



Belgium

Highlights in 2008

Environment policy in Belgium is mainly a regional competence. The environmental agenda of the three regions – Brussels, Flanders and Wallonia – was dominated by the transposition and implementation of various recent EU Directives.

Environment policies in Belgium in 2008 focused mainly on climate change, energy efficiency and renewable energy.

The approval of the national allocation plan by the European Commission, with three sub-regional plans, has made targets more concrete and allocated responsibility between the three regions. The plans set emission caps and allocate allowances for installations covered by the EU Emissions Trading System in line with achieving Belgium's greenhouse gas emission reduction target in 2008-2012. All three regions promoted renewable energy by adopting legislation, as well as various other region-specific market-based incentives and decrees, such as the Walloon air climate plan. Further, topics such as environment and health, water management, soil sanitation, legislation on environmental permits, biodiversity and particularly waste reduction, continued to be addressed during 2008 in the different regions.

Climate change and energy

	Belgium				EU-27 total	rank in EU-27
	2000	2005	2006	target		
Total Kyoto GHG emissions						
– million tonnes (Mt) CO ₂ eq.	145.5	142.3	137	134.8 (by 2008-2012)	5142.8	
– from energy supply and use, including transport (Mt CO ₂ eq.)	116.4	115.2	110.9		4098.7	
– from transport (Mt CO ₂ eq.)	24.9	26.6	26.1		992.3	
					EU-27 average	rank in EU-27
– per capita (tonnes CO ₂ eq.)	14.2	13.6	13.0		10.4	21
– per GDP (tonnes CO ₂ eq. per 1000€ GDP)	578.0	521.8	487.6		495.7	11
– trend (% change compared to base year*)	-0.1%	-2.3%	-6%	-7.5% (by 2008-12)	-10.8%	13

* Base year for CO₂, N₂O and CH₄ is 1990 and for F-gases is 1995.

		target	EU-27 average
– Projected 2010 emissions trend compared to base year*			
– with existing measures, Kyoto mechanisms and carbon sinks	-8.5%	-7.5%	-13.4%
– with existing and additional measures, Kyoto mechanisms and carbon sinks	-8.5%	(by 2008-12)	-16.3%

* Base year for CO₂, N₂O and CH₄ is 1990 and for F-gases is 1995.

	Belgium			target	EU-27 average	rank in EU-27
	2000	2005	2006			
Average CO ₂ emissions from new passenger cars sold (grams CO ₂ /km)	165.4	152.8 (2006)	151.7 (2007)	130 by 2012-15 for EU-27	157.5	6
Electricity produced from renewable energy sources (% gross electricity consumption)	1.5%	(2006) 3.9%	(2007) 4.2%	6.0%	(2007) 15.6%	22
– from hydropower	0.5%	0.4%	0.4%	(by 2010)	9.2%	
– from wind	0%	0.4%	0.5%		3.1%	
– from biomass	1.0%	3.1%	3.3%		3.0%	
Combined heat and power generation (% gross electricity generation)	6.5%	8.5%	8.7%	18% by 2010 for EU-15	10.9%	17
Energy consumption per capita (kg oil eq.)	5 988	5 835	5 727		3 694	25
Energy intensity - Energy consumption per 1000€ GDP (kg oil eq.)	247	227	219		202	13

In 2006, Belgium's greenhouse gas emissions were 6% lower than the base year, compared to its Kyoto target of -7.5% for the period 2008-2012. According to the latest data, Belgium is projected to achieve its target using existing measures, Kyoto mechanisms and carbon sinks.

In 2008, all levels of Belgian administration have been actively promoting new measures to deal with the climate change and energy challenge. Measures ranged from the approval of the National Allocation Plan to promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency measures.

In October 2008, the European Commission approved the National Allocation Plan Table that indicated the specific amounts of CO₂ allowances allocated to each installation under the EU Emissions Trading System. This means that the three regional allocation plans can come into force.



The federal government and the three regions promoted renewable energy and energy efficiency during 2008. The federal government offers a tax reduction on 40% of invoiced expenses, ranging from double glazing to solar panels, with a certain maximum amount per year and per home. Additionally, the regions have set up supplementary subsidy schemes for promoting energy efficiency, e.g. the Brussels capital region gives subsidies for insulation, energy efficient household appliances, boilers, heating systems and solar energy. The regions also adapted their legislation in line with the Energy Performance in Buildings Directive. In Wallonia, the air climate plan was adopted in March 2008. It includes indicative targets for renewable energy and energy consumption. Wallonia also requires energy labelling for rental properties as well as properties for sale since September 2008. In Flanders, properties put up for sale must have an energy label certificate since November 2008. This applies to rental properties too as of January 2009.

Following the adoption of the climate and energy package in December 2008, Belgium agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 by 15% compared to 2005 levels in sectors like buildings, road transport, and farming (i.e. sectors not covered by the Emissions Trading System). Furthermore, Belgium has committed to achieving by 2020 a share of energy from renewable sources in gross final energy consumption of 13% (up from 2% in 2005).

Nature and biodiversity

	2000	2006	Belgium		target	EU-27 average	rank in EU-27
			2007	2008			
Natura 2000 area (sites designated under Habitats and Birds Directives) as % of terrestrial area		12.6%	12.6%	12.7%		17.0%	
Sufficiency of site designation under the Habitats Directive	99.6% (2004)		99.6%	99.6%	100%		
Area occupied by organic farming (% of Utilised Agricultural Area)	1.5%	2.1%	2.4%			4.2%	20
Freight transport (billion tkm)	66	60.5	59.2			EU total 2505.0	
– % road	77.4%	71.1%	71.1%			76.9%	9 of 26
– % rail	11.6%	14.2%	13.2%			17.4%	17 of 26

The Federal Plan on Sustainable Development 2004-2008 includes a specific action point on 'protecting biodiversity', which promotes close cooperation between transport, business, sustainable development and the research sector in an effort to protect biodiversity. In December 2008, the federal government launched a public consultation on the proposed federal action plans for the integration of biodiversity into these four sectors.

New legislation in Flanders on soil rehabilitation was implemented as of June 2008. It is based on the decree for soil rehabilitation and soil protection and includes, among other things, new guidelines on these issues. At the same time, special organisations for soil sanitation were created in 2008 in order to promote cooperation and the distribution of costs between the regional level,

the local authorities and the private sector. The 2010 goal is to restore 37% of the sites with potential pollution and to sanitise 31% of sites with a known pollution problem.

In September 2008, the Walloon government introduced a new Forest Code, which places greater emphasis on protecting biodiversity. This Code will be important for biodiversity protection in Wallonia because one third of the whole territory is covered by forests. The new Code aims to strike a balance between the environmental, economic, social, educational and recreational functions of forests. The Walloon region also adopted a new Decree on Soil Management. It outlines soil management based on risk assessment and risk management.

Environment and health

	Belgium				EU-27 average	rank in EU-27
	2000	2005	2006	Ceiling		
Urban population exposure to air pollution by particles (annual mean concentration, $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)	32.9	30.9	33.9	30.0	30.0	16 out of 23
Urban population exposure to air pollution by ozone (SOMO35 level, $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3 \cdot \text{day}$)	1 976	2 695	4 024	2 554	4 417	9 out of 23
Air pollutant emissions (thousand tonnes)				(by 2010)	EU27 total	
– sulphur dioxides (SO_2)	171	144	139	99	7946	
– nitrogen oxides (NO_x)	330	285	278	176	11198	
– non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOCs)	249	153	150	139	9391	
– ammonia (NH_3)	87	74	73	74	4006	
	1994	Latest available year (2005)				
Water exploitation index	33.8%		32.4%		n.a.	24

Concerning air quality, the federal government organised between November 2008 and January 2009 a consultation on the draft of the 2009-2012 plan to combat air pollution. It should contribute towards achieving the emission levels indicated in the Göteborg protocol and the Directive on national emission ceilings for certain atmospheric pollutants.

In Flanders, a number of provisions regarding reduction of Nitrogen Oxide (NO_x) and Non-Methane Volatile Organic Compounds (NMVOC) emissions have been incorporated into the Flemish Regulation on Environmental Permits. The Flemish Dust Plan to reduce PM_{10} levels in ambient air went through a revision process during 2008 and will be made more stringent in 2009. Priority was also given to various projects concerning integrated water basin management. Final approval of the Water Basin Management Plans is expected in 2009.

In 2008, the Walloon and the Flemish regions continued implementing the programme for the sustainable management of nitrates in agriculture, which was adopted in 2007. Its main objective is to detect and designate vulnerable zones and apply the new protective rules limiting the use of nitrates for agricultural purposes in these areas. The Walloon region also launched a public consultation on water designed to pinpoint the most pressing issues and then develop new initiatives during 2009.

The Brussels Region has been working on a new plan to reduce noise nuisance. The focus is to reduce noise from transport, improve the sound comfort of dwellings, promote new technology (insulation, new cars and public transport, etc.), introduce an observatory for the follow up of noise complaints, and designate quiet zones.

Natural resources and waste

	Belgium				EU-27 average	rank in EU-27
	2000	2006	2007	target		
Municipal waste generated (kg per capita)	474	483	492		522	12
- % landfilled	15.4%	5.0%	4.3%		41.0%	4
- % incinerated	32.9%	33.5%	32.9%		19.9%	
	2000	2005	2006			
Recycling of packaging waste (as % total packaging waste)	63%	76.8%	79%	55%-80% (by 2008)	56.5 %	1

Belgium ranks among the top EU Member States in terms of separate collection and recycling of waste. For waste selection more and more Flemish communes are introducing the "DIFTAR" (differentiated tariff). This is a financial instrument designed to calculate waste selection costs as accurately as possible and to financially stimulate citizens to prevent waste and improve their waste separation habits. Households that produce less waste per person and separate it efficiently will have to pay a lower tariff. In January 2008, a new Walloon fiscal decree came into force stimulating better waste management in the Walloon Region. This decree introduces eight new taxation regimes, ranging from taxation on waste incineration to a tax favouring selective collection of waste from households. The Brussels government in 2008 launched a public consultation on a draft waste reduction plan. An important target of the draft plan is to reduce waste by 50 kg per person per year up to 2014.

Better regulation and implementation

	Belgium			EU-27 total
	31/12/2006	31/12/2007	31/12/2008	
Infringements of EU environmental legislation	20	24	21	481

By the end of 2007, the new Walloon decree on environmental responsibility came into force. It transposes the EU Liability Directive, and was made more explicit in June 2008 by a ministerial circular. The decree provides a framework of rights and obligations for each actor in the environmental field and applies the polluter pays principle more explicitly.

Use of market-based instruments

	Belgium			EU-27 average
	2000	2005	2006	
Share of environmental taxes in total tax revenue	5%	5.2%	4.9%	6.4%

Environmental technologies

As regards pollution prevention and control, an important incentive for the dissemination of best practices is the process for authorising industrial installations. Competent authorities have to set conditions for issuing operating permits for installations in line with the Directive on Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC). This requires that all industrial permits be issued by 30 October 2007. Belgium reported that by April 2008, 1369 authorisations had been issued out of a total of 1519.

Outlook for 2009

In June 2009, all three regions are electing a new parliament and government. In the coming year, further efforts will be put into transposing European Directives into national and regional laws. At different government levels, more measures will be implemented to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including new and higher subsidies for insulation, etc. The Flemish government also has plans to reform the tax system for private vehicles, which should better take into account the environmental features of the vehicle. Further discussions with the other regions and the federal government will be launched on this in 2009. In December 2008, the Walloon government finalised the draft version of the Walloon Environment and Health Action Plan for the period 2008-2013. Public consultation on this new Plan was launched in January 2009 and it is expected to come into force during the first half of 2009. Wallonia is also finalising a regional sustainable development strategy, which will be adopted in 2009. The Brussels government can apply new measures in 2009 when concentrations of air pollutants exceed a threshold. For example, a driving ban can be imposed on cars according to their licence number and a driving ban on all trucks above 3.5 tonnes.