUCN BELGIAN FOCAL POINT

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is the world's 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.



In 2022 the Platform continued to provide regular updates to IUCN members and the Belgian scientific communities 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'.

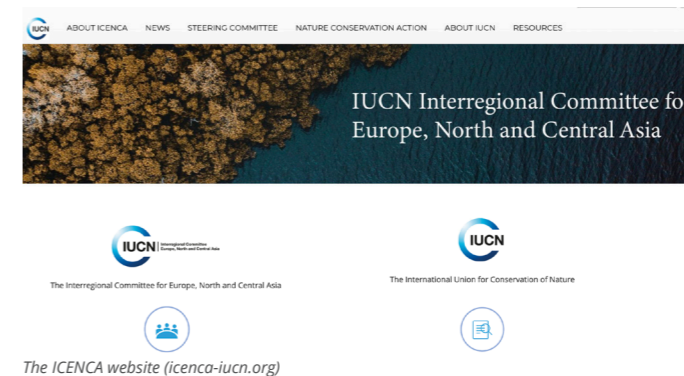
ICENCA

At the European level BBPf is strongly active within the Interregional Committee for Europe, North and Central Asia (ICENCA). The Committee, which was formally approved in June 2022, is an IUCN mechanism to generate practical and pragmatic assistance for strengthening cooperation and collaboration between all IUCN entities in Europe, North and Central Asia. Divija Jata, Platform Operational Coordinator, sits on the steering committee representing West Europe.

through the
International Union
For the Conservation
of Nature (IUCN)



As part of the support and engagement within the ICENCA committee, the Platform developed and hosts the ICENCA website (www.icenca-iucn.org). Here members and interested stakeholders from across the region can find out more about the work of the steering committee, major events organised, and contact points of the national committees across the region. The Steering Committee meets quarterly and during its meeting, members are invited to present examples of nature conservation in their countries.



through the
International Union
For the Conservation
of Nature (IUCN)



IUCN MED WEEK 2022

On 29 and 30 September, several high-level dialogues discussed the link and interactions between nature and other key topics such as peace, regional cooperation, economic development and the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This meeting took place in Malaga, Spain.

The day before the event saw the first meeting of the Chairs of the Committees of IUCN Members from Mediterranean countries, with the attendance of two regional committees: ICENCA (Interregional Committee for Europe, North and Central Asia) and the Regional Committee for Africa of the North. This special occasion enabled an exchange of experiences while promoting the north-south relationship. The BBPf took part in this event not only during the committee meetings but also moderated a panel session at one of the events.



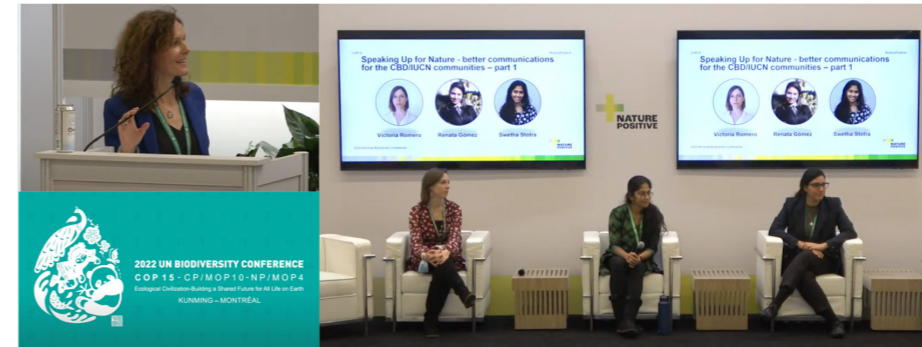
The IUCN-Med week celebrated 20 years of commitment to the conservation of nature in the mediterranean photo ©IUCN

SPEAKING UP FOR NATURE: ICENCA AT COP15

At the global level, during the 2022 UN Biodiversity Conference, ICENCA organised a panel discussion as part of the IUCN Nature Positive Pavilion at the COP15 meeting, Montreal, addressing the questions:

- How is communication between two of the most influential global arrangements for nature conservation?
- As essential actors, how can IUCN Members, including regional governments, youth and indigenous peoples, engage and communicate effectively through relevant collaborations such as IUCN's National and Regional Committees and Commissions?

The panel consisted of a range of IUCN experts, Commission chairs and members of the secretariat. It was co-moderated by the BBPf strategic coordinator Hilde Eggermont.



Hilde Eggermont is co-moderating a panel discussion at the COP15 nature positive pavilion. In the panel from left to right: Victoria Romero (policy-officer biodiversity IUCN), Swetha Stotra (Chair of IUCN CEESP Intergenerational Partnership and Young Professional groups) and Renata Gomez (Biodiversity Programme Manager at Regions4).

Reflecting on the work carried out by the Belgian IUCN Focal Point in 2022, the Platform has decided it is time to bring together members for an IUCN Belgian members day planned to be carried out in the following year. This day will focus on networking between IUCN members, discovering what conservation tools the Union can provide and showcasing the work of IUCN in Belgium.

through the
International Union
For the Conservation
of Nature (IUCN)



2 striped shield bugs (*Graphosoma italicum*) also known as Minstrel bugs mating on a flower. They are common in Southern Europe, but can be found more often in Northern regions of Europe lately. (photo by Frans Eggermont)

BIODIVERSA+

Biodiversa+ is the European co-funded biodiversity partnership supporting excellent research on biodiversity with an impact for policy and society (2021-2028). The BBPf, on behalf of the Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO), has a central role in Biodiversa+ hosting the new Chair and Coordinator of the Partnership, as well as the Biodiversa+ Communication Officer. The Platform supports various tasks across the Biodiversa+ Portfolio.



The 5 functions of Biodiversa+

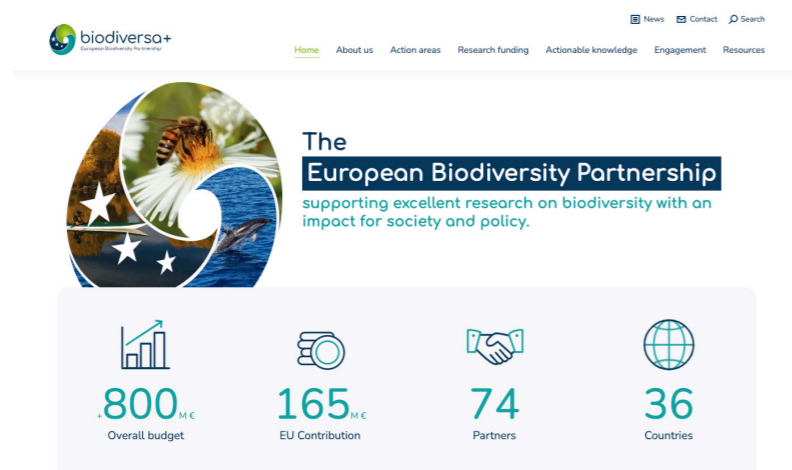
One of the main objectives of Biodiversa+ is to produce actionable knowledge to tackle the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation. In this context, Biodiversa+ supported 36 new projects funded under its BiodivProtect call for a total budget of over 44 Mio€ (including funding from the European Commission). In 2022, Biodiversa+ also launched a Biodiversa+ BiodivMon Call for Research Proposals on "Improved transnational monitoring of biodiversity and ecosystem change for science and society", with a tentative total budget of over 40 Mi€.

through Biodiversa+



COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH EFFORTS

In 2022, the BBPf led the development of a new-and-improved website for Biodiversa+, with a special focus on user friendliness and accessibility. The website was officially launched in November 2022. The Platform is managing the European Biodiversity Partnership's website, and providing ad hoc support for fixing bugs.



The BBPf has also developed the Biodiversa+ communication strategy identifying the main audiences of the European Biodiversity Partnership, the key messages of Biodiversa+ as well as the communication channels to be used. It also produced a social media strategy, as well as a dedicated communication toolkit for its partners. Through its efforts on social media, its Twitter account has grown from 3731 followers to 4916 between January and December 2022, while its LinkedIn page has gained 1332 followers.

through Biodiversa+



The Platform also contributed to the creation of visuals, posters and lay-outing efforts of Biodiversa+.

Ahead of the IPBES 9, a press briefing was organised by the Platform on behalf of Biodiversa+. The online event "Concrete actions for the sustainable use of biodiversity and consideration of biodiversity values" was organised just before the approval of two new Assessment Reports on "the Diverse Conceptualization of the Multiple Values of Nature and its Benefits" and "Sustainable Use of Wildlife". It provided the interested press with concrete actions and results from Biodiversa+ projects that address the challenges of sustainable use of biodiversity and valuing nature in Europe and beyond.

EUROPABON KEY COLLABORATION

Another main working area of Biodiversa+ is biodiversity monitoring. That's why in September 2022, Biodiversa+ and EuropaBON officially became key collaborators! EuropaBON has the mission to overcome existing data gaps and workflow bottlenecks by designing an EU-wide framework for monitoring biodiversity and ecosystem services. EuropaBON and Biodiversa+ have joined forces to promote and support transnational biodiversity monitoring. This key collaboration also aims to build on, enrich and operationalise relevant outcomes from EuropaBON through Biodiversa+.



Hilde Eggermont and Henrique Pereira at the EuropaBon stakeholder conference "shaping the future European biodiversity monitoring framework" in collaboration with Biodiversa+

On 8 November 2022, the EuropaBON conference “shaping the future European biodiversity monitoring framework” took place in partnership with Biodiversa+. The BBPf supported the organisation of this hybrid event at INBO. The conference brought together the wider biodiversity monitoring community. This event provided the opportunity for a range of participants from academia, policymaking, NGOs, government and the private sector to get updates, meet and exchange. In particular, all participants had the opportunity to draft and discuss tasks and modes of implementation of a future European biodiversity monitoring centre.

Back-to-back to the EuropaBON conference, the BBPF was in charge of organizing the Biodiversa+ workshop focusing on use of biodiversity monitoring data by the private sector. It was attended by 27 people.

CAPACITY BUILDING

To build capacity of the Biodiversa-funded projects, the BBPf organised the BiodivRestore Data Management workshop on 19 May 2022. This workshop targeted the projects funded under its 2020-2021 call, and followed the two previous Biodiversa data management workshops in which the Platform was highly involved too. The workshop was held online and addressed the issues of Open Science, Data Management Plans, Data publication, as well as sharing of practical experiences from other projects.

The Platform has also set-up and led a working group on providing Biodiversa-funded projects with capacity building activities related to communication. A concept note for this task was produced and communication capacity building activities will start in 2023.

EVENTS

The Platform also supported the organisation of events on behalf of Biodiversa+, such as the GBIF Data Beyond Border event, which was organised back-to-back with the GB29 governing board. The event provided a forum for stakeholders to strengthen cooperation between Biodiversa+, GBIF, the European Commission, agencies, research programmes, infrastructures, networks and initiatives to deliver the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and the 2050 vision of ‘Living in harmony with nature’ adopted under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.



Anne Teller (EU environment) presenting at the data beyond borders event.

EXPERT COMMITTEE/ADVISORY BOARD

The Platform takes part in several expert committees and advisory boards at regional, national and international levels. Here is a selection:

BRAIN project steering committee

The BRAIN-be framework programme from Belspo integrates several funding initiatives of the Belgian Science Policy Office with the aim of stimulating even more effective collaborations in the research implemented by the Federal Scientific Institutions (FSIs) and the rest of the scientific community. more on [BRAIN-Be](#).



The BRAIN (Belgian Research Action through Interdisciplinary Networks) website, hosted by BELSPO.

The BBPf has been part of the follow-up committees for three BRAIN projects:

- TANGO, a project on estimating tipping points in Antarctic benthic ecosystems under future climate change scenarios. It held its annual meeting on 23 September 2022.
- INTERCEPT, on monitoring the trade of exotic animals, wild meat, and the pathogens they carry, who had its kick-off meeting on 10 November 2022.
- FOURCAST, on forest and urban islands effects on climate adaptation of biodiversity, who held a first meeting on 21 October 2022.

The Platform provides advice to the projects in terms of science-policy interface, outreach, stakeholder engagement, and communication

Expert to the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC)

The EOSC Association is the legal entity established to govern the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC). It was formed on 29th July 2020 with four founding members and has since grown to over 200 Members and Observers. Currently there are 22 Belgian EOSC members (www.eosc.eu). The EOSC provides European researchers, innovators, companies and citizens with a federated and open multi-disciplinary environment where they can publish, find and reuse data, tools and services for research, innovation and educational purposes.



The Platform has recently joined the Technical Interoperability of Data and Services Task Force. The Task Force will take the EOSC Interoperability Framework (EIF) recommendations around technical architecture as their starting point to help develop the EOSC Core and Exchange. The Task Force will deliver key documents such as a first principles document and a landscape overview of the EIF, as well as technical architecture descriptions of the EIF, including examples of adaptation hints for major existing solutions.

Preventing Zoonotic Disease Emergence (PREZODE)



In September 2022, Belgium became an official member of the PREZODE initiative. PREZODE aims to improve the understanding of the mechanisms leading to zoonotic disease emergence in complex socio-ecosystems, to identify the main biological, ecological, and socio-economic drivers influencing the risk of emergence and to strengthen the capacity of human societies to respond to them.

Within Belgium the Platform will support the PREZODE secretariat and expert committee (currently comprising universities as well as Belgian federal and regional administrations), in activities involving stakeholder engagement and working on a Belgian One World One Health strategic action plan.

Nature Report Flanders

BBPf is on the steering committee of the Nature Report Flanders, and especially advised on the interlinkages between the report and science-policy processes, as well as on the barriers, leverage points and solution paths for the different challenges faced by biodiversity in Flanders.



European Agroecology Living Lab & Research Network & FACCE-JPI

BBPf plays an advisory role in the All-Ready CSA (European Agroecology Living Lab & Research Network) and is on the Stakeholder Advisory board for FACCE - JPI, exchanging best practices for the establishment of the Agro-ecology Partnership, and lifting the role of nature-based solutions and biodiversity in agroecosystems



We love a cute hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), but keep your distance! Don't worry they won't bite, but unfortunately hedgehogs are known to carry many diseases that are harmful to humans. They don't like being touched and will roll up to protect themselves. (photo by Robin Bosteels)

COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

Platform Communication

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform has always had a strong social media presence for quick updates on biodiversity science policy issues at the Belgian, European and International levels. We have always strived to share our activities easily, making them accessible to a broad audience in an informal setting. BBPf can be found on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter.



@biodiversity.be



belgian biodiversity platform

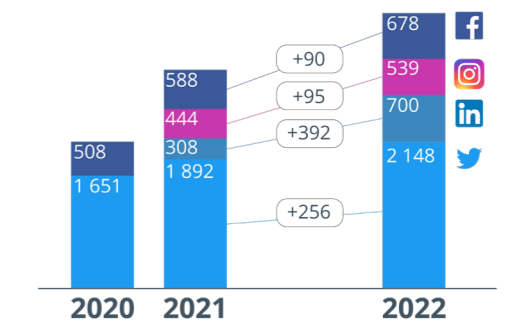


@Biodiversity_be

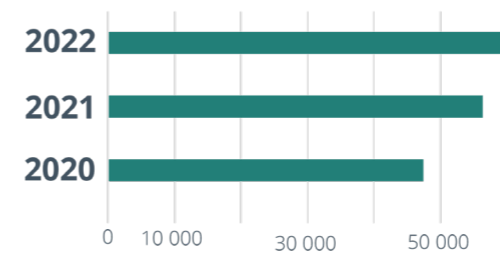


@belgian_biodiversity_platform

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform is experiencing a constant growth in social media followers across all platforms. Twitter being our most used platform with 2.148 followers on the 31st of December 2022.



Social media followers across our 4 different platforms, and the extra followers we gained during 2022.



Unique website visitors to biodiversity.be

The website **biodiversity.be** is our main and most complete point of communication. It explains who we are, what we do, events, and much more. Our number of visitors keeps going up each year. In 2022 62.893 unique visitors used our website

Along with this work we continue to send dedicated monthly newsletters (known as the **Biodiversity Newsflash**) with over 3.500 subscribers. The newsletter includes all the latest work done by the Platform across the different working areas and topical issues.



The Biodiversity Newsflash reached has around 3500 subscribers who receive the newsflash every month, this number is still growing. The newsflash can also be found on our website and all social media channels.

NETWORKING AND THINK TANK ACTIVITIES

Biodiversity Spring Market 2022

The Biodiversity market (formally known as BEES market) is a science-policy-practice fair organised yearly by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform inviting participants from across our working areas. Every year we see the return of participants from previous markets, but also we welcome new participants from across Belgium and the EU. The 2022 edition for the Biodiversity Market took place for the first time in Spring on 23rd of March at INBO, Brussels.

Against the backdrop of the Nature Restoration Law, this edition of the Biodiversity Market had a particular focus on nature restoration in Europe. In full collaboration with the European Commission, the programme included a high-level information session in the morning, with presentations on the topic of nature restoration from various actors.

This was a successful event with around 150 of participants attending and a market where 25 organisations had set up a stand.



The morning session of the Biodiversity Spring Market consisted of speakers with a focus on the nature restoration law in Europe.



During the afternoon session of the Biodiversity Spring Market 25 organisations presented their initiatives.

One Health and Pandemic Prevention

In September 2022, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), the Belgian One Health Network, the PREZODE Initiative, and the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union organised a special reception to discuss the importance of the One Health approach and the critical need to include 'prevention at source' in the new World Health Organization (WHO) instrument to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. This event consisted of several high level speakers including **Federal Minister of Climate, Environment, Sustainable Development and Green Deal Ms. Zakia Khattabi**, the **Ambassador for Global Health, France Ms. Stéphanie Seydoux**, and the **Advisor to the Minister of Environment and Special Envoy for International Negotiations, Czech Republic Mr. Ladislav Miko**. Closing remarks were given by Hilde Eggermont.

We welcome all those who missed the meeting to watch the recording which can be found on our website (biodiversity.be/5830/)



Participants of the 'One Health and Pandemic Prevention' reception.

Building bridges between UNFCCC COP27 and CBD COP15

On the 21st of November, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform together with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) hosted a reception where guests could explore how a new Global Biodiversity Framework and the Sustainable Development Goals could mutually reinforce each other through implementation.



The event was held at a timely opportunity in between the UNFCCC COP25 and the CBD COP15. Representatives of the European institutions, upcoming EU presidencies, and leading nations with embassies in Brussels, the heart of the European Union came together to exchange ideas together with leading institutions, civil society, businesses and others.

We welcome all those who missed the meeting to watch the recording which can be found on our website (biodiversity.be/5838/).

A recording of the event can be found on <https://youtu.be/5loLN34Xbbo>.

"It has become clear that biodiversity has to be considered simultaneously with climate change as these two issues go hand in hand, also from a political point of view"

- Florika Fink-Hooijer (DG Environment European Commission), 2022



From left to right: Ines Verleye, William Macfarlane, Joe Walston and Camila Maria Polo Florez on the panel discussion of the event.

Building bridges between the UNFCCC COP27 and the CBD COP15

Florika Fink-Hooijer
Director General, DG Environment

William Macfarlane
Deputy Ambassador of the UK mission to the EU

Camila Maria Polo Florez
Chargée d'Affaires at the Embassy of Colombia to Belgium and Luxembourg, Mission to the European Union and NATO

Ines Verleye
FPS Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment
Head of Belgian Delegation CBD COP 15

Joe Walston
Executive Vice-President for Global Conservation
World Conservation Society

Belgian Biodiversity Platform at COP15

"The 30x30 target was adopted and now establishes the framework to protect our biodiversity at the international level. This changes the playing field"

- Minister Zakia Khattabi, 2022



During the United Nations Biodiversity Conference, held in Montreal, governments came together for the 15th Convention of Biological Diversity Conference of Parties (CBD COP15). Together with other actors (civil society, youth, indigenous communities,...) they agreed on decisions that will affect biodiversity and human's relationship with it.

During this COP15, an historical agreement has been reached to protect at least **30% of the world's land and Oceans by 2030**. This is the most ambitious plan on biodiversity ever. In total 4 goals and 23 targets are set to be reached by 2030. This includes the plan to reduce annual harmful government subsidies by \$500 billion, cut food waste in half, and others.

In Montreal the Belgian Biodiversity Platform represented by our Strategic Coordinator Hilde Eggermont, was part of the Belgian delegation at COP15 to advise on the collaboration between IPBES and CBD. She participated as a speaker at the science forum to explain [Biodiversa+'s plan to establish a European observation network](#) which helps Europe progress towards the new targets in monitoring and tracking of biodiversity.

The Platform together with the IPBES chair, debriefed the science policy forum, organised by the [EU post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework](#). We also co-organised [a side event with GBIF on building capacity](#) to deliver open biodiversity data for research and decisions in support of the Global Biodiversity Framework.



Federal environment minister Climate, Environment, Sustainable Development and Green Deal of Belgium Mme Zakia Khattabi and members of the Belgian Delegation at COP15, Montreal. It is stated in a press release that this agreement on biodiversity is similar to what Paris was for the climate.



The common garden snail (*Cornu aspersum*) is terrestrial mollusk and one of the best know species in the world. (photo by Robin Bosteels)



Strategic objective:

To facilitate collaboration between regional and federal actors in support of biodiversity science-policy interfacing

2

FORESIGHT AND RESEARCH FRAMING

Foresight activities explore the future of scientific and technological achievements and their potential impacts on society. This working area aims to identify the areas of scientific research and technological development most likely to bring about change and drive economic, environmental and social benefits for the future. Our activities include a wide range of qualitative and quantitative methods and are generally applied to identify plausible futures to allow organisations to be better prepared for future changes, identify key drivers of change and trends, evaluate the need for action in support of policy changes and identify key questions for targeted research.

PUBLICATIONS

Within the working area of foresight and research framing includes our involvement in science and scientific papers, which goes beyond a 'simple' aid to the presentation of research results. Because of our intermediate position between science and policy, we witness the needs of both communities and try to bridge.

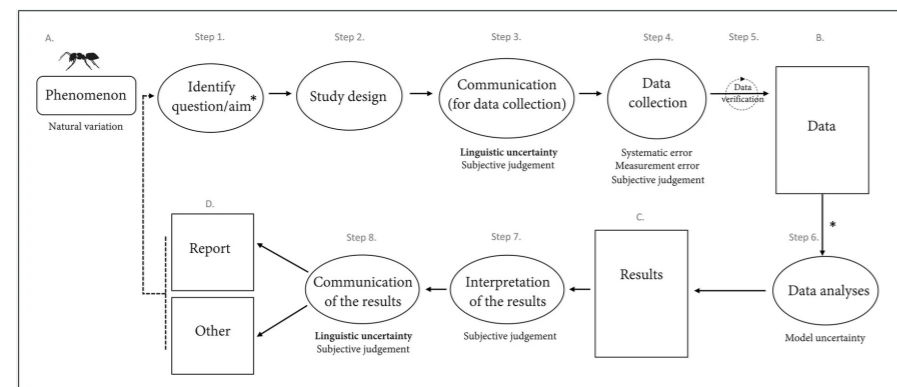
This can result in, amongst others: framing a (more) policy relevant research question or paper outline; strengthening the policy context of scientific papers, providing input from an applied/policy perspective; facilitate the understanding of new concepts; focus on science-policy interfacing processes; communication tools; and foresight activities/inventories.

Identifying, reducing, and communicating uncertainty in community science: a focus on alien species



Probert, A. F., Wegmann, D., Volery, L., Adriaens, T., Bakiu, R., Bertolino, S., Essl, F., Gervasini, E., Groom, Q., Latombe, G., Marisavjevic, D., Mumford, H., Pergl, J., Preda, C., Roy, H., Scalera, R., Teixeira Elena, T., **Vanderhoeven, S.**, Bacher, S. (2022). Identifying, reducing, and communicating uncertainty in community science: a focus on alien species. *Biological Invasions*, 24(11), 3395-3421.

Community science (also often referred to as citizen science) provides a unique opportunity to address questions beyond the scope of other research methods whilst simultaneously engaging communities in the scientific process. Focusing on alien species centered community science projects, authors identified key research questions and the relevant uncertainties that arise during the process of developing the study design, for example, when collecting the data and during the statistical analyses.



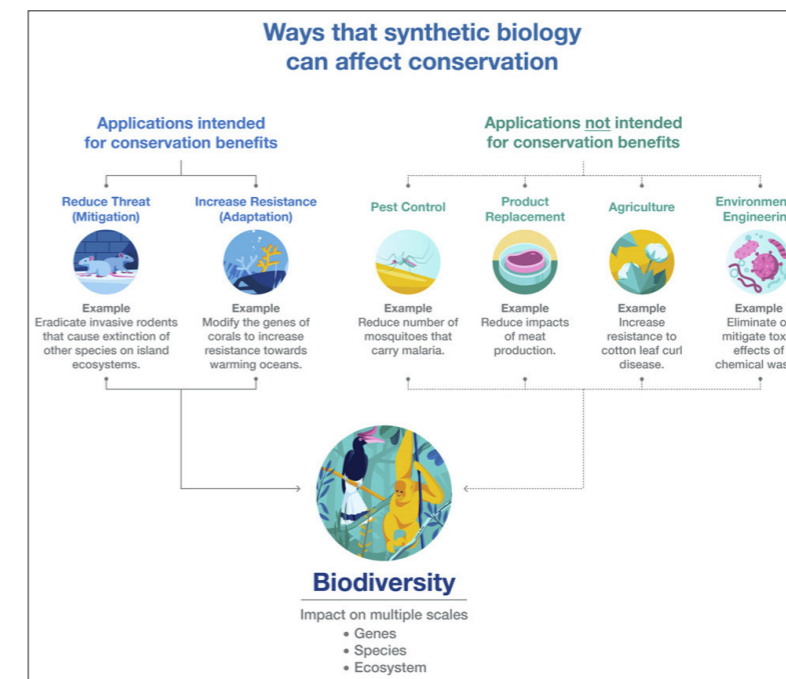
Schematic of a generalised scientific process identifying where differences in sources of uncertainty emerge in context to community science projects related to alien species (Probert et al 2022)

Direct and indirect impacts of synthetic biology on biodiversity conservation



Macfarlane, N. B., Adams, J., Bennett, E. L., Brooks, T. M., Delborne, J. A., **Eggermont, H.**, ... & Redford, K. H. (2022). Direct and indirect impacts of synthetic biology on biodiversity conservation. *iScience*, 105423.

Synthetic biology has the potential to transform biodiversity conservation, both directly and indirectly, in ways that are negative and positive. However, applying these biotechnology tools to environmental questions is fraught with uncertainty and could harm cultures, rights, livelihoods, and nature. This review brings these diverse perspectives together and emerges out of the need for a balanced and inclusive examination of the potential application of these technologies to biodiversity conservation.



Examples of the anticipated costs and benefits of conservation applications of synthetic biology (Macfarlane et al 2022)

Mapping transnational collaborations for research on Biodiversity and Climate Change



Asanica, A., Popa, A., Tiedrez-Daijardin, A., Velter, V., **Eggermont, H.**, Mandon, C., **Verhaegen, C.** and Bethe, J. 2022. Mapping transnational collaborations for research on Biodiversity and Climate Change. *Biodiversa report*. 36 pages

In this guide, BiodivClim discusses the implications of the results to guide further development of research collaboration on biodiversity and climate change in the future. The overarching aim of this mapping is to promote coordinated and well-targeted actions of European and international research programmers and funders. It also paves the way to future joint activities at the interface between biodiversity and climate change.

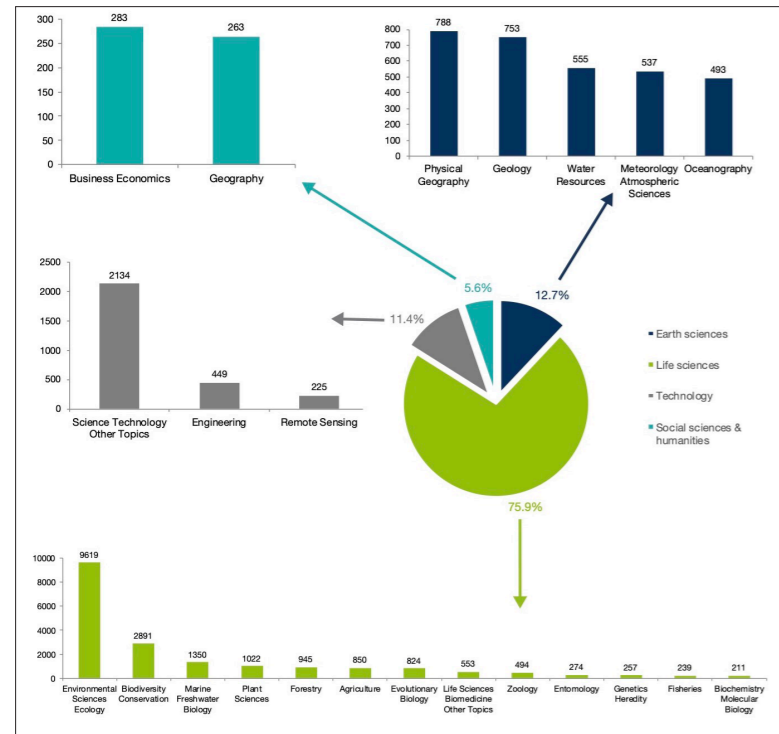


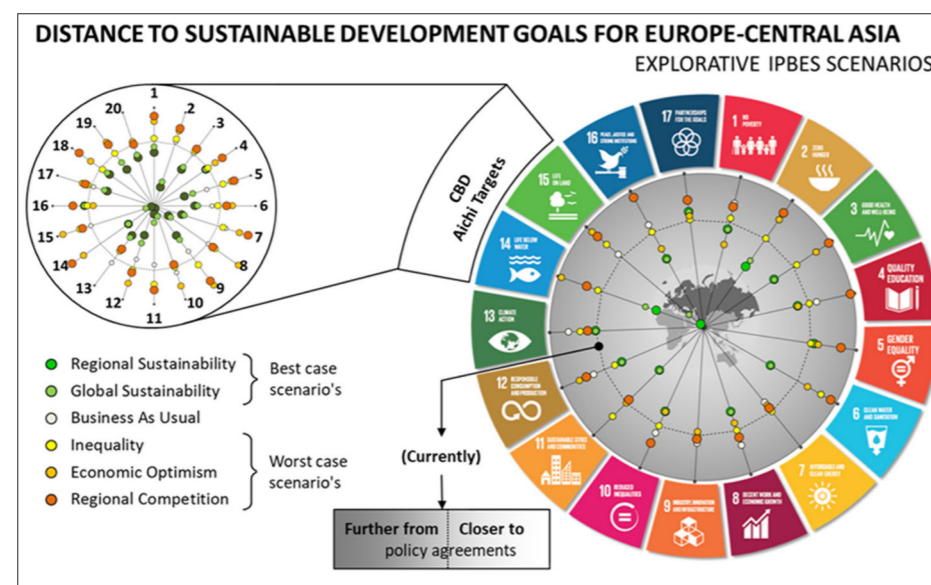
Figure shows the research domains and specific research areas (topics) covered by biodiversity and climate change publications between 2011 and 2020

Transformative Change Needs Direction

Jacobs, S., Santos-Martín, F., Primmer, E., Boeraeve, F., Morán-Ordóñez, A., Proença, V., Schlaepfer, M., Brotons, L., Dunford, R., Lavorel, S., Guisan, A., Claudet, J., Harmáčková, Z. V., Liekens, I., Hauck, J., Kok, K., Zinngrebe, Y., Pedde, S., Czúcz, B., Solidoro, C., Cantele, M., Rixen, C., Heck, A., Desair, J., Pliening, T., & Harrison, P. A. (2022). Transformative change needs direction. *Sustainability*, 14(22), 14844.

Comparing the impacts of future scenarios is essential for developing and guiding the political sustainability agenda. This review-based analysis compares six IPBES scenarios for their impacts on 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 20 biodiversity targets (Aichi targets) for the Europe and Central Asia regions. Authors confirm and substantiate the claim that transformative change is vital but also point out which directions for political transformation are to be preferred.

Projected impact on UN Sustainable Development Goals for 6 IPBES explorative scenarios Europe-Central Asia. Relative distance to current situation (dashed line). Upper left detail for SDGs 14 and 15 depicts impact on 2020 Aichi biodiversity targets. Time horizon of literature from 2030 to 2100 (Jacobs et al 2022)



HORIZON SCANNING AND RESEARCH FRAMING

The foresight activities of the Platform mainly focus on the identification of knowledge gaps and research needs (often referred to as 'Horizon Scanning') to feed national and European research programming and funding. Knowledge gaps and needs are identified through ad-hoc consultations with the Belgian scientific community at large, as well as through national and international initiatives such as IPBES, BiodivERSA+, LIFE and Horizon Europe projects.

Cooperation with the Convention on Biological Diversity (COOP4CBD)



The COOP4CBD project is a Horizon Europe Coordinated and Support Action running from October 2022 until September 2026. The project is being coordinated by UNEP - WCMC and consists of 9 partners including one of our host institutes (Royal Belgian Institute for Natural Sciences).

The overall aim of this project is to enhance coordination of European Union (EU) support to advance the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and in doing so to make more effective use of existing expertise and initiatives, in particular those initiatives supported by the EU.

The Platform is engaged in this project as part of its role within the BIOPOLS (Biodiversity Policy) unit at the Royal Belgian Institute for Natural Sciences (RBINS). Work for this project includes mapping the knowledge needs within the CBD, mapping knowledge holders, institutions, networks and platforms relevant to CBD and mobilising expert groups to provide support to CBD negotiators.



Strategic objective:

To catalyse innovative approaches which improve the transdisciplinary evidence-base on biodiversity

3

OPEN EVIDENCE
in support of
decision making

BELGIAN DELEGATION FOR GBIF

The [Global Biodiversity Information Facility \(GBIF\)](#) is an international network and research infrastructure funded by the world's governments and aimed at providing anyone, anywhere, open access to data about all types of life on Earth. Based on a network of participating countries and organisations, GBIF provides data-holding institutions with common standards and open-source tools that enable them to share information about where and when species have been recorded. GBIF gives access to more than a billion occurrence data worldwide, which can be consulted using several search filters and obtained in a consistent format according to internationally recognised standards (Darwin Core).



"We publish the best possible biodiversity data to support research, policy and decisions through a vibrant Belgian network of data publishers"

- Belgian Node for GBIF

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform (BBPf) is the [Belgian node for GBIF](#), contributing to the regional and global successes of this key Biodiversity Data Infrastructure for Research and Science Policy. The Platform also continues its recurring collaborations within the GBIF Community, seeking synergies with the IPBES and CBD Nation Focal Point is also amongst our priorities.

through the
Global Biodiversity
Information Facility
(GBIF)



DATA PUBLISHING AND DATA USE NETWORK

In 2022 the Belgian GBIF data publishing network welcomed 5 new members. (Environment Brussels, Agency for Nature and Forest, Contrat de rivière Senne, Rato vzw and the Province of East Flanders). In total there are 25 data publishing institutions active in Belgium, with 461 datasets published. Data from Belgium covers 245 countries and areas, with more than 40 000 000 records published.

In 2022 researchers from Belgium contributed to 42 peer reviewed articles citing GBIF out of a total of 214 since 2008.

In 2022 there were 6750 download requests made, representing 1,3% of all downloads that year. Monthly, about 3 billion records are downloaded from datasets published by Belgian institutions.

Several GBIF related projects are conducted in Belgium, these projects mostly focus on the improvement of the GBIF network or have work packages dedicated to data publishing. Although the Belgian Biodiversity Platform is not always officially a partner in these projects, these projects only became possible due to the strong Belgian GBIF community.

Projects relevant for GBIF: Vespawatch, Riparias, Camera trap network, Lifewatch Bird tracking, ESAS/ EMODNet Biology, GBIF camera trapping guide, Eels tracking Network, Environment Brussels 'soorten', B3 cubed, TriAS, MovetoGBIF...

HOSTING THE GB29 (GOVERNING BOARD) CONFERENCE

Belgium hosted the 29th GBIF Governing Board week, 2-6 October 2022. For the first time, this Governing Board meeting was conducted as a hybrid meeting with in- person attendance at the Comics Art Museum in Brussels, Belgium, and virtual attendance via Zoom. Amongst other decisions, the Board approved the 2023 Work Programme and Budget and new members of the standing committees have been elected. The next Governing Board Chair Liam Lysaght takes over the role of Dr Tanya Abrahamse. In his opening speech, Arnaud Vajda (Belspo President) reiterated the indefectible support of our country to the GBIF initiative, and emphasised its key role in Open Biodiversity data.

through the
Global Biodiversity
Information Facility
(GBIF)



Representative from all GBIF nodes were present in person at the Comic Arts Museum in Brussels or attended virtually.

GB29 group photo,
Comics Art Museum, Brussels, Belgium.
Photo by Lise Goudeseune/Belgian
Biodiversity Platform.



Platform members who participated the conference as staff are overlooking the GB29 meeting.

OPEN EVIDENCE

Mobilising Data, Experts and Policies in Scientific Collections (MOBILISE)

Mobilise is a cost action established in 2018 with aims to build up a cooperative, inclusive, bottom-up and responsive network with active involvement of European stakeholders to support research for biodiversity and geodiversity informatics. MOBILISE facilitates knowledge and technology transfer across stakeholders, bridging the gaps between biodiversity and geodiversity research and information technology best practices. This year Platform Biodiversity Data Officer, Dimitri Brosens was a trainer for the MOBILISE blended Training School (TS).

“Digitisation and data management challenges in small collections”. This blended training course (both online and face to face) took place in May 2022. It gave the opportunity to Natural History Institutions holding small collections to get informed and exercised on the digitisation and management of their collections.



Dimitri Brosens is giving a workshop on "digitisation and data management challenges in small collections"

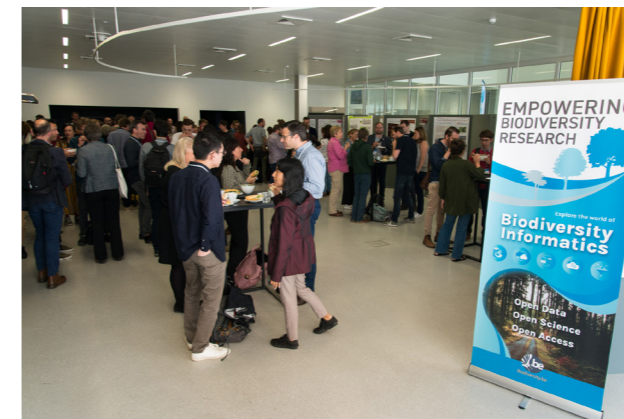
FAIR AND OPEN DATA

EMPOWERING BIODIVERSITY RESEARCH

EBR II Conference

EMPOWERING BIODIVERSITY RESEARCH

2022 saw the the return of the Empowering Biodiversity Research conference. This second edition brought together the biodiversity informatics community from Belgium and abroad at the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren in May 2022. More than 140 participants were able to meet in a relaxed atmosphere, after a long period of cancellations due to the COVID 19 pandemic.



participants of the EBR II Conference are having lunch at the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren.



Partner organisations of the EBR II Conference.

Thanks to the participation of many partners involved (RMCA, INBO, RBINS, BGM,...) the conference was able to offer high level presentations during the two days but also a market animated by more than 20 demonstration stands, covering a wide range of initiatives and topics (OBIS, TDWG, Elixir, LifeWatch, CeBIOS, Plazi, Uware technologies, CETAF, DISCO, etc.). The conference was a success and met with a lot of very positive returns, with a new edition in a wider and more international format being proposed for May 2024 in Maastricht.



In the auditorium speakers presented their projects on Biodiversity Informatics topics.



Cebios, The Belgian Biodiversity Platform and Uware Robotics were one of the many organisations that set up their stand and the market, which was part of the EBR II conference.



The *Leptodactylus macrosternum* (a frog species from Latin America), one of the many species found in the collections of the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences. (Photo by Lise Goudeseune)



Empowering Biodiversity Research Workshops

In the frame of this EBR conference, a set of 7 successful workshops were held along the year by the different organising teams, covering a wide range of biodiversity informatics training and tools demonstrations. The BBPf organised the “Explore GBIF from the Cloud” workshop, during which attendees could experience some GBIF data download and cleaning using different tools and languages (Jupyter Notebook, SQL, Python Pandas, RawGraphs,...). This could include a part of Cloud computing (using Microsoft Azure), a powerful new way to overcome technical limitations and allowing processing large volumes of data.

The workshop level was very high and required some data handling knowledge, and it was a successful first trial on this fresh topic amongst the GBIF community. It was attended by a limited number of experienced people who achieved exercises with success and provided positive feedback. Also the workshop experience, codes and returns could be shared with GBIF secretariat for possible further uptakes.



visualizing occurrences distribution over time and and space using RawGraphs

TDWG (BIODIVERSITY INFORMATION STANDARDS)



In 2022 members of the BBPf data team attended (both virtually and in real life) the TDWG 2022 conference in Sofia, Bulgaria. It is during the TDWG conference that the global Biodiversity Informatics community convenes to discuss the latest developments on the relevant TDWG standards. Dimitri Brosens was, also this year, a session organiser.

DECISION MAKING SUPPORT TOOLS AND SYSTEMS



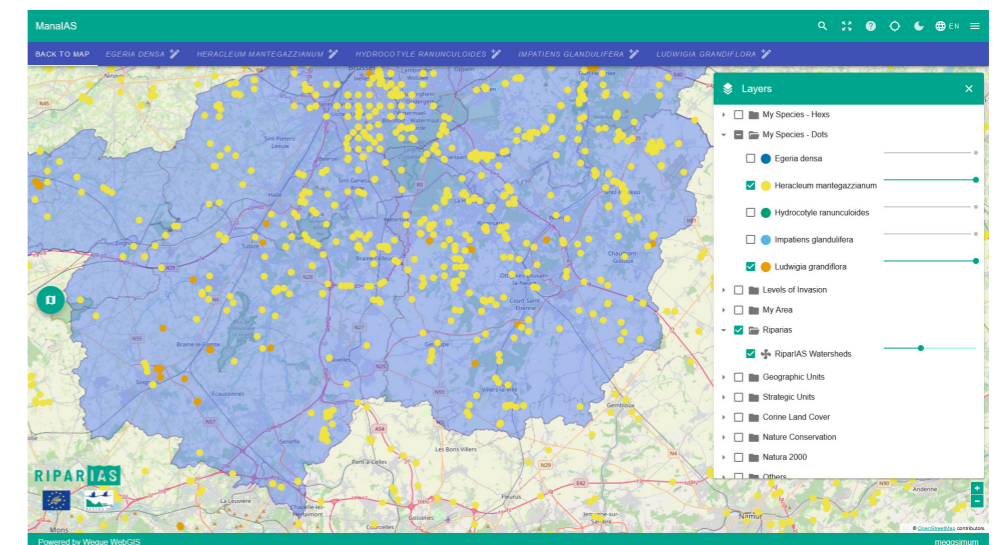
RIPARIAS REACHING INTEGRATED AND PROMPT ACTION IN RESPONSE TO INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES (LIFE RIPARIAS PROJECT)



With a running period of six years, the project is co-funded by the LIFE programme of the European Union and the three Belgian regional authorities (LIFE19 NAT/ BE/000953). It aims at developing a decision workflow based on scientific data and knowledge to establish priorities for action and to provide effective guidance to decision makers and managers.

2022 saw the development of the decision support tool, MANAIAS, set up by Sonia Vanderhoeven, the Platform's IT team, Sébastien Ronveaux, André Heughebart and Julien Cigar. It provides a spatially explicit system to assist program managers and policy makers in establishing priorities for IAS management programs and actions. The Beta version was developed, taking the mockup produced in 2021 as a reference. Based on textual and geo-localised information, the user answers a series of questions that allow prioritising the species and areas to be managed in the chosen geographical context. Beyond the prioritisation itself, MANAIAS underpins the transparency and repeatability of the decision-making process.

In addition, the Platform is also responsible for the international outreach of the project. Sonia Vanderhoeven presented the project at the International Conference on Biological Invasions Neobiota in Tratu, Estonia in September 2022.



Visualisation of species occurrence in the decision support tool

OUR TEAM

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Manager



Dr Hilde Eggermont
Strategic Coordinator
and Biodiversity Expert



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Operational Coordinator

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Data Acquisition Manager



Maxime Coupremagne
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Leendert Plaetinck
Communication Officer



Coralie Verhaegen
Communication Officer - Biodiversa+

SCIENTIFIC TEAM



Lise Goudeseune
Biodiversity Expert



Dr Sander Jacobs
Biodiversity Expert



Dr Sonia Vanderhoeven
Biodiversity Expert



Anna Heck
Biodiversity Expert

IT EXPERTS



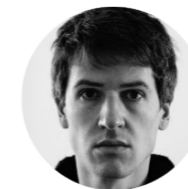
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IT Team Coordinator



Francois Malherbe
Developer



Sébastien Ronveaux
IT expert



Julien Cigar
System Administrator

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 by Divija Jata and Leendert Plaetinck

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Edited by Hilde Eggermont and the Belgian Biodiversity Platform team members



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