



Biodiversity.be

Highlights Report 2023



Belgian Biodiversity Platform

For Science, Policy and Practice

With the support of BELSPO, Belgian Science Policy Office



FOREWORD



Hilde Eggermont, outgoing Strategic Coordinator

Over the past two decades, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform (BBPf) has achieved significant milestones in advancing biodiversity and ecosystem services. Through the unwavering dedication of its staff, the BBPf has emerged as a prominent contributor to both national and international discussions on biodiversity. Hosting national focal points for major initiatives (such as the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, IUCN, and IPBES) has enabled the BBPf to facilitate connections and maximize its impact.

Renowned for its well-attended events, including Spring markets and workshops that actively involve young scientists, the BBPf has fostered an inclusive environment for knowledge exchange. Its Communities of Practice have flourished, nurturing collaboration among stakeholders and shaping policy decisions.

The BBPf's engagement in European and international initiatives such as Biodiversa+, alongside its contributions to biodiversity e-infrastructures and spin-off projects, demonstrates its commitment to global biodiversity conservation. This was also the focus of the Conservation Research Matters II conference, which examined the scope of evidence-based decision making in Belgium. It has been both a profound pleasure and honor to serve the team for more than a decade!

As we navigate the complexities of environmental challenges, the year 2023 has offered valuable insights into the delicate balance of our planet's biodiversity. Amidst concerns like climate change and unsustainable resource use, we find ourselves at a pivotal moment for global ecosystems. In this report, we explore the biodiversity issues that came to the forefront in 2023, emphasizing the urgent need for science policy practice stakeholders to enact proactive measures to preserve Earth's abundant life.

By the end of last year, we witnessed the completion of significant milestones delayed by the COVID pandemic, such as decisions aimed at enhancing global chemicals management and safeguarding marine life in international waters. A predominant focus of last year revolved around addressing key challenges facing European biodiversity including the need to enhance the implementation and enforcement of existing conservation measures, strengthen monitoring and reporting mechanisms, and address underlying drivers of biodiversity loss. These include the proliferation of invasive species to the impacts of emerging infectious diseases, the complex interplay of ecological, social, and economic factors. There is also a growing acknowledgment of the interdependence among these drivers and the significance of collaborations between international science-policy interfaces.

At the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, we continue to tackle biodiversity challenges through concerted action and play a pivotal role in shaping and implementing evidence-based policies. This 2023 report presents an overview of our achievements, including fostering national and international collaboration. As the host for key initiatives like GBIF, IPBES and IUCN as well as leading the European Biodiversity Partnership (Biodiversa+) the Belgian Biodiversity Platform supported a wide array of national and regional activities and initiatives, by bridging connections and facilitating initiatives.

Going forward, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform will continue to prioritize the enhancement of Biodiversity research, policy, and action. We want to thank to all those who have contributed to our activities and accomplishments, and eagerly anticipate ongoing engagement and action!

Enjoy the read!



Divija Jata
Strategic Coordinator

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 7



KNOWLEDGE BROKERAGE 9

IPBES focal point	10
IUCN focal point	14
Biodiversa +	18
GBIF National Node	22
Belgian Biodiversity Alliance	23
Expert committee/Advisory board	24
Communication and Outreach	26
Networking and think-tank activities	27



FORESIGHT AND RESEARCH FRAMING 31

Publications	32
Horizon scanning and research prioritisation	33



OPEN EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF DECISION MAKING 37

Belgian Delegation for GBIF	38
FAIR and Open Data	42
Decision Making support tools and systems	43

OUR TEAM 44

PARTNERS 46



Our Mission

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

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform (BBPf) serves as a science-policy-practice interface, funded by the Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO) and supported by a Cooperation Agreement between federal and concerned federated authorities. Acting as a liaison among policy, science, and practice within the complex field of biodiversity, the BBPf addresses various topical issues, including nature and society, invasive alien species, biodiversity and climate change, One Health, and biodiversity conservation.

Our multidisciplinary team is composed of biodiversity experts, IT specialists, science-policy officers and a communications officer, and is overseen by an executive secretary at BELSPO. BBPf operates across four host institutes: BELSPO, SPW-DEMNA, INBO, and RBINS. This year we also began operating with Sciensano, concerning work around One Health. These strategic placements ensure robust support for the Platform's mandate and activities.

Amidst significant changes in 2023, the BBPf has embraced opportunities for growth. After 12 years of exemplary leadership, Platform Coordinator Hilde Eggermont transitioned to the role of Administrator General at our partner institution INBO, while maintaining a pivotal role in our steering committee. Divija Jata, a key player in Platform coordination alongside Hilde, stepped into the Coordinator role. DJ brings with her expertise and a vision for advancing the Platform.

Furthermore, three new members joined the team. These exciting additions to the team are enhancing support for the One Health Network, engaging in a project within the Walloon biodiversity research context, and providing communication support for Biodiversa+ respectively.

In 2023, the BBPf continued to play a key role in both the Belgian and global biodiversity landscape. The Platform has earned recognition for its reliability and expanded its influence through active participation in key organisations such as IUCN, IPBES, BIODIVERSA+, and GBIF.



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 in 2012 by member states, including Belgium, to assess the state of the planet's biodiversity, ecosystems, and the essential services they provide to society. IPBES functions to bridge the gap between the scientific community and policymakers by providing objective scientific information and expert knowledge that informs decision-making at the local, national, and global level.



In previous years the Belgian Biodiversity Platform acted as the sole IPBES Belgian National Focal point. We now work in closer collaboration with BELSPO, where both the IPBES and the IPCC focal point are situated under the lead of Bart Rymen. For the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, Anna Heck functions as Secondary National Focal Point. This arrangement has led to better practice sharing between the two science-policy interfaces, particularly in view of the upcoming EU RESPIN project.

The activities of the Platform consist of engaging Belgian experts and stakeholders in the IPBES work programme, ensuring uptake of deliverables by policy makers in Belgium, and co-leading the plenary negotiations for Belgium, among other tasks.

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

TECHNICAL SUPPORT UNIT

Biodiversa+, coordinated by BBP on behalf of BELSPO, hosted strategic support for 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

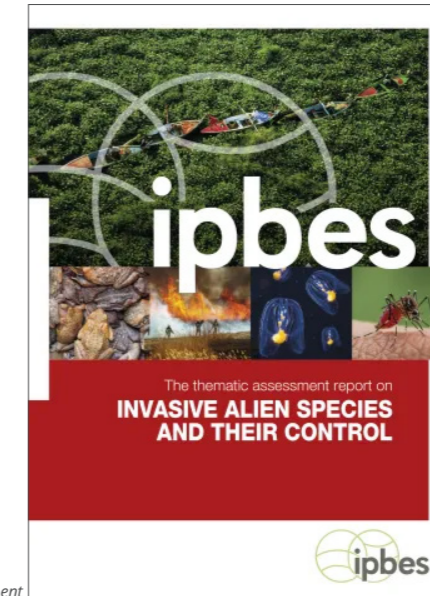
The Platform continues to exchange best practices with other national focal points, including in IPBES dialogue meetings. This year, Anna Heck participated in such a dialogue meeting hosted by the Government of Norway in Bergen, with the main aim to discuss capacity building and the future role of the policy support function, as well as how to increase the use of IPBES assessments and deliverables in policy- and decision-making.



Dialogue meeting with other National Focal Points in Bergen, Norway.

IPBES IAS ASSESSMENT

Over the last 4 years, Sonia Vanderhoeven contributed as Lead Author to the IPBES Thematic Assessment of Invasive Alien Species and their Control. This assessment and its summary for policymakers were accepted and approved, respectively, at the 10th plenary session in Bonn, Germany, in September 2023.



Front cover of the IPBES IAS assessment

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



This assessment represents a considerable effort by the scientific community to demonstrate the scale of invasive alien species as a major threat to biodiversity. In the future, this assessment will serve as a cornerstone for global decision makers and local authorities to act against biological invasions. The report highlights that future biological invasions, invasive alien species, and their impacts can be prevented through effective management and more integrated approaches.



Authors of the IPBES IAS assessment go on stage after the approval of the summary for policymakers at the IPBES-10 Plenary in Bonn. Sonia Vanderhoeven second in the first row.

The assessment has received major interest from the national and international press. Sonia Vanderhoeven participated in numerous French-language radio and television interviews from the Belgian, French and Canadian press, reflecting the ever-growing interest in this issue.



IPBES 10

As head of the Belgian IPBES delegation and national focal point, BBPF was present at IPBES-10 in Bonn. Below you may find some of the most important outcomes.



The Belgian Delegation at IPBES-10 in Bonn (from left to right): Bart Rymen (BELSPO), Sonia Vanderhoeven (BBPF), Hendrik Segers (RBINS), Hilde Eggermont (BBPF), Marie Baeckelandt (RBINS), Anna Heck (BBPF), Els Van de Velde (DOMG). Photo by IISD/ENB | Anastasia Rodopoulou.

• APPROVAL OF THE IAS ASSESSMENT

As mentioned above, the assessment on invasive species and their control and its summary for policymakers were accepted and approved, respectively, at IPBES-10. This assessment gives an overview on the current status and trends of invasive alien species, their impacts, their drivers, their management, and policy options to address the challenges they pose. The full assessment can be accessed via the [IPBES website](#).

• UPCOMING ASSESSMENTS

At IPBES-10, the scoping process for a second global assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services was approved. The resulting scoping report will be on the agenda for approval at IPBES-11. Furthermore, the scoping report for a fast-track methodological assessment on monitoring biodiversity and Nature's contributions to people was also approved. This assessment will start in 2024 and conclude at IPBES-13 in 2026. Both processes will provide opportunities for Belgian experts to be engaged in IPBES work.

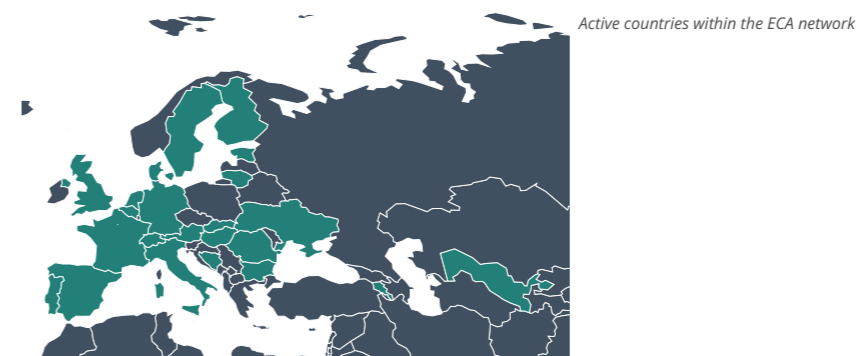
• COLLABORATION BETWEEN IPBES AND IPCC

This plenary once again explored possibilities to strengthen the collaboration between IPBES and IPCC. The IPCC National Focal Point, Bart Rymen, was leading these discussions for the Belgian delegation in an effort to show that Belgium remains committed to a stronger collaboration between these two intergovernmental science-policy bodies.

ECA NETWORK

The ECA network (Europe and Central Asia) is an informal network of organisations engaging in IPBES and brings together the IPBES national focal points (NFP) and the national biodiversity Platforms in Europe working at the science-policy interface in the biodiversity arena. The network is comprised of 23 members across Europe and Central Asia.

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform facilitates the ECA network and is one of the co-organizers of the ECA network meetings (see below). For more information on the ECA network, please visit: www.ipbes.eu



PESC7 CONFERENCE

The PESC7 conference held in Kastamonu, Türkiye, was convened by the ECA network (Europa and Central Asia), a group in which the Belgian Biodiversity Platform plays a pivotal role. This assembly served as the Pan-European stakeholder consultation for the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). Three of our team members were present for this conference.



From left to right; Divija Jata, Anna Heck, Leendert Plaetinck and Marie Baeckelandt (Belgian CBD Focal Point) attended PESC-7

The objectives of this seventh meeting of the ECA network was to engage in informal preparatory discussions for IPBES-10, to promote stakeholder engagement in IPBES' work, to support networking across the region, and to disseminate best practices within the ECA network on engaging with IPBES. With over 60 participants representing more than 20 countries, the event provided an enriching opportunity for focal points and experts to discuss and work on advancing the IPBES objectives.



IUCN BELGIAN FOCAL POINT

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



In 2023 the Belgian Biodiversity 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 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'.

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



IUCN BELGIAN MEMBERS DAY

As the IUCN Belgian focal point, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform organised the first IUCN Belgian Members Day for its IUCN members and interested stakeholders.



This full-day event served as an informative session shedding light on the various facets of IUCN's work. This included the European work programme, IUCN tools, and member engagement strategies through the Regional Conservation Forum and World Conservation Congress. The primary aim of Member's day was enhancing awareness, fostering stronger engagement among Belgian experts and members, and showcasing the value of IUCN and its role in the Science-Policy landscape.



Hilde Eggermont moderating the panel discussion on the role of IUCN in the global policy debate.

Sonia Peña Moreno, Director at the International Policy Centre of IUCN, giving a talk on the role of IUCN in the implementation of the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

The day's agenda featured enlightening discussions on the pivotal role of IUCN locally and globally, the functions of focal points, and insightful panel deliberations on IUCN's contributions to the global discourse.

The event welcomed 10 speakers, including Belgian and international experts, and over 75 attendees. This benchmark event proved to be successful, setting the stage for future collaborative endeavours and



From left to right Alberto Arroya Schnell, Arnaud Goessens, Jean-Christophe Vié, Sonia Peña Moreno, Hilde Eggermont, Divija Jata, Thomas Brooks, Chris Mahon and Boris Erg. Speakers and panellists at the IUCN Belgian Members day. Missing: Peter Galbusera.

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

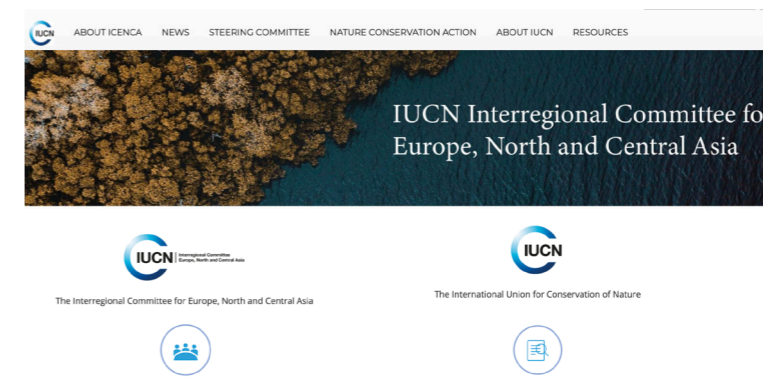


ICENCA

ICENCA (Interregional Committee for Europe, North and Central Asia) seeks to add value and provide an IUCN mechanism to generate practical and pragmatic assistance for strengthening cooperation and collaboration between all IUCN entities in the region.

As a member of the ICENCA Steering Committee and also its leadership team, the Platform plays an active role in reflecting on the conservation strategy and goals for the super region as well as encouraging member engagement in IUCN activities.

In 2023, ICENCA notably co-organised and participated in a meeting of the IUCN Community for Europe North and Central Asia, held 16 to 18 October in Yerevan, Armenia.



The ICENCA website (icenca-iucn.org) which is hosted by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform



IUCN MEMBERS EVENT ARMENIA

One of the goals of ICENCA has been to gather the IUCN family within this “super region” at a community meeting. This finally became a reality when ICENCA received an invitation to host such a gathering from the Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets (FPWC) in Armenia, a long-standing IUCN member.

The meeting in Yerevan was a fine example of all that is good about IUCN and how valuable its convening power can be. It also demonstrated the value of activities led by ICENCA.

The event attracted a wide range of participants which represented what was meant by the IUCN ‘Community’ - IUCN Members (State, Subnational and NGO), IUCN Commission members, IUCN Councillors elected from the Regions (5 out of 6 for the super-region), IUCN National Committees and Country Focal Points, and IUCN Secretariat colleagues from Regional Offices.



Divija Jata giving a talk at the IUCN members event in Armenia.



ICENCA members from different countries assembled at the IUCN members event in Yerevan, Armenia.

The comprehensive agenda covered topics such as biodiversity, youth engagement, and resource mobilisation. This meeting underscored the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing pressing environmental challenges. Additionally, the event’s report and presentations offered valuable insights into the outcomes and discussions held during the three-day event, highlighting the collective dedication and contributions of the organising team and participants.

The feedback from this first in-person meeting held by the IUCN Interregional Committee for Europe, North and Central Asia (ICENCA) has been overwhelmingly positive.

A meeting report can be found on the ICENCA website.

<https://www.icenca-iucn.org/93/>



IUCN REGIONAL CONSERVATION FORUM BID

In 2023, together with the Flemish Ministry for Justice, Planning, Environment, Energy and Tourism, the Flemish Ministry of Environment and Spatial Development, Visit Flanders and the city of Bruges, we successfully submitted a bid to host the next IUCN Regional Conservation Forum (RCF) for Europe, North and Central Asia.

“We are delighted to host RCF 2024 in the historical city of Bruges. Working hand in hand with IUCN and local partners, we aim to make the RCF an impactful and inspiring event in the run up to the IUCN World Conservation Congress in 2025. By sharing inspiring success stories and stimulating debate, we aim to help leverage the momentum created by the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and advance the highly needed whole-of-society engagement in the implementation of the ambitious agenda for biodiversity and climate. By paying specific attention to sustainability, we also hope to deliver a benchmark for green RCFs”

- IUCN Vice-president and Councillor Hilde Eggermont

What is an IUCN RCF?

Once every four years, IUCN convenes its Regional Conservation Fora as a crucial Platform for the IUCN Members, Commissions and the Secretariat to prepare for the upcoming IUCN World Conservation Congress. Bringing IUCN constituents from two Statutory Regions – West Europe, and East Europe, North and Central Asia, RCF 2024 will be a major opportunity to present their work and sustainable development issues and conservation priorities from the global to regional perspectives, advance the next IUCN quadrennial programme and help inform and steer IUCN’s strategic direction in the regions.

For more information on the RCF contact Divija Jata
(d.jata@biodiversity.be)



The IUCN RCF 2024 for Europe, North and Central Asia will take place in the city of Bruges



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+. The Belgian Biodiversity Platform hosted until October 2023 the chair and coordination of Biodiversa+. We also host a Communications Officer and hired a second communications Officer in November 2023. The Platform supports various tasks across the Biodiversa+ Portfolio.



Thanks in part to the BBPf's role in mobilising the Belgian scientific community in pan-European networks, Belgium remains at the heart of biodiversity research in Europe, with Belgian teams participating in 24 of the 69 projects funded by Biodiversa+ to date.

through Biodiversa+



COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH EFFORTS

The BBPf leads the communication efforts for Biodiversa+ and plays a major role in supporting its impact. Communication takes place mainly through the Biodiversa+ website, its newsletter (almost 5,000 subscribers), its social networks (more than 11,000 subscribers), and through events and press relations. It also develops and manages the modules of the Biodiversa+ digital Platform, which includes a website, multiple searchable databases, an intranet, an open access Platform, and project reporting tools. In this way, it facilitates the work of the Partnership, maximises its impact and legacy, and makes it a benchmark in the European biodiversity landscape.

In 2023, Biodiversa+ has:

- fostered, through workshops and strategic documents, a harmonised approach to biodiversity monitoring across scales, establishing a framework that aligns stakeholder interests and promotes seamless collaboration and data exchange
- Launched three pilot projects to further develop transnational collaboration in biodiversity monitoring:
 1. assessing governance and data standards in various countries,
 2. testing the use of car-mounted cameras, light traps, and computer vision to detect invasive species, and
 3. refining a standardised method for soil sampling and analysis using traditional and advanced techniques;



- Co-developed the “European Roadmap to 2030 for Research and Innovation on Nature-based solutions” through NetworkNature;
- Mapping of transnational and bi-regional research collaborations and assist for research funders to support international biodiversity research;
- Updated its “Data Management Guide,” aimed at assisting researchers creating and implementing Data Management Plans effectively, reflecting the evolving landscape of data management.
- Organised a Science-Policy Forum to support the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework with a focus on conservation.
- Participated in several events, notably:
 1. the European Climate Change Adaptation Conference through BiodivClim Knowledge Hub,
 2. IPBES-10, in its role as Technical Support Unit (TSU) for Knowledge Generation, and;
 3. The 25th meeting of the SBSTTA (Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention on Biological Diversity) where it organised a side-event on KMGBF implementation.

through Biodiversa+



KMGBF implementation side event at the 25th meeting of the SBSTTA

BIODIVSCEN

The BiodivScen call, launched in 2017 in partnership with the Belmont Forum, closed in 2023. BiodivScen projects are using scenario-building to assess future changes in biodiversity and support effective conservation policies. To deepen the impact of these projects, Biodiversa+ has:



1. Published a policy brief to help decision-makers gain insights into ecosystem dynamics and formulate effective management strategies;
2. Produced two animated videos to showcase the achievements of projects that have produced excellent science with concrete implications for policy and/or society, and;
3. Published a comprehensive press kit to further disseminate key findings and insights from seven projects.

RESEARCH CALLS

Each year, Biodiversa launches a new call for joint research. These calls are structured in several main phases: preparation of the call, launch and reception of proposals, evaluation and selection of proposals and launch of funded projects.

In 2023, Biodiversa+:

- Launched the 36 projects selected under the BiodivProtect call on "Supporting the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems across land and sea", with a budget of over €44 million;
- Evaluated the proposals received under the BiodivMon call on "Improved transnational monitoring of biodiversity and ecosystem change for science and society" and selected 33 research projects for funding of over €46 million;
- Launched the BiodivNBS call on "Nature-based solutions for biodiversity, human well-being and transformative change", with a tentative budget of around €40 million;
- Prepared the launch of a new call, BiodivTransform, on "Supporting societal transformation for the sustainable use and management of biodiversity".

LAUNCH OF THE BIODIVCLIM KNOWLEDGE HUB

Protecting and restoring biodiversity is crucial to addressing climate change, which is a direct driver of biodiversity loss. Working with nature to conserve, manage and restore ecosystems – notably through nature-based solutions – is one of the most cost-effective approaches to mitigating and adapting to climate change, and thus reducing one of the pressure factors on biodiversity. However, several knowledge gaps remain and efforts for the uptake of available evidence by policy and practice need to be scaled up.

Against this background and in the context of its 'BiodivClim' ERANET COFUND action, Biodiversa+ has launched a pan-European Knowledge Hub on the topic "Potential of nature-based solutions for mitigating and adapting to climate change".

Launch of the BiodivClim knowledge hub in Brussels



The BiodivClim knowledge hub is a community of practice that aims at enhancing research collaborations, knowledge and data sharing and academic outputs, as well as supporting science-policy/science-society interfacing to increase the impact of funded research. It is composed of 32 researchers from BiodivClim funded projects, projects funded under H2020 Research and Innovation Actions, and projects funded by Joint Programme Initiatives (such as FACCE-JPI and JPI Climate).

In 2023 the Platform on behalf of Belspo was happy to organise the launch of the BiodivClim Knowledge Hub. The aim of the event was to present the BiodivClim Knowledge Hub, its objectives as well as to discuss and agree on the work plan for the knowledge hub task forces, including:

- Papers on knowledge gaps and implementation gaps related to NbS for climate change adaptation and mitigation;
- Policy briefs and products to feed IPBES & IPCC assessments;
- Organisation of conferences, including the organisation of sessions during the 2023 ECCA conference, to be held from 19 to 21 June 2023 in Dublin.



©Elliot Leclercq

Oecanthus pellucens, the Italian tree cricket is more common around the mediterranean but its northern territory boundary runs through Belgium.

GBIF NATIONAL NODE

The Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) is an international network aimed at promoting and facilitating free and open access to biodiversity data from around the world. It serves as a digital infrastructure, aggregating and disseminating data on species occurrences and distribution, including information on plants, animals, fungi, and microbes. GBIF enables scientists, policymakers, and the public to access a vast wealth of biodiversity information for research, conservation, and decision-making purposes. By fostering collaboration among data providers and users globally, GBIF plays a crucial role in advancing our understanding of biodiversity and supporting efforts to conserve and sustainably manage the Earth's natural resources. The Belgian GBIF node, which is part of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, is facilitating GBIF related work in Belgium. Report on the Belgian activities within GBIF can be found on the [GBIF website analytics-files.gbif.org](https://analytics-files.gbif.org).



*through the
Global Biodiversity
Information Facility
(GBIF)*



SUPPORTING BIODIVERSITY DATA MOBILISATION

The Belgian GBIF node supports efforts in data mobilisation by organising initiatives to collect, harmonise, and share biodiversity data from various sources across the country. Through strategic partnerships with research institutions, museums, citizen science projects, and governmental agencies, the Platform oversees the data mobilisation efforts and encourages data holders to contribute their datasets to the GBIF network. The Platform empowers stakeholders to efficiently mobilise biodiversity data in standardised formats by providing guidance on data management practices, promoting data mobilisation tools, and organising capacity-building activities, thus ensuring their integration into GBIF. This collaborative approach enhances the accessibility and usability of Belgian biodiversity data, facilitating scientific research, informing conservation actions, and supporting evidence-based decision-making processes at local, national, and international levels.

In 2023, we linked the zoological specimen data published by RBINS to the Global Registry of Scientific Collection (GRSciColl), attracted new data publishers, and made sure most relevant data received an update.

Through the GBIF Integrated Publishing Toolkit (IPT) of RBINS (<https://ipt.naturalsciences.be/>), we've facilitated republishing updated versions of the major taxon group collection datasets. In Flanders all of the Meetnetten datasets were updated. The Platform offers IPT hosting and Helpdesk support to all Belgian institutions. Additionally, we advocate for use of state-of-the-art data exchange standards (DarwinCore and Data Packages) through our contribution to TDWG.

SUPPORTING BIODIVERSITY DATA MANAGEMENT AND CURATION

The Platform is engaged in supporting the management and curation of biodiversity data, with a focus on enhancing data quality in line with GBIF requirements. This involves standardising and documenting existing data sources through the addition of metadata and mapping to Darwin Core or Data Package standards. Additionally, we are assisting Belgian institutions in their implementation of technical solutions encompassing use of persistent identifiers, largely in regards to the GRSciColl. Pragmatic metadating of collections therefore, is elucidated under the Working Area about Open evidence in support of decision making (WA3), especially based on FAIR and open data.

*through the
Global Biodiversity
Information Facility
(GBIF)*



BELGIAN BIODIVERSITY ALLIANCE

The Belgian Biodiversity Alliance, an initiative driven by both public and private partners, strives to establish a cohesive Platform for tangible contributions to biodiversity conservation throughout Belgium. As an autonomous alliance guided by its collective partners, it operates through a Secretariat managed by a non-profit association.



Since its inception in 2022, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform has been a partner of the BBA. Alongside the FPS Public Health, Food Chain Safety, and Environment, it forms part of the BBA Secretariat, collaborating on website development, outreach initiatives, and more since 2023.

Through a network of actions and initiatives spanning Belgium, the BBA aims to support regional, national, European, and global efforts to curb and reverse biodiversity loss by 2050. Organised into two axes, each with five objectives, these actions seek to make significant strides in biodiversity conservation. More information on biodiversity-alliance.be.

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:

Belgian National Risk Assessment 2023-2026



Sonia Vanderhoeven served as an expert in the 2023-2026 assessment of the risks incurred by Belgium by the Federal Crisis Centre. For this risk assessment, experts from 40 different public organisations analysed the probability and impact of various scenarios that could occur in Belgium over the next five years. One chapter of this analysis specifically targeted biological invasions. Results are expected in 2024.

Belgian One Health Network (BEOH)

The Belgian One Health network (BEOH) launched in 2019 aims to enhance collaboration, capacity building and communication among Belgian One Health actors.

The BEOH activities are supported by Dominique Vandekerchove (BBPf/Sciensano One Health science officer) with the help of a coordination team composed of experts from different research organisations as well as representatives of policy makers and other stakeholders.



Belgian One Health Network

Supporting collaboration, capacity building and communication among Belgian actors.

In 2023, BEOH's vision and missions were defined :

Vision

Bringing together Belgian scientists, practitioners, citizens, decision- and policy-makers to enable and stimulate sharing knowledge in support of sustainable health for humans, animals, plants and the environment, joining the global effort and contributing to the pursuit of a One Health agenda in Belgium.

Missions

- We offer a multidisciplinary Platform for all relevant stakeholders to nurture and strengthen the One Health approach in research, policy and decision-making.
- We foster activities, collaboration and information sharing between all actors and sectors to identify and cover One Health knowledge gaps.
- We leverage communication and enhance the visibility of knowledge and activities to raise awareness on the added value of the One Health approach.

Preventing Zoonotic Disease Emergence (PREZODE)



Belgium joined the [PREZODE initiative](#) in October 2021, and created a dedicated One Health expert group at national level. The [FPS Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment](#) (Maud Istasse, Biodiversity & Governance) and [Sciensano](#) (Dominique Vandekerchove, One Health Science Officer at the Belgian Biodiversity Platform) are co-piloting its activities, with the support of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform.

PREZODE's objective is to understand the drivers and risk factors associated with zoonotic disease emergence, the underlying ecological and epidemiological mechanisms, and how to detect and mitigate these events as early as possible deep prevention.

In 2023, the Extended Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health gave a mandate to the PREZODE Belgian Expert Group (BEEG) to develop One World One Health (OWOH) Vision policy recommendations for the national context. The PREZODE BEEG organised three multidisciplinary workshops, involving experts in public health, animal health, food safety, plant health and the environment. They yielded the [OWOH Vision policy recommendations](#), which are to be used as a basis for the exploration of possibilities for a national action plan on preventing zoonotic disease emergence.



Sonia Vanderhoeven is moderating the panel discussion at the third PREZODE workshop on October 6, 2023

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 community 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 Belgian Biodiversity Platform has been part of the follow-up committees for three BRAIN projects:

- TANGO, a project estimating tipping points in Antarctic benthic ecosystems during future climate change scenarios. It held its third follow up committee meeting 22 September 2023 attended by Lise Goudeseune and Leendert Plaetinck at the University of Ghent.
- INTERCEPT, a project monitoring the trade of exotic animals, wild meat, and the pathogens they carry.
- FOURCAST, a project on forests and urban islands' effects on the adaption of climate and its effects on biodiversity. FOURCAST held a second meeting on 22 November 2023 attended by Lise Goudeseune and Leendert Plaetinck at the Meise Botanic Garden.

The Platform consults on these projects, providing support in terms of science-policy interfacing, outreach, stakeholder engagement, and communication.

COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

Platform Communication

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform maintains a robust social media presence, providing timely updates on biodiversity science policy matters spanning Belgian, European, and international domains. Through these channels we provide easy access to our activities, fostering engagement with a diverse audience in an informal online environment. Our stakeholders can follow BBP on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and X to stay informed and connected.



@biodiversity.be



belgian biodiversity Platform

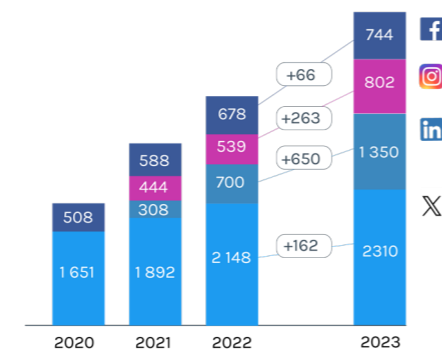


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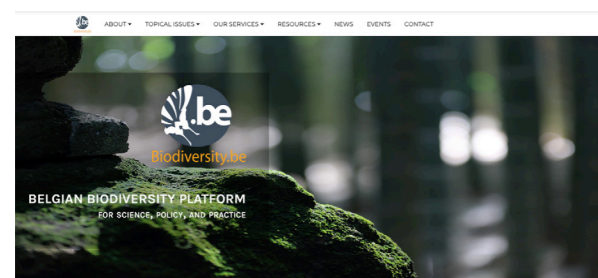


@belgian_biodiversity_Platform

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform is experiencing consistent growth in its social media presence, with a steady increase in followers across all platforms. Of particular note is the significant growth observed on our LinkedIn platform, where the follower count has nearly doubled compared to previous years. While the presence on other platforms continues to expand, the pace of growth may be relatively slower. Nonetheless, this upward trend underscores the increasing interest and engagement surrounding the organisation's mission and initiatives.



Social media followers across our 4 different Platforms, and the extra followers we gained during 2023.



The website **biodiversity.be** serves as the primary and most comprehensive communication platform. It provides an overview of the Platform's identity and offers information on our work, events, and more.



The Biodiversity Newsflash reaches 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.

In addition to this, BBP continues to distribute dedicated monthly newsletters, known as the **Biodiversity Newsflash**, to over 3,500 subscribers. The newsletter covers the latest work conducted by the Platform across various focus areas and topical issues.

NETWORKING AND THINK TANK ACTIVITIES

Biodiversity Spring Market 2023



Biodiversity.be

2023

Biodiversity Spring Market



The Biodiversity Spring Market, organised by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, has concluded yet another successful edition. This yearly event aimed at bringing Belgian Biodiversity actors together to network and showcase their initiatives brought approximately 120 stakeholders to Brussels.

The theme for this year's event was "Biodiversity Monitoring," following the COP15 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and the EU biodiversity strategy 2030. These presentations can be found on our website. This edition of the Spring Market included presentations on the European and Belgium level, case studies and a monitoring showcase from Catalonia.

The Platform created an engaging and informative atmosphere for 25 organisations to showcase their initiatives. The event provided an excellent opportunity for networking, and we were thrilled to see so many people came together to discuss the importance of biodiversity monitoring.



Stakeholder from different organisations had the opportunity to network and meet each other at the Biodiversity Spring Market. The event kicked-off with keynote speakers in the morning (photo bottom right).

The common wall lizard (*Podarcis muralis*) is a species of lizard with a large distribution in Europe.



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Forum For the Future of Agriculture



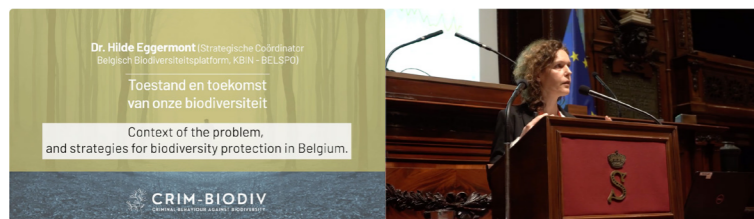
Hilde Eggermont moderating the pre-event of 'Forum For the Future of Agriculture'

Hilde Eggermont moderated the pre-event to ['Forum For the Future of Agriculture'](#) organised by the European Landowners' Organization (ELO) and the European Network of Private Land Conservation (ENPLC). The spotlight was on the controversial topic of ecosystem service credits. A diverse array of voices contributed their opinions and concerns, including Cristi Gherghiceanu from Fundatia ADEPT Transilvania, Luc Groot from the Dutch Federation of Private Landowners, Meredith Reisfield from Indigo, and Giulio Volpi from the European Commission.

This session delved into critical questions such as the complications of putting a price on nature, the need for proper monitoring and quantification, the potential for a European biodiversity credit scheme, strategies to incentivize landowners, and the interplay between carbon and biodiversity.

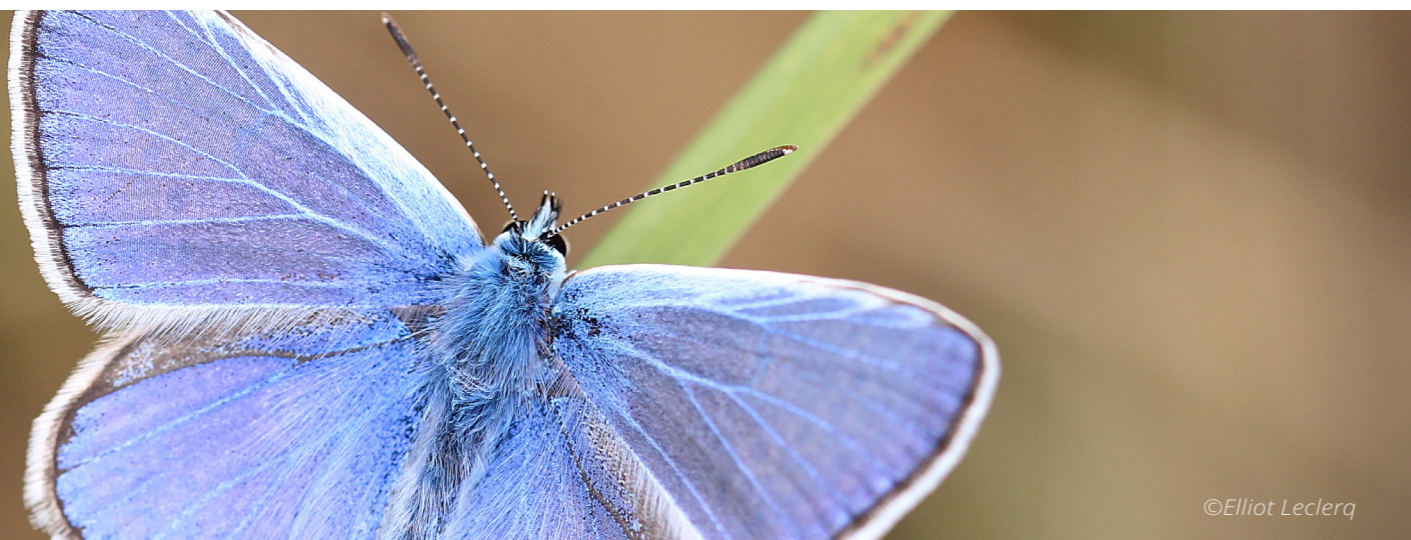
CRIM-BIODIV

During the [closing conference of the CRIM-BIODIV](#) event, Hilde Eggermont delivered a compelling presentation, "Toestand en toekomst van onze biodiversiteit in België" ("The State and Future of Biodiversity in Belgium"). CRIM-BIODIV is a BRAIN research project funded by BELSPO and executed by NICC (Nationaal Instituut voor Criminalistiek en Criminologie) and Canopea. Hilde's speech centered the findings of the Living Planet Report, compiled collaboratively with the WWF Belgium and other organisations, providing an insightful overview of biodiversity in Belgium.



Hilde Eggermont presenting during the closing ceremony of the CRIM-BIODIV conference.

During this conference, held on February 3rd, Hilde addressed the pressing issues surrounding research into responses to damage inflicted upon biodiversity. The interdisciplinary dialogue featured speakers from both social and life sciences, aiming to analyse reactions or lack thereof in the face of biodiversity threats. This inclusive approach fostered a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics surrounding endangered biodiversity.



©Elliot Leclercq

It's name might be 'common blue' but it still feels special to encounter this *Polyommatus icarus*.

Technical Workshop: Implementing the new Global Biodiversity Framework: Making Target 3 work for People and Nature

In collaboration with the Wildlife Conservation Society, The Nature Conservancy, and the World Commission on Protected Areas, we planned a technical workshop supporting implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework. Specifically, our focus was on optimising Target 3 to benefit both people and nature. The workshop delved into four key sections:

- Ensuring ecological representativeness and integrity in 30 x 30^[1] site designation,
- Highlighting the benefits of protected and conserved areas under 30 x 30 for people,
- Implementing 30 x 30 in the marine and inland water environment, and
- Bridging theory with practice in supporting and financing global 30 x 30 implementation.



Multiple high-level speakers took the stage in grand auditorium at RBINS for this workshop on implementing the new Global Biodiversity Framework.

Speakers included Dr. Michel Van Camp, *Director-General of the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences*, Mr. Hugo Schally, *Adviser for International Negotiations at DG ENV, European Commission*, Dr. Hilde Eggermont, *Coordinator & Chair of the European Biodiversity Partnership (Biodiversa+)*, and Mr. Boris Erg, *Director of the IUCN European Regional Office*, among others.

To delve deeper into the workshop's program and findings, please [visit our website](#).

[1] Known colloquially as the '30x30 target', Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework contains an ambitious commitment to conserve 30% of terrestrial, inland water, coastal and marine areas by 2030.



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. They are used to identify plausible futures to allow organisations to be better prepared for future changes, identify key trends and drivers of change, evaluate the need for action in support of policy changes, and to identify key questions for targeted research.

PUBLICATIONS

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.

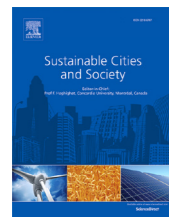
Overwhelming evidence galvanizes a global consensus on the need for action against Invasive Alien Species



Schwindt, E., August, T. A., Vanderhoeven, S., McGeoch, M. A., Bacher, S., Galil, B. S., ... & Meyerson, L. A. (2023). *Overwhelming evidence galvanizes a global consensus on the need for action against Invasive Alien Species. Biological Invasions, 1-6.*

In this paper, the IPBES-IAS assessment is placed in the continuum of invasion science and policy history. It describes the assessment process, and discusses the results.

Beyond biodiversity: eliciting diverse values of urban green spaces in Flanders



Bastiaansen, T., Van Wambeke, E., El Bakkali, C., Desair, J., Noël, C., Kenis, K., ... & Jacobs, S. (2023). *Beyond biodiversity: eliciting diverse values of urban green spaces in Flanders. Land, 12(6), 1186.*

This study assesses crowdsourcing methods for understanding subjective values of urban green spaces, vital for city planning. The findings stress the need for effective measures to avoid overlooking subjective values in smart city planning.

HORIZON SCANNING AND RESEARCH PRIORITISATION

The foresight centred 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.

SPW - Walloon biodiversity research framework

In 2023, the Platform benefited from a contract with the Service Public de Wallonie (SPW) to establish a framework structuring biodiversity research in support of decision making in Wallonia. Lison Cowez joined the Platform team as part of this two-year project. The project aims to strengthen the acquisition and sharing of knowledge and skills in the field of biodiversity, particularly in nature conservation and management. This opportunity for Wallonia brings together several of the Platform's recurring activities described in the next paragraphs, creating a win-win situation.

Typology of biodiversity research in Belgium

Characterising the scientific expertise available is a long-term process that requires a certain degree of standardisation. With this in mind, Sonia Vanderhoeven and Lison Cowez set out to establish a typology of the research disciplines to meet the challenges of biodiversity decision-making. A first, identification of themes has been made through the analysis of four reference texts: the COP15 report (GBF, 2022), the IPBES report on biodiversity and ecosystem services (2019), the European biodiversity strategy for 2030 (2020) and the Belgian biodiversity strategy (2013). This typology was submitted to the Belgian scientific community in order to characterise the expertise available in Belgium. Respondents were given the opportunity to complete the provided list of topics. As a result, the current typology is made up of 17 major themes broken down into 144 sub-themes ranging from a wide range of disciplines, from natural science to applied engineering or social sciences, all of which highlight the interdisciplinarity of biodiversity research. This typology offers a wide range of potential uses, including characterisation of the biodiversity research landscape and the setting up of an expert registry, which will be the focus of new activities in 2024.



©Elliot Leclercq

Migrant hawkers (*Aeshna mixta*) are one of the dragonflies that can be found away from water but for breeding it prefers still or slow-flowing water.



Conservation Research Matters II conference

In 2012-2013, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform highlighted Belgian research on biodiversity conservation by launching the Conservation Research Matters initiative, an horizon scanning exercise based on participatory approaches to develop research recommendations. Ten years later, the Platform broached the topic again through its follow-up conference which took place on 21 December at the Université Libre de Bruxelles. Approximately 140 people registered for the event, including experts from the academic sphere, conservation practitioners, and representatives of public authorities in charge of biodiversity decision making.

The first part of the day consisted of presentations providing a common basis for the afternoon's discussions, an overview of the importance of conservation research for decision making. This was first addressed from the point of view of the European Commission (Frank Vassen (DG Environment) and Gilles Doignon (DG Research & Innovation). The practitioners' point of view was presented through talks by Natuurpunt Studies (Kristijn Swinnen) and Natagora Etudes (Anne Weiserbs), both NGOs operating at regional level.



Platform member Lison Cowez is giving a presentation on the characterisation of Belgian research expertise on biodiversity



The Walloon group during one of the breakout sessions of the CRM II conference

In the second portion of the day, discussions organised by region (Brussels-Capital Region, Flemish Region and Walloon Region) allowed reflection on the implementation of evidence-based decision-making, and data and knowledge needs of public authorities.

Cooperation with the Convention on Biological Diversity (COOP4CBD)



The Improving Cooperation for the Convention on Biological Diversity (COOP4CBD) is a 4-year EU-funded project spanning from December 2022 to November 2026. It aims to strengthen the science-policy interface by making more effective use of existing expertise and initiatives to facilitate the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, within the European Union (EU) and Associated Countries.

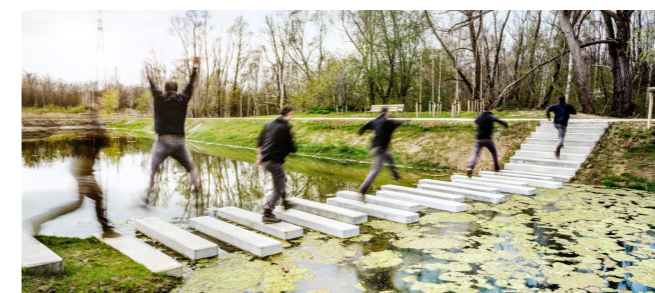
The focus of the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS) is to help engage experts and researchers in processes of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) by responding to the need for science-policy interface support for negotiators from EU, its Member States, and associated countries. WP4 will facilitate the development and delivery of technical and scientific cooperation with the Clearing House Mechanism and the Bioland tool.

Capacity-building workshops have been and will continue to be organised in the context of this project, targeting both thematic experts and National Focal Points.

More information can be found on: coop4cbd.eu

Nature Based Solutions Atlas

The NBS Atlas ("[Atlas Groenblauwe Oplossingen](#)") aims to bring together inspiring projects working on urban water management and greening the built environment. The atlas will consist of a website and an underlying database.



Green-blue infrastructures in Flanders

By initiating a collaboration with several stakeholders, including Aquafin, VLARIO, ANB, Department Omgeving and INBO, information from different areas of expertise on green-blue interventions will be found in one overview: the NBS Atlas.

The basis for this collaboration was formed by developing a shared (urban) NBS conceptual framework and drawing up a form with which we will collect information/data from the projects.

Ewaut Van Wambeke is developing this project with the support of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform.



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

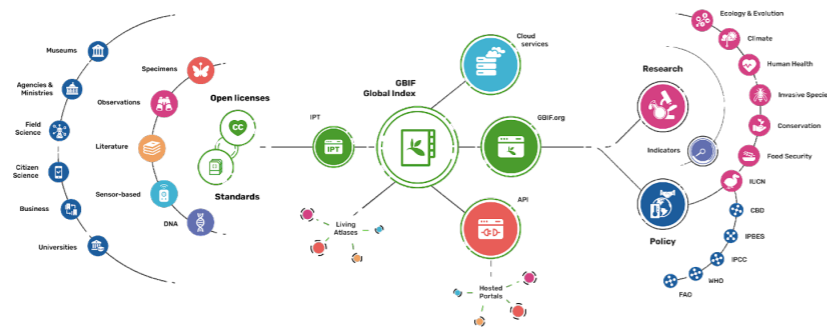
The Belgian Biodiversity Platform (BBPf) is the [Belgian node for GBIF](#), contributing to the regional and global successes of this key Biodiversity Data Infrastructure for Research and Science Policy. The Platform also continues its recurring collaborations within the GBIF Community, seeking synergies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

through the
Global Biodiversity
Information Facility
(GBIF)



SUPPORTING DATA PUBLICATION AND USE

The Belgian node offers support to data publishers and data users via a variety of tools and data flows.



GBIF data-flow

Supporting data publication and use network

In 2023, Belgium published 45+ million records to GBIF, from 27 data publishers organised in 500+ datasets. 3 new data publishers were registered to GBIF: the Walloon Agricultural Research Centre, Brussels Environment and the OBIS (Ocean Biodiversity Information System) secretariat. Although most of the institutional data holders are now part of GBIF, the Platform will try to complete the map and reach out to additional partners, specifically in the private sector.

SUPPORT OF INTERNATIONAL GBIF NETWORK

Mobilise training school Brussels! (mobilise action DiSSCo)

through the
Global Biodiversity
Information Facility
(GBIF)



6 and 7 of February 2023, 18 trainees with 4 expert trainers followed the 4th Mobilise Training School on the "Publication of biological geological palaeontological and mineralogical data", at the premises of the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences in Brussels.

In February 2023 we co-organized the workshop: "MOBILISE fourth blended Training School (TS) "Next step in the digitization process of Natural History collections: Publishing of biological, geological, palaeontological & mineralogical data". Dimitri Brosens (GBIF node manager for Belgium) was one of the co-organizers and trainers.

CETAF DEST training

In November 2023, the Platform co-organized the workshop "Digitisation of Natural History Collections: From Data Quality to Data Cleaning and Data Publishing – A Hands-On Experience. This workshop was organised because of the success of previous Mobilise workshops. Dimitri Brosens (GBIF node manager for Belgium) was one of the co-organizers and trainers.

The CETAF-DEST Training course, "Digitisation of Natural History collections: From data quality to cleaning and data publishing. A hands-on experience" was a successful collaboration with the Belgian Biodiversity Platform and other Belgian partners, including RMCA, GBIF Poland, and GBIF Austria. The aim of the course was to provide participants with practical knowledge and skills essential for digitising biological, geological, palaeontological, and mineralogical data from natural history collections.

Based on the success of the course, it is recommended to continue organising similar trainings in the future, focusing on digitisation and data management in natural history collections. Collaboration with organisations like the Belgian Biodiversity Platform can further enhance the reach and effectiveness of such initiatives, benefiting the wider biodiversity community.



The course has been implemented four times and standardised within the EU COST Action CA17106 on "Mobilising Data, Experts and Policies in Scientific Collections-MOBILISE". It received positive feedback from participants. It was evaluated as highly successful in providing participants with valuable knowledge and skills in digitising natural history collections. The collaboration with the Belgian Biodiversity Platform added significant value to the course by enhancing its reach and impact within the biodiversity community, not only in Belgium but throughout Europe.

Global Nodes training

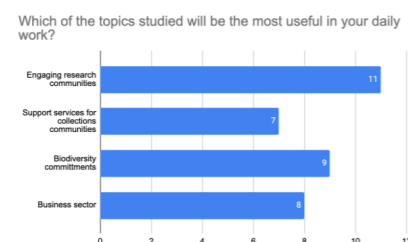
GBIF organised a two-day nodes training workshop just prior to the global nodes meeting and GB30. This was the first in-person Global Nodes training offered since 2019. The workshop focused on enhancing node development by delivering four new modules as part of a training curriculum on node management, each supported by reusable learning materials, and fostering guided mentorship from experts in the nodes community on four priority topics. These topics were: engaging research communities for data mobilisation and use; strengthening support services for collections communities; supporting national biodiversity commitments and the science-policy interface; and promoting open biodiversity data approaches within the business sector.



A group picture of the Global Nodes training, where Dimitri Brosens was one of the trainers.

Dimitri Brosens was asked to be a trainer in the Global Nodes training co-organised the part of the workshop regarding engaging research communities. The Belgian GBIF node is exemplary in this topic for the whole GBIF nodes community.

The full report can be consulted on globalnodes.gbif.org.



After the GBIF nodes training participants responded positively regarding the use of the topics in their daily work.

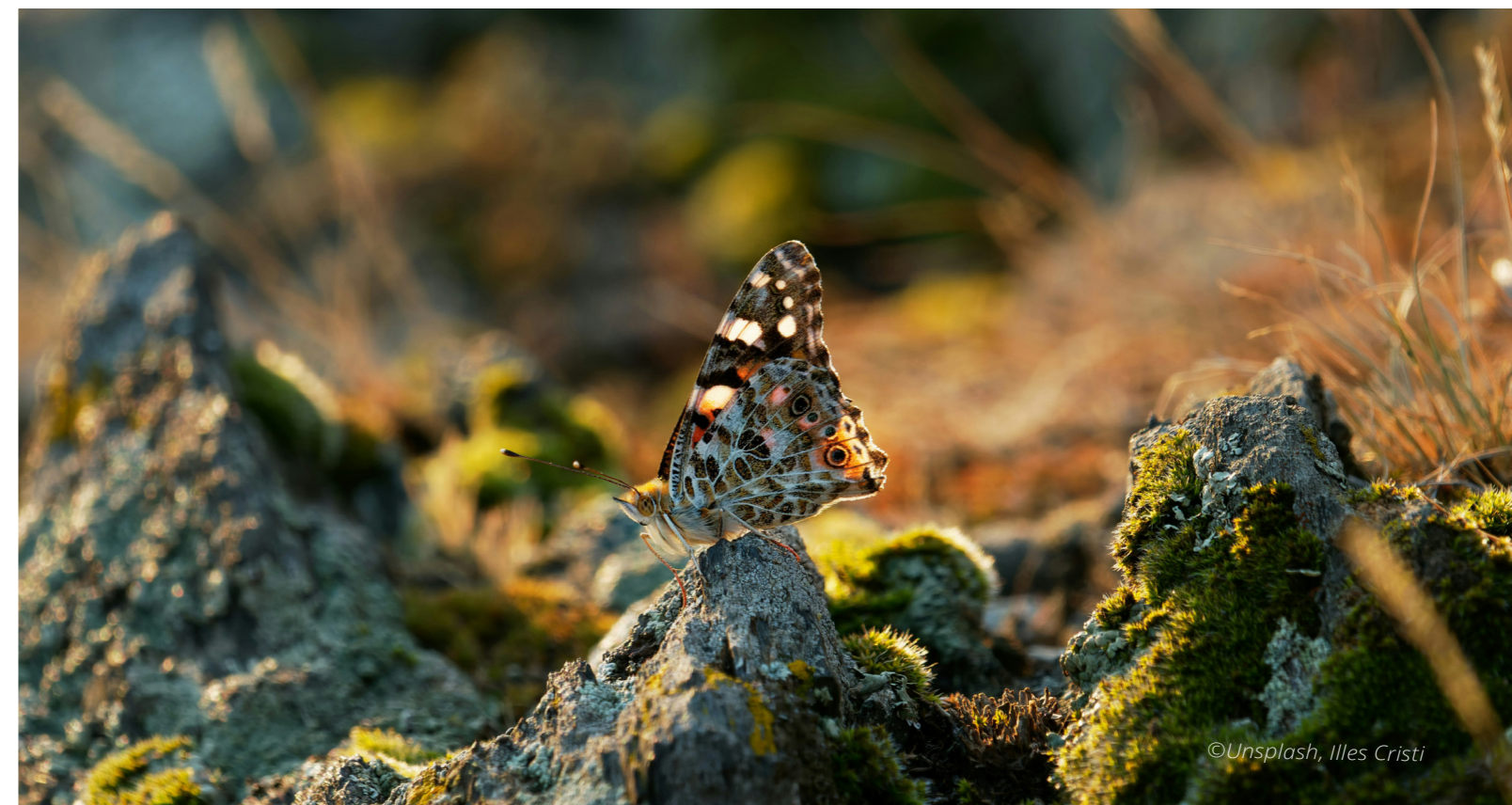
Hosting GBIF BID showcase at the Institute of Natural Sciences

Within the Biodiversity Information for Development (BID) programme, a symposium co-hosted by GBIF and the EU was held at the Institute of Natural Sciences in co-organisation with the Belgian Biodiversity Platform.



This BID showcase aimed at enhancing capacity in mobilising and utilising biodiversity data effectively to support the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). This event brought together various stakeholders, including representatives from funded projects, funders, aligned initiatives, and policymakers, to reflect on the progress and future directions of the BID programme.

Across three sessions, speakers shared insights on key themes and fostered dialogue and collaboration to support the implementation of the GBF. Additionally, a closed workshop convened representatives from the GBIF network, BID projects, and regional support teams to catalyse collaborations and strengthen implementation efforts. This event was livestreamed to engage a broader audience. The symposium aimed to showcase the impact of the BID programme to date, explore future needs and priorities, and foster key collaborations to advance shared goals in biodiversity conservation and management.



©Unsplash, Illes Cristi

vanessa cardui also known as the painted lady is one of the most widespread species of butterfly.

FAIR AND OPEN DATA

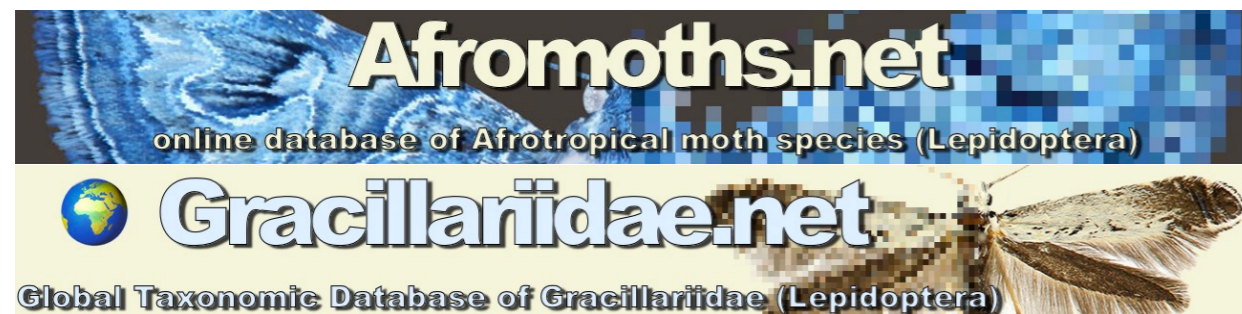
GRSciColl



The Global Registry of Scientific Collections (GRSciColl) is increasingly becoming a preferred method for accessing information about natural history collections and their host institutions. Through facilitation of this registry, the Platform is improving the visibility of the Belgian collections, especially at RBINS and the RMCA.

Their specimen-related data records, published in one or multiple GBIF datasets, are systematically aggregated in GRSciColl collections of higher taxon groups (such as Insects, Molluscs or Mammals) based on collection codes according to CETAF (Consortium of European Taxonomic Facilities) guidelines. This GBIF Registry classification system not only supports comprehensive searches by taxonomists among the Platform's major stakeholders, but also provides an accessible web portal for nature enthusiasts.

Afromoths and Gracillariidae websites

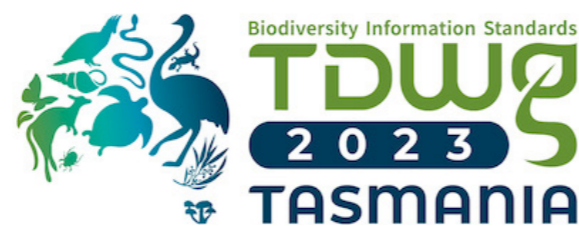


These popular websites are developed and maintained by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, they are initially launched in 2008 and have been regularly updated since then. The numbers of unique visitors per month exceed 3.000 and 1.500 respectively.

In 2023, the Platform managed to completely revamp the websites using the Django framework. The new Front Office offers a more intuitive user interface and the Back Office allows taxonomists to directly update the underlying database with the most recent and accurate taxonomic information including type specimens, publications, sequences, and photos. The data is now regularly published to Catalogue Of Life via ChecklistBank using the new CoLDP standards.

TDWG

André Heughebaert and Dimitri Brosens presented and participated in the TDWG 2023 Conference held in Hobart, Australia. Dimitri presented on the developments around the installation of a [Living Atlas](#) and André presented on [policy relevant lists of species](#). The Platform has been an institutional member of TDWG for many years.



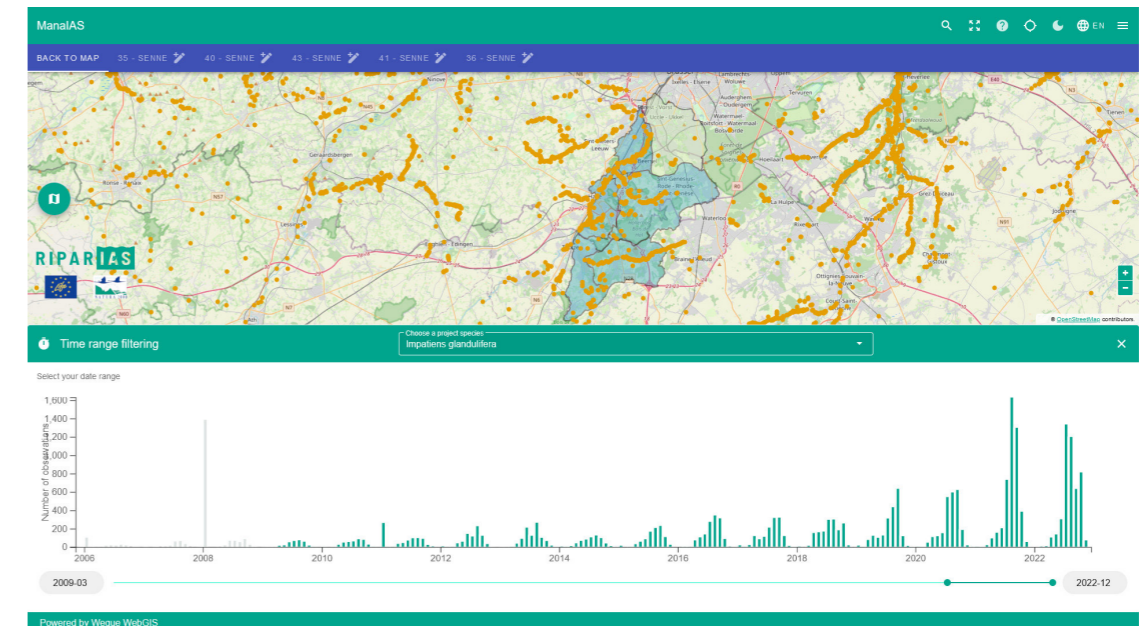
These conferences provide a showcase for state-of-the-art biodiversity informatics, much of which relies on the standards created by TDWG and partner organisations.

DECISION MAKING SUPPORT TOOLS AND SYSTEMS

RIPARIAS Reaching Integrated and Prompt Action in Response to Invasive Alien Species (LIFE RIPARIAS project)



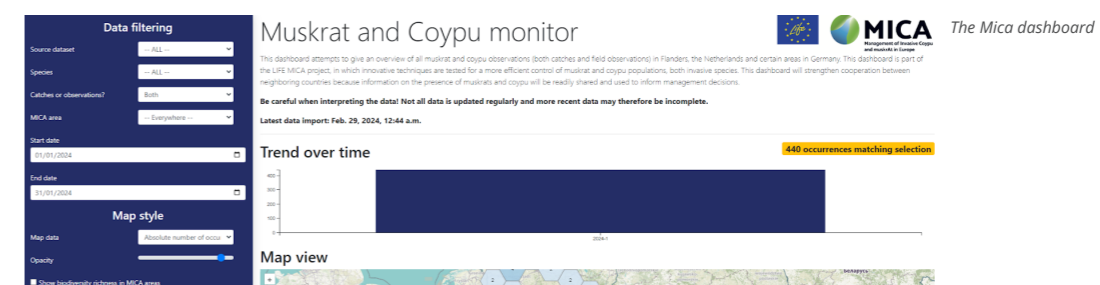
The third year of this European project saw the continuation of technical developments to establish the decision support tool MANIAS by Sonia Vanderhoeven and the Platform's IT team, Sébastien Ronveaux, André Heughebart, and Julien Cigar. It provides a spatially explicit system to assist program managers and policy makers in establishing priorities for IAS management programs and actions. The tool is expected to be officially released by the end of 2024. Work has begun on extending use of this tool to other river basin areas and adaption to another European Member State, Luxembourg.



ManalIAS during an assessment aiming to prioritize *Impatiens glandulifera* management inside some river basin sub-units of the Senne. The user is able to explore the histogram of recorded observations and to filter the displayed occurrences by selecting a time period of interest.

MICA

The Life MICA project (Management of Invasive Coypu and muskrat in Europe) is looking for solutions for better detection of muskrats and coypu. A dataflow from GBIF to the Mica dashboard was created with support from the Belgian GBIF node.



OUR TEAM

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Manager



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Divija Jata
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GBIF node Manager



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Communication Officer



Coralie Verhaegen
Communication Officer - Biodiversa+



Phong Hoang
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Lise Goudeseune
Science-Policy Officer



Dr Dominique Vandekerchove
One Health Expert



Lison Cowez
Science Policy Officer



Ewaut Van Wambeke
Nature Based solutions expert

IT EXPERTS



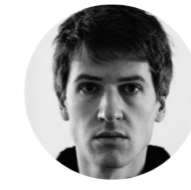
Ir André Heughebaert
IT Team Coordinator



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](#))



• Sciensano

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 Leendert Plaetinck and Ashley Norman

Designed by Leendert Plaetinck

Edited by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform team members



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