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# Answers to the UN Questionnaire about the Progress, Obstacles and Failures in the Implementation of Agenda 21 in Belgium

## *I. General Evaluation of the policies and measures taken to reach the objectives of Agenda 21 in Belgium*

The actions conducted in Belgium during the period only meet the requirements of sustainable development in an uneven fashion, and are, for the most part insufficient, despite the adoption of some policies and measures and the progress that has been made at the institutional and conceptual levels. This section reviews actions in Belgium at the Federal and Regional levels.

### **I.1 Major progress achieved**

#### **At the Federal level**

**Four major themes** are the core issues of the first Federal Report on Sustainable Development 1. They correspond to the implementation in Belgium of four chapters of Agenda 21: eradicating poverty and social exclusion, protecting the atmosphere (climate change and ozone in the troposphere) and marine ecosystems (dangerous substances, over-fishing...), and changes in consumption patterns)

**Policy goals:** Regarding the sustainable development long-term policy goals for these core themes, difficulty of proceeding from the abstract to the concrete were encountered in the policy-making. These goals relate to a *wholesome environment* and *human health* (environmental themes), *sustainable consumption* (changing consumption patterns) and *human dignity* (fighting poverty and social exclusion). These sustainable development policy goals are widely accepted but, as they remain far too abstract, it is hard to link them to concrete political measures.

**Policies and measures:** To provide an overall view of political progress since Rio, the sustainable development methodology proposed by the Report makes a (strictly analytical) distinction between two categories of domestic policies: the “core policies” (for each of the four themes) and “supporting policies” (other area of federal government action). According to this methodology, the analysis can be conducted in three steps:

1. The political and institutional framework which integrates the federal “core policies” in their international and national context
2. The content of federal “core policies” focused on the four chosen core themes
3. The content of “supporting (or horizontal) policies”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Under the law of 5 May 1997, the Federal Planning Bureau (FPB) is responsible for producing regularly this Report.

<sup>2</sup> Other areas of federal governmental policy with an indirect influence on the core policy are, for instance, powers with regard to energy, transport and agriculture need to be used in order to successfully conduct an atmospheric protection policy.

## The framework for federal core policies in their international and domestic context

The international framework in which sustainable development policy and measures are developed differ for each topic:

- For efforts to combat poverty and social exclusion, existing international framework and commitments are binding in a political sense rather than in a legal one;
- By contrast, policy relating to protection of the atmosphere and the marine environment sits within an international framework that is strengthened by legally binding conventions and protocols such as the Kyoto protocol;
- As regards policy related to changing consumption and production patterns, the situation is characterised by both political commitments and binding rules which are often contradicting each other. European and international context simultaneously encourages moves towards sustainable consumption, and restricts them via the current form of competition rules and the protection of individual consumers' rights.

**Progress made:** During the past period a series of instruments have been introduced such as the co-operation agreement of 5 April 1995 between the Federal State and the Regions of Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels concerning the co-ordination of international environmental policy,....., which will enable Belgium in future to make more of a contribution to improve the coherence of this international framework aiming at sustainable development. The main progress achieved, which also concerns the domestic need of coherence in sustainable development policy, is the adoption of a new legal framework in the Act of 5 May 1997 on the co-ordination of Federal Sustainable Development Policy. This decision institutes a planning and reporting process with a view to developing "measures at the federal level to implement the objective of sustainable development" structured along the lines of Agenda 21 and based on the international commitments to which Belgium has subscribed. (see point describing the federal strategy).

A fundamental analysis of domestic policy at federal level during a period from 1992 to 1998 makes it also clear that federal policy as regards sustainable development for the chosen areas has an important co-ordination role to play for both the core policies and the supporting policies. In the structure of a federal state, the federal, regional and community authorities have complementary powers for the implementation of a sustainable development policy and multi-level governance is thus needed. As far as social and environmental themes are concerned, the co-ordination of federal actions with those of the regions and communities has represented an important element of the efforts made up to now. Consultation structures have been created in the form of interministerial conferences or co-ordination structures between administrations and, in the case of efforts to combat poverty, a formula for permanent co-operation has been developed in the form of co-operation agreements. But this framework and its efficiency may still be improved.

## The content of federal "core policies" focused on the four chosen core themes

The policy regarding poverty and social exclusion during this period has been focused on the detection of problems experienced by resourceless people and on the co-ordination of new measures directly aimed at solving these problems. These measures, however, remained in the margin of mainstream socio-economic decision making. Regarding sustainable consumption, measures have also been taken, including environmental taxes, European environmental label, commission for environmental labelling and advertising and the introduction of an environmental management system in public departments. But their coherence still suffers from lack of integration in a co-ordinated sustainable consumption strategy. As for atmosphere and marine environment, the case is somehow different. Considering that they are affected, for better or for worse by most policies, there has been a lack of concern and a lack of integration of marine environment and atmosphere protection issues within other policy areas. Some integrated strategies have been developed in the past years, which certainly is a progress, but they mostly experienced lack of co-ordination at the European level and a lack of financial means and implementation at the Belgian level.



## The supporting or horizontal policies such as science policy

Core policies develop within a more or less favourable context, depending on the support or lack of support provided by a series of other so-called “horizontal” or “transversal” policies. Among other things, the report highlights the potential role of the following four policy areas (the order in which they are presented bears no relation to their respective importance): scientific research, the tax system, budget, supervision and enforcement. So far, scientific research might have more contributed to some progress towards sustainable development than the tax system<sup>3</sup>, budget policy<sup>4</sup> or supervision and enforcement<sup>5</sup>. It is therefore more highlighted here.

The Federal Office for Scientific, Technical and Cultural affairs (OSTC) is responsible for the “Scientific Support Plan for a Sustainable Development Policy” (SPSD I, 1997 - 2002). The programmes included in this Plan to which a budget of BEF 2.7 billion (EUR 66.9 millions) was allocated, aim, among other objectives, to give a scientific support to the decision making related to the various components of sustainable development. The Scientific Support Plan for a Sustainable Development Policy is composed of five thematic programmes<sup>6</sup>, within the framework of which the environmental component is closely interwoven with the specific concerns of the involved sectors. It also encompasses a programme, “Levers for a Sustainable Development Policy”, whose main theme is the adaptation of economic, social and environmentally-related behaviours in the light of the development of policy-guiding instruments. It includes also research instruments, by encouraging the use of earth observation data via satellite and the BELNET telematics network for data exchange. These activities are completed by Supporting actions<sup>7</sup> which have as objective the integration of scientific data, their appropriated management, and the active promotion of communication and information exchange with all involved spheres.

In May 2000 the Belgian Council of Ministers adopted a second Multiannual Scientific Support Plan for a Sustainable Development Policy (SPSD II). To have a better-knit, more integrated and coherent scientific approach which is also more flexible with regard to new research and policy developments, it was decided to give SPSD II (2001-2006) two co-ordinated structures, called ‘Global Change, Ecosystems and Biodiversity’ and ‘Sustainable Production and Consumption Patterns’ arching over and in some cases reorienting the programmes of SPSD I and strengthening biodiversity and energy matters. Besides these two co-ordinated structures, there are the Supporting actions (see above) and the Mixed actions. The Mixed actions are intended to enhance the integration of environmental, social and economic dimensions in order to get a better balance between those 3 components of sustainable development - a strategy with high political priority at both the European and international level.

To achieve its full impact, this federal initiative will benefit from the collaboration of the regional and local authority governments, which have certain competencies required for the envisioned scientific research’s outcomes to give rise to tangible innovations in the area of sustainable

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<sup>3</sup> The federal government can use various types of tax instrument in order to achieve core policy objectives. The Report shows that as far as environmental goals are concerned, the main measures that have been adopted involve a reform of the tax system for energy and transport. These measures have had an impact on energy consumption and on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, but have failed to compensate for the worldwide fall in energy prices. However, there have been no major changes to income tax in favour of social redistribution since the reform of personal tax in the late eighties.

<sup>4</sup> Budget possibilities largely define the federal policy’s potential. Although there are certainly other factors that explain the low priority given to sustainable development projects, the budget latitude imposed by the Maastricht standards has to a great extent influenced the context in which the core policies studied in this report have been formulated and applied.

<sup>5</sup> The federal government has at its disposal significant supervisory and enforcement powers for existing laws. The police and the judicial system are areas of federal competence. The report shows that this function could be usefully reinforced, particularly for marine environmental protection.

<sup>6</sup> The programmes “Sustainable Management of the North Sea”, “Global Change and Sustainable Development”, and “Antarctica”, as support for the agreements and treaties which Belgium has signed, and the programmes “Sustainable Mobility” and “Pre-normative Research in the Food Sector”,

<sup>7</sup> The objectives pursued under the heading of Supporting actions reflect the concerns addressed by Agenda 21 in sections III (“Strengthening the role of the main groups”) and IV (“Means of implementation”) and more specifically in chapters 35 (“Science for sustainable development”) and 40 (“Information for decision-making”). Specific tools have been developed in order to achieve these objectives: data bases, platforms for concertation, synthesis reports etc.



development. To this end SPSD I was implemented within the framework of a co-operation agreement between the federal government and the Regions. The federal government, Regions and Communities will sign a co-operation agreement to implement and follow up the SPSD II.

## In the Flemish Region

The Flemish Region has enshrined the principle of Sustainable Development as general point of reference for policy development. As the Flemish coalition agreement puts it, *“Future oriented and modernising management implies bearing Sustainable Development in mind at the different levels of policy-making of the Flemish Government. This implies, meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Sustainable development is to be kept within the limits of the ecological carrying capacity, and has to have eye for the poor in the society.”*

**Strategic planning** has been implemented on the basis of reports on the state of the environment, regional plans for addressing sustainable development issues, and explicit environmental policies.

Moreover, Sustainable Development is the cornerstone of the environmental policy which has been systematically developed over the last ten years within the Flemish Region. Ever since

1995 this environmental policy was raised to a statutory level in a basic environmental law. The law demands the development of a transparent `state of the environment` reporting system and regulates the policy planning at the different levels of policy-making within the Flemish Region. An environmental management plan every five years, and an environmental programme every year.

With respect to content, Agenda 21 and Sustainable Development form the frame of reference for environmental policy development. This has been reflected in the emphasis given to the principles of the declaration of RIO (e.g. the precautionary principle) and the emphasise being put on integration of environmental concerns in all policy domains, e.g. within the domains of energy; spatial planning; agriculture. Waste and waste water plans have been prepared and a special plan has been developed to solve problems caused by the disposal of large quantities of manure. Several cities (Ghent, Antwerp and others) have prepared plans addressing the mobility issues.

**The strategic objectives** for the Environmental Policy Plan 1997-2001 were:

- encouraging people, companies and authorities to adopt more environmentally responsible behaviour;
- bringing environmental quality in Flanders to the average level of neighbouring countries;
- preventing damage to nature and the environment, to the extent possible.

Changes in consumption and production patterns have been stimulated by the use of economic instruments. Flander's regional authorities levy taxes on waste water effluents, waste, manure and water extraction, and the local authorities apply general environmental or waste levies and quasi-taxes on distributed electricity and gas. The expenditure on pollution abatement and control appears to have been about 0,8 per cent of the regional GDP. In Flanders, local authorities have increased their environmental expenditure by 75 per cent since 1991, mainly on waste water and household waste. Nearly 70 per cent of local environmental expenditure is related to solid waste. The regional environmental expenditure is mostly related to water pollution, in particular investment in waste water infrastructure.

## Dans la Région wallonne

Les progrès accomplis dans la Région wallonne sont nombreux, comme le montrent les rapports thématiques transmis annuellement à la Commission du Développement durable des Nations Unies.

Le Plan d'Environnement pour un Développement Durable (PEDD), outil de planification générale en matière d'environnement, adopté le 9 mars 1995, a joué un rôle important comme moyen de



sensibilisation et de mise en œuvre du développement durable. Deux évaluations du PEDD ont été réalisées: une première en 1998 et l'évaluation finale, qui vient d'être clôturée. Ses conclusions sont certes mitigées mais de réels progrès sont à souligner.

Néanmoins, le PEDD était peut-être trop focalisé sur l'environnement. Mais la Région wallonne a dorénavant choisi d'agir pour le développement durable au travers de la mise en place d'un « Contrat d'Avenir pour la Wallonie », adopté par le Gouvernement wallon le 20 janvier 2000. Cet outil permet une intégration plus importante de l'économique et du social aux côtés de l'environnement, et renforce deux vecteurs de facilitation que sont la concertation gouvernementale et la consultation des citoyens.

Par ailleurs, de nombreux autres outils ont été mis au service de l'application des objectifs d'Action 21 dans notre région (voir infra II). Ainsi, de manière générale, les autorités wallonnes peuvent affirmer que les résultats sont globalement positifs même si des progrès importants doivent encore être réalisés en matière de développement durable et d'intégration des politiques.

## I.2 Major obstacles and failures

### At the Federal level

The federal government has significant powers to give concrete shape to the core and supporting policies. Possible political interventions are indeed situated both at core policy level (e.g. a minimum income level and product standards) and at supporting policy level (e.g. social security contributions and energy pricing). Among other things, these involve defining the objectives of each type of policy and assigning the appropriate means for conducting it. The Report reveals that the ultimate objectives of the areas dealt with in this report are taken more seriously today than in 1992. However they have so far not been translated into adequate intermediate objectives that are scientifically and socially acceptable.

The Federal Report on Sustainable Development concludes that decision-making in recent years remained often characterised by:

- A failure to frame federal policy options within the context of the challenge of sustainable development for the entire planet.
- A lack of long-term view, resulting in a lack of mid-term objectives goals aiming at altering the course of current unsustainable trends within our present development, or, when such objectives do exist, a lack of means to achieve them.
- Difficulties with integrating the economic, environmental and social components of sustainable development and the various powers connected with the sustainable development project. These difficulties are due to lack of consultation and co-ordination, sometimes as a result of a lack of adequate structures, and sometimes because of existing bodies being inadequately staffed.
- A failure to take uncertainties regarding the long-term repercussions of our present development model sufficiently into account.
- Insufficient efforts to clarify development options on a participatory basis.

### In the Flemish Region

- The all-embracing character of the concept of Sustainable Development versus other policy priorities: For any development agenda to become sustainable, the very principles of ecological soundness and equity should become the guiding principles for all policies - encompassing all sectors of society. Full integration of environmental concerns is therefore a necessity. However, up till now, this has not materialised. All too often sustainable development is losing out to other policy priorities, making it the sole responsibility of the Ministry of



Environment. As an example, although physical planning is now carried out more rigorously, in many cases environmental concerns have not been part of physical planning decisions. As land use is affected by urban sprawl and very dense transport networks, the focus is more on the traditional economic development. Land use planning instruments ought to play an important role in environmental management, because when environmental protection and land use planning conflict locally, sustainable development is unlikely to be achieved.

- Contradicting strategies: “all-in Sustainable Development policy”, “Environmental policy” or both ? To make the necessary change in course, two conflicting strategies are competing. At the one hand there is the opinion that the environmental policy domain should be merged into an overall policy frame for sustainable development because of the environmental impact of the economic and social developments and because of the socio-economic costs imposed by the environmental policy developments. At the other hand there is the opinion that one should stick to an environmental policy as such to ensure continuity and to reinforce policy integration through an extension of the Ministry of Environment, particularly through increasing its capacity.
- The environmental regulations are becoming too complex. The general complaint is that the environmental regulations and in particular the fragmented legislature has become very complicated and obscure. However, work is being done to simplify the regulations.
- Sustainable development is putting horizontal-level consultation to the test and brings about the risk of red taping efficient policymaking. Policy integration demands systematic and prior horizontal talks of all sectors involved as to incorporate economic, social and ecological dimensions into the decision making. Everybody talking about everything is slowing down the decision making process and endangers the management efficiency. It is therefore recommended that the decision-makers incorporate the concept of sustainable development at their respective sector domains.
- An integrative concept, as Sustainable Development is, is hard to handle in the Belgian setting of exclusive responsibilities. Having a layered structure of exclusive government responsibilities at federal and regional/community level, Belgium is facing difficulties to assign the powers of a sustainable development policy. Additional mechanisms of consultation have to be established, bringing about delays and additional communal conflicts.
- Problems with implementation of environmental policies at local level. The environmental planning of provinces and municipalities is still at an early stage. The staffing levels, recourses, and organisation are still insufficient to deal with the new tasks.
- Sustainable Development squeezed between a globalizing economy and socio-environmental demands. Sustainable Development aims to counterbalance our consumption and production patterns (the economic domain) in such a way that they match environmental and social demands. However, confronted with a globalizing economy and a tendency of deregulation the means of government intervention are being eroded. In an increasing global economy, central government has only little influence on the vectors determining production and consumption patterns.
- Dependency upon international progress: In view of the global organisation of the economy and because of the cross-border dimensions of the environmental crises, sustainable development can only be achieved when progress is being made also at the international level.



## Dans la Région wallonne

- La mise en œuvre du plan: Une des grandes difficultés est la gestion du PEDD par la seule administration de l'environnement. Le thème de l'environnement est à l'évidence un volet important du dossier, mais cette approche limite les objectifs de transversalité et d'intégration du développement durable. Le Contrat d'Avenir pour la Wallonie rencontrera certainement mieux ces impératifs.
- Le cloisonnement des compétences: Il faut tendre à une plus grande intégration des politiques. Les volontés sont présentes, le concept de développement durable est ancré dans beaucoup d'esprits, mais le cloisonnement des compétences est parfois encore trop présent. Le Contrat d'Avenir pour la Wallonie va dans cette direction.

## *II. National strategy*

### **II.1 Description, process and content of the Federal strategy**

**The Act of 5 May 1997** on the co-ordination of Federal Sustainable Development Policy sets up a new planning and reporting process with a view to developing "measures at the federal level to implement the objective of sustainable development" structured along the lines of Agenda 21 and based on the international commitments to which Belgium has subscribed.

#### **Description of the Federal strategy**

This Act provides for four new sustainable development types of instruments:

- **Quadrennial Federal Plans for Sustainable Development:** Every four years, a draft plan is developed by the Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development, submitted to an extensive public consultation, amended as necessary and finally submitted to the Council of Ministers for political approval. The ICSD is a entirelyly new body created by the Act of 5 May 1997. It is composed of representatives of all Federal ministries and placed under the chairmanship of the Secretary of State for Sustainable Development. The Plan is designed to "promote the effectiveness and internal coherence of government policy" with respect to sustainable development. The Federal Plan features both normative and indicative planning. It does not have regulatory force but rather indicates the main guidelines of the sustainable development policy which the Federal Government intends to carry out.
- **Biannual Federal Reports on Sustainable Development:** Every two year, a Report is published by a public agency called the Federal Planning Bureau (Task Force on Sustainable Development) which also brings support and expertise to the Interdepartmental Committee. The Report analyses and assesses the existing situation and policies in Belgium in relation to the relevant international processes and commitments. It presents different scenarios and policy options which constitutes a basis for public debate and political decision-making regarding Sustainable Development. It was published for the first time in September 1999.
- **An extensive public consultation process on the draft plans:** A key-actor of this consultation process is the Federal Council for Sustainable Development. This official advisory body, composed of representatives of the major social groups and stakeholders, was created in the spirit of Rio to advise the Federal Government on the draft sustainable development plans as well as other proposals for legislation regarding sustainable development.



- Yearly Reports of the federal administrations: Every year, the federal administration report to the ICSD on progress in the implementation of the Federal Plan for Sustainable Development

### Process of the Federal strategy

- The first *Federal Report on Sustainable Development* published by the Federal Planning Bureau (FPB) analyses in depth the federal home policy conducted by the Belgian federal government from early 1992 to June 1998. It has been published in August 1998 and covers the federal home policy from 1992 to 1998. It specifically focuses on four major themes of sustainable development, which are also chapters of Agenda 21: *eradicating poverty and social exclusion, protecting the atmosphere (climate change and ozone in the troposphere) and marine ecosystems (dangerous substances, over-fishing...), and changes in consumption patterns*. This analysis will be followed by a study of Belgium's federal foreign policy in a further federal Report. The first Report was used as a strong reference in the elaboration of the first Federal Plan for Sustainable Development.
- The first *Federal Plan for sustainable development* has been prepared<sup>8</sup> with the support of the Federal Planning Bureau under the responsibility of the Interdepartmental Commission for Sustainable Development (ICSD). This Federal commission is composed of civil servants who each represent a member of the Federal Government. The Regions and communities in Belgium each have a representative in this commission. The first draft plan was released in January 2000 and underwent an extensive and probably unique consultation process for such a detailed document. Over 2000 citizens and organisations submitted more than 17.000 specific comments. The final Plan was adopted by the Federal Government of Belgium on 20 July 2000 and laid down later by Royal Decree
- As participation of citizens and major groups to the decision-making process is one of the basic principles of sustainable development, the proposal of plan has been the subject of a wide consultation of the Belgian population. A *public enquiry* has run from the 1st of February till the end of March 2000. And institutions which have received the proposal (the parliament, the governments of the regions and the communities and the Federal Council for Sustainable Development) have had 90 days to formulate their advice on the proposal. *The advice of the Federal Council for Sustainable Development* has a particular status because the above-mentioned law states explicitly that the Government has to motivate explicitly when it does not follow the advice of this council. On the basis of this consultation, the ICSD has prepared a new proposal, again with the support of the Federal Planning Bureau. The final stage of the procedure was the approval by the Government of the final document submitted by the ICDO-CIDD and the publication of the Royal Decree of 19 September containing this approval. The Plan is available to the public.

### Content of the Federal Plan 2000-2004

The document begins with an overview of the ultimate objectives of sustainable development and basic principles used as criteria for the assessment of policies and measures towards sustainable development (global awareness, long term concern, integration, uncertainty and precaution and, finally, participation of major groups and responsibility of citizens). About twenty themes of sustainable development have been integrated in the proposed strategy including "focus" themes: changing consumption patterns, combating poverty and social exclusion, protection of the marine environment, biodiversity and the atmosphere.

A short *status question* is provided for all these themes, as well as a set of action plan including objectives, policies and measures. Like the *Federal Report on Sustainable development*, it classifies

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<sup>8</sup>The text of the final version of the Plan can be consulted on the website of the ICDO-CIDD:



policies into two groups. The first contains the federal policies « focused » on major sustainable development themes (such as the ones quoted above). The second group includes other federal policies, which can support the goals of the former (such as fiscal, finance, science and foreign policies). The plan encompasses both these "focused" and "supporting" policies and measures, also stressing the importance of interdepartmental and interdisciplinary co-ordination.

This plan covers a variety of new objectives such as a cut in energy consumption by 7.5% from its 1990 level by 2010, a 10% reduction in the energy consumption level of federal public buildings from 1999 level by 2000 and a boost of the share of renewables in Belgium's primary energy consumption to 2% by 2010. Federal public administrations have also adopted significant reduction objectives in their consumption of water and their volume of unsorted waste. In agriculture, a 60% increase in organic farms between 2000 and 2004 is to be obtained with a goal of 4% of agricultural surface to be converted to this form of farming. The objective of adopting a quantitative objective for the reduction of poverty at the European level at the end of 2001 is proposed as a goal for the Belgian Presidency.

Reforming energy, transportation and fiscal policy is high on the agenda of this plan. The policy includes the promotion of public transportation, and rail and water, as viable alternatives to road vehicle use. Measures include the switch from labour taxation to energy taxation and from fixed car tax to taxation linked to the amount of energy consumed. This new plan departs indeed from many other sustainable development strategies in its inclusion of policies regarding poverty and social exclusion and of measures to improve the integration of views and actions of the major social groups in the implementation of this strategy.

## II.2 Description, process and impact of the strategy of the Flemish Region

### Description of the strategy of the Flemish Region

The Flemish Region has yet no uniform strategy on sustainable development. However, the different policy developments, when combined and consolidated, can be understood as an un-outspoken Flemish strategy on sustainable development. The various policy developments towards sustainable development are hereunder summarised.

- The 1995 Decree on General Provisions for Environmental Policy sets out the broad orientation of Flemish environmental policy, including the principle of preventive action, the preference for measures aimed at the source of pollution and the precautionary principle, the stand-still and polluter-pays principles. It requires the preparation, formulation and adoption of a five-year Environmental Management Plan. These environmental policy plans (MINA-plans) are based on the principles of the Brundlandt Report, Agenda 21 and the Fifth action Plan of the European Community. Through these plans, full integration of planning is envisaged, and steps (MINA III being prepared) are being undertaken for further development of this integrated approach. This process of integral environmental policy development is further being strengthened by the publication of the biannual reports (MIRA I & II), the publication of yearly (MIRA T), and more recently the environmental scenarios report (MIRA S). The second MINA Plan entered into force in January 1997, and strategies around 13 themes and nine target groups. It is linked to a biennial environmental status report and the annual environmental programme approved by the Flemish Government.
- The most recent Flemish coalition agreement is stressing the importance of incorporating the principle of Sustainable Development as general point of reference for policy development.
- The decree on Administrative Policy, granting the 'pararegional' authorities a main role in policy-making: OVAM for solid waste; VMM for waste water and air (and the preparation of the Environment and nature reports), VLM for land use planning; and VMW for the winning and distribution of potable water.



- The development of environmental policy plans at provincial and municipality level. Point of departure is the local agenda 21. Municipalities can enter into voluntary agreements with the Region of Flanders, establishing municipal environmental covenants. In order to get subsidies, municipalities agree to achieve a series of environmental goals which go beyond the minimum legal requirements.
- The regional structure plans for Flanders aiming at the preservation, strengthening, and, if possible expansion of open spaces, is regulating the use of the land by setting standards in function of types of usage.
- Various policy plans that deal with the energy sector; the transport sector; and other sectors are being prepared.
- Voluntary agreements with businesses and other instruments for influencing the behaviour of the population for encouraging businesses and the public to act sustainable. The toolbox consists of the following instruments: environmental policy agreements; licences; policy regulations; levies; subsidies; advertising in the media; direct financing of projects; and the use of manpower.

### Process of the strategy of the Flemish Region

In all of the aforementioned strategies, the process of a public investigation/hearing is becoming more and more rule. The process as such can be summarised as follow:

- The design of an Environmental Policy Plan (five years cycle) by a group of experts within the administration.
- Public consultation/hearing/investigation in which many institutions including all sectors (both the government and the private sector) and the broader public is involved.
- Discussion of the draft by the parliamentary commission on environment.
- Adoption by the Flemish parliament.
- Implementation.
- Yearly monitoring report submitted to the advisory organs; the Flemish parliament; and the Flemish government.
- Periodic publication of state of the environment reports 'Report on the environment and nature in Flanders' (MIRA); 'Report on the environment and nature in Flanders: Themes'; 'Report on the environment and nature in Flanders: scenario's'.

### Impact of the strategy of the Flemish Region

Flanders has come a long way in developing and initiating a policy process towards sustainable development. The different initiatives are becoming more concise, and above all, the process in itself enjoys Decree supported status. The environmental administration is very active in drafting and implementing plans and strategies to promote the environmental policies. However, special efforts are needed to ensure that environmental concerns are reflected in all sectoral policy making.

## II.3 Description, process and impact of the strategy of the Walloon Region

**Le Décret du 21 avril 1994 relatif à la planification:** Un tournant dans le domaine du développement durable est sans conteste le Décret du 21/04/1994 relatif à «la planification en



matière d'environnement dans le cadre du développement durable ». Celui-ci prévoit en effet la mise en place d'une planification en matière d'environnement en plusieurs étapes:

1. L'élaboration d'un rapport sur l'état de l'environnement wallon (EEW) qui doit comporter «un bilan des efforts réalisés en Région wallonne en matière de développement durable en référence au programme Action 21. ». Alors que jusqu'en 1996 l'EEW n'abordait que quelques thèmes par année, l'année 2000 a vu la sortie d'un « Tableau de bord de l'environnement » qui correspond certainement mieux aux objectifs du décret susmentionné.
2. La deuxième étape est constituée par le Plan d'Environnement pour le Développement durable (PEDD)(cfr. Annexe 1). Ce plan doit donner une vision à "moyen et long terme" en matière d'environnement et de développement durable, et fait l'objet d'une consultation publique. Le plan est établi tous les 5 ans (1<sup>er</sup> plan en 1995) et reste d'application tant qu'il n'a pas été remplacé. Il est divisé en 12 cahiers thématiques et contient 257 actions. Son efficacité s'est directement exprimée à travers l'enquête publique et les différentes consultations, mais également par la prise de conscience des responsables des actions. Une dernière évaluation de ses résultats montre que globalement il a eu des effets positifs, tant sur la transversalité des décisions, que sur la rencontre des objectifs d'Action 21 et notamment une meilleure gestion des ressources naturelles.
3. La troisième étape est constituée par divers programmes sectoriels. Le Gouvernement doit ainsi établir un programme d'action pour la qualité des eaux, un programme d'action pour la qualité de l'air, un programme d'action pour la qualité des sols, un programme d'action pour la protection de la nature et enfin un plan de gestion des déchets (le premier date de 1991 et couvrait la période 1991-1995, le second s'intitule « plan wallon des déchets, horizon 2010 » et a été adopté en 1998).
4. Depuis le 22/01/1998, le Décret a été modifié pour inclure l'élaboration de Plans Communaux d'Environnement et de Développement de la Nature (PCEDN), lesquels constituent l'application du concept d'agenda local 21.

Outre la planification, ce décret a également prévu la création du Conseil Wallon de l'Environnement et du Développement Durable (CWEDD). Cet organe consultatif a pour mission essentielle d'être le reflet de la société civile et des grands groupes sociaux, représentés en son sein, dans les avis qu'il remet. Il est également chargé d'une mission de contrôle de la mise en œuvre du PEDD. Ce conseil regroupe entre autres l'Union Wallonne des Entreprises, les organisations syndicales et représentatives des classes moyennes, les associations des consommateurs et de protection de l'environnement, l'Union des Villes et des Communes de Wallonie, les institutions universitaires et l'éducation en général. En outre d'autres commissions consultatives existent en Région wallonne: Conseil Supérieur Wallon de la Forêt et de la Filière Bois, Conseil Supérieur Wallon de l'Agriculture, de l'Agro-alimentaire et de l'Alimentation, Conseil Supérieur Wallon de la Conservation de la Nature, etc.

### Le Décret du 11 mars 1999 relatif au permis d'environnement

Le Décret relatif au permis d'environnement marque également une avancée importante en matière d'intégration. Ainsi, le concept de permis unique permet d'intégrer le développement des activités humaines aux problématiques d'environnement et de gestion du territoire (information, consultation, aide à la décision, autorisations administratives, sensibilisation, prévention des nuisances, études d'impact et recherche de solutions alternatives). Le permis d'environnement apporte également des améliorations à l'évaluation des études d'incidences.

### Le Schéma de développement de l'espace régional (SDER)

Instrument de développement territorial, le schéma concerne l'ensemble des politiques régionales ainsi que celles qui ont une retombée sur le territoire wallon. Outil transversal, il vise à fournir une ligne de conduite pour assurer une cohérence régionale et une inscription de la Région dans le



contexte européen (SDEC). Adopté par le Gouvernement wallon le 27 mai 1999, il fera l'objet d'un suivi et d'une évaluation.

### Le Contrat d'Avenir pour la Wallonie

Le Contrat d'Avenir pour la Wallonie adopté par le Gouvernement wallon le 20 janvier 2000, est un projet qui fixe des objectifs définis à un horizon de 10 ans, et marque la cohésion de l'action gouvernementale par la transversalité des actions de chacune des compétences.

A travers ce projet d'avenir, le Gouvernement wallon a non seulement souhaité tendre vers une Wallonie active et solidaire sur la voie du développement durable, mais aussi recueillir l'adhésion de toutes les forces de la Wallonie. Il a ainsi rencontré tous les partenaires de la société lors de réunions organisées dans les principales villes de Wallonie en 1999, ce qui a permis la prise en compte de 206 amendements au projet initial.

Dans cette approche, l'accent est mis sur les complémentarités indispensables dans les domaines social, économique et environnemental et sur la nécessité de trouver un équilibre entre eux lorsqu'ils entrent en conflit. 20 groupes de mesures ont été déterminées par le Gouvernement. Elles constitueront une première phase d'actions au cours des deux prochaines années.

Le Contrat d'Avenir rencontre une lacune du PEDD, à savoir d'envisager le développement durable sous un angle plus large que le seul aspect environnemental. Signalons encore que le Gouvernement vient de réaliser une première évaluation interne au 15 février 2001.

## *III. General evaluation and detailed examples*

### **III.1 Flemish Region**

#### **General evaluation**

Flanders is developing well economically. It's economy is one of the most open in the OECD area, and its annual growth of GDP has been following the EU and OECD averages. GDP growth is almost entirely due to increased labour productivity, with virtually no net job creation. Flanders' workforce has been the most highly skilled in the world and the most productive in western Europe.

To come to a sustainable development, the region Flanders has developed an integrated policy of pollution prevention and control since the late 1980's, and has implemented the principle of prevention using best available technologies. As a result of the policy initiatives, overall pollutant emissions have been decoupled from economic growth. SOX, NOx and CO2 emissions, as well as the use of nitrogen and phosphate fertilisers, decreased despite the increase in GDP. On the other hand, municipal waste generation increased faster than GDP and pesticide use increased faster than agricultural production. Flanders has one of the highest road traffic intensity per unit of GDP and has the highest road network density, and the road passenger traffic is still on the increase and exceeds increase in GDP. Such rapid growth entails significant externalities in terms of air pollution, noise, space for road infrastructure. Decoupling pressures on the environment from economic growth is essential in order to achieve sustainable development in a very densely populated region. Progress can be observed in the above mentioned areas, but there are still other areas in which decoupling has not been achieved. Greater emphasis should be given to the greening of fiscal measures, i.e. modifying them so as to reduce pressure on the environment without increasing the total tax burden.

The use of economic instruments, especially water charges combined with environmentally oriented financial aid and strict regulations, has had a noticeable impact on environmental performance. There has been a reduction in emissions to water, and the environmental impact of waste water has been reduced. However, revenues collected from environmental charges and taxes are inadequate, and appropriation from the general budget is still needed to overcome shortage of water and waste management infrastructure.



## Example of partnership between the public and the private sector

Adoption of self-monitoring mechanisms in large industries has had a positive effect on compliance with environmental laws; however, in small and medium sized enterprises there is a need to continue the inspection programme in order to achieve better compliance with standards. Flanders has promoted the direct participation of the industry in entering into voluntary agreements. Industry organisations are increasingly willing to enter into such agreements, especially the chemical sector, the building sector, the glass sector, etc. A Flemish decree, adopted in 1994, regulates voluntary agreements between industry groups and government agencies and makes them more transparent. Industry has reduced the total load of pollutants discharged. It is taking an active part in environmental self-monitoring of its facilities and practises environmental care at plant level. Many firms are improving their environmental management systems in order to obtain ISO 14001 certification. The Flemish system of "environmental care at plant level" requires the appointment of an environmental co-ordinator, preparation of an environmental audit, measurement and registration of emissions, and adoption of a company policy in order to avoid accidents. The type "dangerous installation" plants are legally obliged to provide annual environmental reporting, which Flemish authorities check carefully. Coupled to the provision of financial aid to plants to improve their environmental condition, this compulsory reporting made the information system relating to environmental achievements at firm level well developed.

### III.2 Walloon Region

Les exemples de partenariats public / privé pour le développement durable sont également nombreux en Région Wallonne:

- En septembre 1997, 300 entreprises ont participé à l'opération " Prévention " comportant trois phases: sensibilisation-information, gestion de l'environnement et amélioration de l'environnement. Dans ce cadre, plus de 4000 recommandations ont été formulées aux entreprises par des conseillers. En outre, cette opération a permis aux entreprises de développer en interne des changements et des comportements préventifs.
- Le programme « RISE », pour Réseau Intersyndical d'information et de Sensibilisation à l'Environnement, est soutenu par la Région wallonne et comprend quatre types d'actions:
  - la réalisation d'un guide pratique à destination des représentants des travailleurs,
  - l'information et la sensibilisation par l'organisation de formations et la réalisation d'une cassette vidéo,
  - des expériences pilotes menées dans plusieurs entreprises wallonnes afin de développer une méthodologie de concertation et de participation des représentants des travailleurs en matière d'environnement,
  - la mise en place d'un appui technique en matière d'environnement qui a notamment pour but de servir d'intermédiaire pour l'accès à l'information et à l'expertise et d'encadrer sur les plans technique et méthodologique, les demandes et initiatives syndicales.
- Le Gouvernement wallon a décidé d'amplifier sa politique d'aide au secteur privé pour une meilleure prise en compte des problématiques environnementales par l'approbation de quatre arrêtés accordant des subventions pour un montant total de 238.998.000 francs aux opérateurs économiques et sociaux (syndicats, classes moyennes et entreprises). Ce projet « fil de l'éco-gestion » vise notamment la facilitation pour la mise en œuvre du permis d'environnement, la prévention et la gestion des déchets d'emballages et la création de cellules de conseillers en environnement.



**Le secteur de l'économie sociale** est aussi un acteur majeur en Région wallonne dans la politique de prévention et de préservation de l'environnement, notamment dans le secteur des déchets. On peut citer quelques exemples:

- La Coordination Wallonne d'Economie Sociale Active dans le Recyclage et le Réemploi (CWESAR) est une ASBL, créée en 1997, qui regroupe plus de 30 initiatives représentant près de 1000 emplois, dont 600 en Région wallonne. Elle travaille en filière, alliant développement concerté et formation.
- Le projet "TERRE" assure la collecte et le recyclage des papiers et textiles tout en favorisant la création d'emplois durables, particulièrement pour les moins qualifiés.
- Dans le cadre du Programme de Transition Professionnelle (PTP), la création de plus de 300 emplois en liaison avec l'environnement a été autorisée de 1998 à 1999. Ce programme concerne le secteur non marchand, s'adresse essentiellement à des chômeurs peu ou moyennement qualifiés et vise à rencontrer des besoins collectifs de société qui ne sont pas suffisamment assurés par le circuit de travail régulier.

**Sensibilisation:** En Wallonie, la société civile est intégrée au processus de développement durable par diverses formes d'actions tant structurelles que ponctuelles. Citons comme exemples:

- Le Conseil Wallon de l'Environnement et du Développement Durable (CWEDD), mentionné plus haut. Cet organe consultatif a pour mission essentielle d'être le reflet de la société civile et des grands groupes sociaux, représentés en son sein, dans la formulation des politiques de développement durable.
- Un partenariat avec la Radio Télévision Belge Francophone a également permis d'insérer quotidiennement un sujet consacré à l'environnement dans le journal télévisé consacré aux plus jeunes, « les niouzz ».
- Par ailleurs, le Réseau Wallon en Eco-Consommation œuvre à l'adoption généralisée de comportements de consommation plus écologiques en sensibilisant et en informant les consommateurs.

S'il est difficile de quantifier les résultats de ces différentes initiatives, il est évident qu'elles contribuent largement à la prise de conscience de l'importance du processus de développement durable. Par ailleurs, les exemples de partenariat public / privé démontrent bien la pertinence, et les résultats positifs, d'une démarche d'intégration des logiques économiques, sociales, et environnementales.

## *IV. Conclusions and Recommendations*

*(For more political aspects, see EU Council Conclusions + EU positions and statements in the whole Rio Follow up)*

It is clear that the implementation of sustainable development offers Belgian citizens new reasons for solidarity in the face of the responsibilities and, ultimately, the common goals of sustainable development. The transition process towards sustainable development:

- commits Belgium to a society-wide project whose challenges should not be underestimated at either the planetary level or more locally; environmental governance at the world level is an important part of these challenges;
- implies the adoption of realistic intermediate objectives or targets, within a clearly defined long-term perspective, accompanied with the necessary means to



ensure the achievement of the long term goals of a sustainable development process;

- requires improved integration of social, environmental and economic affairs, among others at the institutional level; in this regard, it is clear that, at the UN level, the integrative work of a commission like the CSD should go on and even be emphasized after the WSSS;
- recognises the existence of scientific uncertainties and aims at improved interaction between scientific knowledge and the management of serious and unavoidable risks;
- requires clarification, within a broad participation process, of the development options chosen by Belgian society.

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