

Prevention at source of emerging zoonotic diseases in Belgium – WG PREZODE

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The international [PREZODE](#) initiative, launched in 2021, which aims to prevent zoonotic disease emergence, provides a global One Health scientific framework for pandemic prevention. It aims at understanding the root causes of emerging infectious diseases of animal origin and at developing integrated early detection, and resilience mechanisms. It focuses on ‘**prevention at source**’, i.e. the initial stages of the chain of events potentially leading up to pathogen spill-over and an outbreak, and integrates the interconnectedness of climate change, biodiversity loss and ecosystem health.

Belgium signed the initiative in 2021 and created the **Belgian working group (WG) PREZODE** in 2022 to cover prevention of zoonoses in Belgium. WG PREZODE is composed of experts from regional and federal government organisations, scientific institutions, universities and the civil society active in human, animal and environmental health.

In 2023, WG PREZODE drafted seven [policy recommendations](#) : (1) establishment of a cross-cutting One World, One Health (OWOH) governance at the Belgian level, (2) elaboration of a comprehensive cross-sectoral national action plan, (3) establishment and promotion of integrated, aligned and complementary monitoring and surveillance programmes, (4) creation of funding opportunities for OWOH scientific research, (5) development of a socio-educational programme, (6) support for and learning from countries with a higher risk for zoonotic disease emergence and assisting the global community in protecting high-integrity ecosystems, and (7) advocating the OWOH approach and its integration into relevant policies at European and international levels.

In 2024-2025, WG PREZODE explored the possibilities to implement the 2023 policy recommendations at national level. Six activities relevant for Belgium were considered: international movements, outdoor tourism and recreational activities, animal handling, livestock farming, land use change, and international policy. The results were summarised in a [Memorandum](#), which was presented during a [workshop](#) in June 2025 and to regional and federal ministers.

Highlights among the Memorandum’s recommendations are the importance of raising awareness among all stakeholders on zoonotic risks, establishing an integrated framework of passive and active surveillance systems covering a large scope of pathogens and using innovative tools resulting in a rapid response, and stronger enforcement of regulations.

In the continuation of its work, WG PREZODE takes into account the results of other studies, such as the Sciensano / FPS Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment project report ‘Support to the development of a Belgian One World, One Health vision with regard to the prevention of emergence of zoonotic diseases’ ([ZooBiodiv](#), 2024-2025), which focused on links with ecosystem degradation including the impact of climate change, and a mapping of the actors and existing initiatives in Belgium in the context of zoonoses. WG PREZODE thus provides a robust support to policy-makers.