

# Adaptation preparedness scoreboard:

## Summary for Belgium

### **Disclaimer**

Based on the scoreboard in Commission Staff Working Document SWD(2018)460 accompanying the evaluation of the EU's strategy for adaptation to climate change. For referencing this Commission analysis from June 2018, please use the full version in the SWD.

### **SUMMARY**

#### **Overall progress**

Since 2017, Belgium is in the implementation phase of the NAP, which is progressing well. A central coordination structure, the Working Group on Adaptation (WGA), supports adaptation mainstreaming in 11 sectors. Sectors and stakeholders were involved in the development of the plan. Best available knowledge on climate scenarios and impacts is used. Recently, effort has taken place to make this knowledge more accessible for a wide range of users. Areas for future improvement include transboundary collaboration and better integration of climate change in spatial planning and the insurance sector.

#### **Adaptation strategies**

In 2010, Belgium approved a national adaptation strategy (NAS). The NAS aimed to improve communication and coherence between the different governments in charge of adaptation, and described a strategy to adapt in 10 priority sectors. Disaster risk management was not yet included in the NAS. The respective governments responsible for adaptation, being the federal government, and the governments of the Walloon region, the Flemish Region and the Brussels-Capital region, do not have separate adaptation strategies.

#### **Adaptation action plans**

The NAP was approved in April 2017. In addition to some overarching national measures, the plan lists adaptation actions for 11 sectors, and for research and international cooperation, which were then promoted by the 4 governments: federal, Flemish, Walloon and Brussels Capital. The adaptation plans for each government were approved in October 2016, June 2013, April 2016 and June 2016 respectively. This means that the total area of Belgium and all its inhabitants are covered by adaptation policy. In the meantime, some provinces as well as larger cities have developed adaptation plans, encouraged by their commitment to the Covenant of Mayors.

#### **Step A: Preparing the ground for adaptation**

##### **1 Coordination structure**

The Working Group on Adaptation (WGA), part of the National Climate Commission (NCC), is at the centre of the adaptation governance system. The WGA develops the NAS and NAP and horizontally coordinates the federal and regional governments to improve coherence and information exchange. The WGA is chaired on rotation. 11 sectors have been identified the WGA and the regional governments have set-up committees and groups to select relevant adaptation measures for the NAP. The WGA has added some

national actions as well. The vertical coordination mechanisms towards the provinces and local authorities are in development and are on ad hoc basis.

## **2 Stakeholders' involvement in policy development**

Policy departments of the regional governments were involved in the identification of adaptation measures during the plan development. All draft adaptation plans were submitted to the public for consultation. Input was received from all types of stakeholders including companies, citizens, NGOs, scientists. The draft plans were also submitted for advice of formal advisory councils. Transboundary cooperation is a priority in the NAP and is progressing, in particular in disaster management and water management.

### **Step B: Assessing risks and vulnerabilities to climate change**

## **3 Current and projected climate change**

The Royal Meteorological Institute (RMI) plays a central role in observing climate change effects. Impacts are observed by fragmented set of institutions, due to the complexity of the federal state structure. To assess impacts, the most recent IPCC scenarios (2014) are used in the modelling by the CORDEX project. All policy departments now have access to information to enable a qualitative but clear understanding of the main vulnerabilities and the impact of the three projections on their sector. Transboundary risks are not systematically assessed.

## **4 Knowledge gaps**

There are several knowledge gaps in Belgian adaptation policy like the specific green infrastructure that help to adapt to climate change. These knowledge gaps are not structurally identified nor prioritized. Nevertheless, knowledge gaps are addressed based on the knowledge needs of the respective policy departments or based on informal judgement. Funding takes place via conventional research funding, via studies on request of policy departments and during think tank sessions.

## **5 Knowledge transfer**

The main focus of knowledge transfer activity is at this moment towards local authorities for local adaptation plan development. Online information portals and adaptation support tools are in development to help them. Information are for instance the areas at risk for flooding and heat, as well as relevant adaptation measures that could be included in the plans. These tools are also useful for sectors and other stakeholders. Capacity building is also taking place, but on an ad hoc basis like by workshops, conferences and education toolkits.

### **Step C: Identifying adaptation options**

## **6 Adaptation options' identification**

Expert judgement was used to prioritise and select adaptation options for the 11 sectors: agriculture, coastal areas, fishery, spatial planning and infrastructure, forests, biodiversity, energy, health, water management, tourism, industry and services, research and international cooperation. In each of the 4 involved governments, consultation of sectoral experts from each policy departments took place to select

adaptation options according to criteria like opportunity for implementation, added value and urgency of action. The integration of disaster risk management and climate change is in progress, mainly by considering climate change in emergency planning.

## **7 Funding resources identified and allocated**

There is no specific budget for the NAS; funding is expected to be made available by the respective policy departments in charge of each measure, from the conventional department budgets. The National Climate Commission has some specific funding for implementation of NAP actions in 2017 and 2018. There is no multi-annual budget plan.

### **Step D: Implementing adaptation action**

## **8 Mainstreaming adaptation in planning processes.**

The different policy departments of the 4 governments have identified adaptation measures and mainstream them in their department plans.

Adaptation is mainstreamed in environmental impact assessment. This is formalized at the federal level and in Flanders. In the Walloon and Brussels Capital region, adaptation is encouraged in the EIA via guidelines, but is not yet formalized in legislation.

Adaptation is not yet completely mainstreamed in disaster risk management nor in spatial planning.

After government consultation with the insurance sector to mainstream climate change adaptation in insurances and disaster funding, it appeared that the insurance sector was not yet prepared to mainstream climate change adaptation.

## **9 Implementing adaptation**

Most of the adaptation options are in the phase of implementation and are in progress with no notable gaps. The implementation is mainly a task of the regional policy departments and not many private actors are involved. Cooperation mechanisms with the local authorities are limited so far, and include mainly information provision and exchange.

### **Step E: Monitoring and evaluation of adaptation activities**

## **10 Monitoring and reporting**

There is no national monitoring and reporting mechanism other than the regular communications to the UNFCCC (every 2 years). Monitoring indicators are in place and refer to the impact of the adaptation option rather than financial monitoring. The Flemish government has developed two progress reports on its adaptation plan, in 2015 and 2017. There is not yet a systematic monitoring mechanism to collect information on adaptation progress at provincial or local level.

## **11 Evaluation**

The evaluation of the NAP will be carried out by the WGA every 2 years, in 2018 and in 2020. This timing is in line with the regular communications to the UNFCCC. Strengths and weakness will be identified as well as remaining gaps. We have not identified any

information was found on how stakeholders will be involved in the monitoring, evaluation and review of the national adaptation policy.