



**WHERE DOES BELGIUM  
STAND IN TERMS OF  
IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE SDGs?**

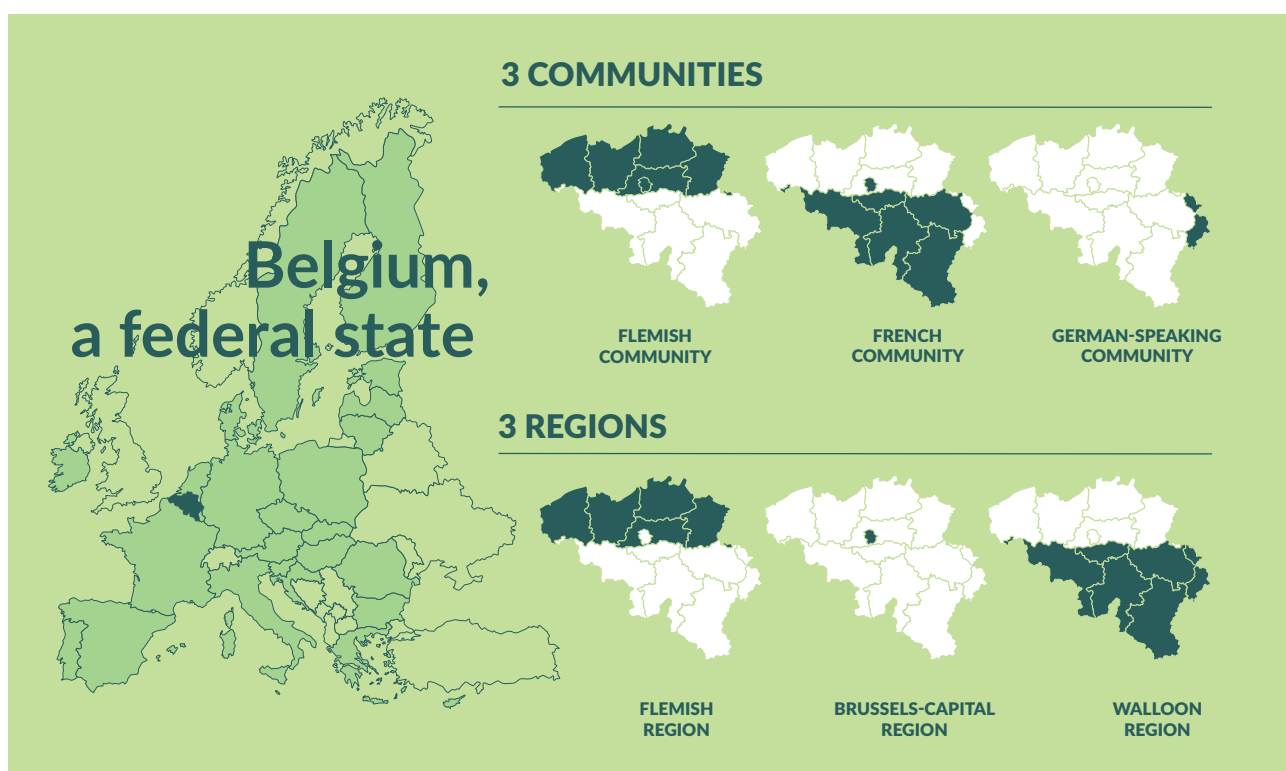
This brochure outlines a number of elements of Belgium's second Voluntary National Review (VNR), published in 2023.

It contains an overview of the actions undertaken by the different authorities in Belgium to achieve to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A number of examples from several governments are highlighted for each SDG, although this obviously does not mean that other governments in Belgium are not taking action in these areas.

The Voluntary National Review and its Annexes provide a comprehensive view of all the actions.

# 01 INTRODUCTION

Belgium is a Federal State composed of Communities and Regions. The governance of the country is in the hands of different partners, who independently exercise their powers in their domains. The Federal State, the Communities and the Regions are legally equal but have jurisdiction in different areas.



In 2023, Belgium submitted a second Voluntary National Review (VNR) to the United Nations to reiterate its commitment to multilateralism and sustainable development. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030), the various governments

in Belgium have taken ownership of the issues and translated them into their own policies, involving both civil society and the private sector.

The full report presents the progress made since the first VNR (2017) as well as the challenges ahead, and aims to mobilise all stakeholders to accelerate

the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). All governments in Belgium also contribute to achieving the SDGs through international actions to promote global sustainable development.

This VNR is the result of a co-creation process involving the different governments in Belgium (federal and federated entities), the local authorities, civil society and the private sector. The process of drafting this VNR began in May 2022, and the final report was validated by the Interministerial Conference on Sustainable Development (IMCSD) on 15 May 2023.

## 02 MAIN MESSAGES

### BELGIUM'S VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW – A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

The decision to present a second VNR is part of a long-standing commitment to multilateralism and sustainable development of the federal state of Belgium. Since 2007, sustainable development has been enshrined in the Belgian Constitution, ensuring that all policy levels pursue the objectives of sustainable development in its social, economic and environmental aspects in their respective competences.

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs requires a whole of society approach and besides governments, other important stakeholders including civil society and the private sector have mobilized around the Global Agenda 2030.

The process of the Second Review was established taking into account this whole of society approach. This joint report is the result of a collaborative effort of various policy levels and stakeholders and summarizes how these various policy levels in the

federal state of Belgium contribute to the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. Since the last VNR in 2017, the Court of Auditors has also conducted an analysis of the implementation, monitoring and reporting by public authorities in Belgium (Preparedness Review) in 2020.

In order to make the process as inclusive as possible, the Federal Council for Sustainable Development (CFDD-FRDO) was tasked to serve as the focal point for engaging various social groups: worker and employer organizations, science and research, youth and «Leave No-One Behind». These were involved in two phases. In the first phase a summarized overview of the SDG implementation of these groups was compiled after which a significant space was devoted to it in the VNR itself. In a second stage, a joint opinion by several advisory councils was requested on the preliminary draft version of the VNR.

The full contributions from all actors who have participated (governments & stakeholders) can be found at [sdgs.be](https://sdgs.be).

## STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES AND POLICIES

Governments in Belgium start from a privileged position given, among other things, the strong institutional framework regarding sustainable development. With a strong economy, high-quality education and relatively low income inequality, governments have the opportunity to pursue sustainability initiatives, both internally and externally.

Through international actions, governments in Belgium are contributing to achieving the SDGs abroad. Global sustainable development has long been a shared commitment: promotion and protection of human rights, effective and inclusive multilateralism, international solidarity, eradicating poverty, combating climate change and reducing inequalities. This commitment was reflected, for example, in the Belgian response to the COVID pandemic, as well as the sixth Belgian mandate in the UN Security Council in 2019-2020 and the focus on climate security and children in armed conflict. Queen Mathilde's role as an SDG Ambassador also illustrates this commitment.

This second VNR illustrates that governments in Belgium have adopted many policy initiatives that contribute positively to the SDGs, yet many challenges also lie ahead of us.

National statistics show that time is running out. In 2022, Belgium was on track to meet the targets for only 20 of the 51 indicators examined. An annex to this VNR shows the evolution since 2000 for a comprehensive list of indicators in more detail, at the national and regional levels.

Key challenges for implementing the 2030 Agenda include, of course, the consequences of the COVID19 pandemic, the theme of this year's HLPF, as well as increasing geopolitical uncertainty, the climate crisis

and biodiversity loss, social inequalities, the link between digitalization and sustainable development, and the central role of education. These challenges can also present opportunities that must be seized.

In their contributions, civil society groups ask for, among other things, greater coherence in the way that different policy levels monitor the implementation of the SDGs and their targets. This means not only regard for internal Belgian policy coherence, but also coherence with the European and international context, given the economic, ecological and social impact across borders.

This VNR shows that the various governments in Belgium and actors involved remain committed to the SDGs by continuing and strengthening existing efforts to live up to the Decade of Action of Sustainable Development as called for by the Secretary-General of the UN.



# 03

## PROCESS

05.05.2022  
**LAUNCH**

01

The ministers responsible for sustainable development in the Belgian governments set the coordination modalities, activate the technical group and send the application for the Voluntary National Review to the UN.

The technical group draws up a plan of approach (process, timetable, stakeholder involvement) and the template for contribution of the various governments and civil society groups.

02

05 > 07/2022  
**DRAWING UP A PLAN OF APPROACH**

07.2022  
**APPROVAL OF THE PLAN OF APPROACH AND COLLECTION OF INFORMATION**

03

The ministers approve the action plan and send requests for contributions from societal groups via the Federal Council for Sustainable Development.

The technical group compiles contributions by authorities, including local authorities. Discussion of contributions by societal groups at the SDG Forum (04.10.2023).

04

07 > 10/2022  
**CONTRIBUTIONS BY GOVERNMENTS AND SOCIETAL GROUPS**

10.2022 > 01.2023  
**COMPILATION AND SYNTHESIS PHASE**

05

The technical group compiles and summarises the contributions into a summary report.

The ministers validate the draft report and submit it to the advisory councils for a joint opinion.

06

13.02.2023  
**APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT REPORT**

02 > 04.2023  
**DEVELOPMENT OF MAIN MESSAGES AND COMMUNICATION MATERIALS**

07

The technical group prepares the main messages, completes the texts, and prepares a brochure and video.

The technical group adjusts the draft report following the opinion issued by the Federal Council for Sustainable Development on 14/04/2023.

08

04.2023  
**PROCESSING THE JOINT OPINION OF CIVIL SOCIETY**

05.2023  
**APPROVAL OF MAIN MESSAGES AND THE DRAFT REPORT**

09

The Ministers approve the draft report, key messages and communication materials.

Finalisation of documents, submission to the UN, publication on [sdgs.be](https://sdgs.be).

10

06.2023  
**FINALISATION AND PUBLICATION OF THE REPORT**

07.2023  
**PRESENTATION AT THE HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM**

11

# 04

## PUBLIC POLICIES AND AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

### 4.1.

#### Integration of the SDGs

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All governments in Belgium are committed to the UN's Agenda 2030 on the basis of their own competencies.

The **federal government** approved a new Federal Sustainable Development Plan in 2021, comprising almost 240 measures. In addition, since 2021, all members of the federal government have been required to present their contribution to the SDGs annually in their general policy notes.

In **Flanders**, the fourth Flemish Sustainable Development Strategy (VSDO4) was approved by the Flemish government in March 2021, with Vision 2050 as its long-term compass and Vision 2030 as its focus. For implementation, efforts are being made on seven transition priorities, among others.

The **French Community** has developed a strategy, following a decree approved on 1 July 2021, which is concretely translated into a transversal for the ecological transition with defined and ambitious objectives.

The **Brussels Capital Region** includes sustainable development projects in its operational objectives and monitors SDG-related actions two or three times a year. The Regional Sustainable Development Plan includes development priorities. Regional sector-specific plans are linked to the SDGs.

Since 2013, the **Walloon government** has had a decree integrating sustainable development at the institutional level. Wallonia's third sustainable development strategy interconnects sectoral policies, equipping Wallonia with measurable 2030 targets linked to the SDGs, forming a clear course of action.

The Regional Development Concept (REK) **Ostbel-**

**gien** Leben is the common thread for implementing the SDGs in the **German-speaking Community**. It encompasses a vision of the future as an economic, border, educational, solidarity-based and vibrant region. REK III comprises 32 projects.

### 4.2.

#### Stakeholder participation

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The Agenda 2030 benefits greatly from a multi-stakeholder approach that involves everyone. This is why all governments in Belgium are committed to stakeholder participation, including in the development of this VNR.

Every year, the **federal government** organises the SDG Forum, which brings together over 600 participants from society, the private sector, academia and the authorities. SDG Voices raises awareness among a wide audience. In addition, the federal authority finances the development of specific projects and provides structural support to two consultation platforms for societal organisations. In 2017, over 80 companies, societal organisations and public sector representatives signed the Belgian SDG Charter for International Development. The website [sdgs.be](http://sdgs.be) brings together the main initiatives.

**Flanders** is cooperating with the relevant stakeholders to create a number of policy plans and in the implementation of the seven transition priorities. Examples include the Vlaamse Veerkracht recovery plan, the Mobiliteitsvisie 2040, the Vlaams Energie en Klimaatplan (VEKP), the Vlaams Actieplan Armoedebestrijding 2020-2024, the Blue Deal, the Flemish Adaptation Plan and the Flanders Spatial Policy Plan. Flanders also supports local authorities in activities that give substance to Flemish sustainable development policy, such as the Week of the Sustainable Municipality.



Since 2021, the Partnership for Sustainable Development has acted as a dialogue body in **Wallonia** for representatives of organisations, inspired by the Major Groups of Agenda 21. They contribute to the development and implementation of the action plan of the third Walloon sustainable development strategy, the mobilisation of stakeholders and Wallonia's progress towards its sustainable development goals. In addition, between 2020 and 2022, nearly one hundred organisations (local authorities, businesses, non-profit sector, etc.) were given free support in their transition to sustainability for one year. At the end of the coaching process, each organisation had an SDG plan to guide its strategic actions for the coming years.

The **German-speaking Community** opted for an extensive participatory process with civil society and the population when drawing up its third Regional Development Concept (REK III). To this end, it carried out a written consultation, a citizens' discussion, an online survey and interviews with student council representatives.

The **Brussels Capital Region's** Regional Sustainable Development Plan to 2040 incorporates European recommendations for a sustainable city (Urban Agenda, Leipzig Charter), with explicit reference to the SDGs. These Goals are integrated into day-to-day management.

### 4.3.

## Policy coherence for sustainable development

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Implementing the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs as an integrated and coherent whole is a challenge. It is important for the implementation of the SDGs to address the interactions between the economic, social and environmental goals in a balanced way while avoiding the negative impacts on the well-being of current and future generations on a global scale. Against this backdrop, sustainable development requires a cross-cutting approach and a long-term vision to avoid these potentially negative effects.

### 4.4.

## Leaving No One Behind

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Leaving no one behind and reaching out to the most vulnerable is central to the policies of the various governments in Belgium.

In the transition to sustainable development, the **federal government** is applying the "Leaving No One Behind" principle to a whole range of policy areas. This is an important theme in the Federal Sustainable Development Plan. In addition, the federal government is pursuing a specific policy to make the transition just with the Federal Plan to Combat Poverty and Inequality (SDG 1). In 2022, the Estates General of the Just Transition were announced at the federal level. The objective of the States General is to prepare a Conference on Just Transition in Belgium. Leaving No One Behind is also important for foreign policy, as demonstrated by Belgium's commitment to minority rights, the development of less developed countries, conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

Reaching the most vulnerable in society is also at the heart of **Flemish** equal opportunities, inclusion and integration policies. A range of Flemish policy areas are taking action, and structural attention is being paid to equal opportunities. In 2020, the action plan for horizontal integration and equal opportunities 2020-2024 was approved.

REK III of the **German-speaking Community** takes vulnerable groups into account. Securing and developing hospital sites is an ongoing task, as is improving public health.

The **Brussels Capital Region** has integrated the Leaving No One Behind principle into its strategic frameworks. The Region provides training and funding for municipal services and involves civil society in drawing up action plans. The Region also takes vulnerable groups into account in its territorial development projects.

In **Wallonia**, attention to the most vulnerable citizens is at the heart of all regional policy measures.

Although this is a cross-cutting issue, Wallonia also has a specific plan, the “Walloon Poverty Elimination Plan”. This plan aims to give every Walloon citizen the progressive means to escape poverty, through access to basic comfort and to work. The plan therefore focuses on access to socio-professional integration, housing and well-being for all.

## 4.5. Institutional mechanisms

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As stipulated in Art. 7bis of the Constitution, each level of government is expected to contribute to sustainable development. The consultation and collaboration between the federated

entities around sustainable development takes place at the Interministerial Conference on Sustainable Development (IMCSD), which brings together members of the governments responsible for sustainable development at the federal, regional and community levels. The IMCSD has been meeting regularly again since 2022 and a new dynamic has been established through a rotating presidency, including with a view to drafting this VNR.





# 05 PROGRESS ON SDGS

This chapter presents best practices and challenges for achieving the SDGs. The detailed contribution of each entity to each SDG, as well as the indicators, can be found in the annex to the report and on the website [www.sdgs.be](http://www.sdgs.be).



# SDG 1 NO POVERTY

SDG Indicator	Unit	Objective	Assessment
i01. Risk of poverty or social exclusion	%	10.8	⊖
i02. Very low work intensity	%	↘	⊕
i05. Over-indebtedness of households	%	↘	○

The fourth **federal** plan for tackling poverty and inequality (2022) implements actions relating to early poverty detection, access to sustainable employment, empowerment and inclusion. The government is making social rights more accessible through concrete measures.

In **Flanders**, poverty reduction has been a cross-cutting policy theme since the 2003 poverty reduction decree. All policy areas take structural measures to prevent and combat poverty, including the Permanent Consultation on Poverty and the Poverty Test. In 2021, Flanders approved the “Energy Poverty Plan 2025” vision document to provide a structural response to fuel poverty.

The Government of the **Wallonia-Brussels Federation** has adopted a 2020-2025 plan to combat poverty and reduce social inequalities. This cross-cutting plan concerns several of the WBF’s areas of competence, including education, children, culture and sport.

The various governments in Belgium actively participate in the achievement of SDG 1 through special support for the construction and development of universal social protection systems, which are one of the priorities of its development cooperation policy. This is reflected in the 2018 creation of the Belgian Dialogue Universal Social Protection 2030 network, in Enabel’s social protection and universal health insurance work in Africa, and in the strategic partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO).

In a context of rising prices for basic goods such as energy and food, poverty reduction and inequality must remain a priority.





## SDG 2 ZERO HUNGER

SDG Indicator	Unit	Objective	Assessment
i07. Adult obesity	%	↘	○
i08. Meat consumption	g/inhabitant/day	↘	+
i09. Organic agriculture area	%	↗	+

“Made in Ostbelgien” from the **German-speaking Community** is a label for short-circuit regional products that promotes the region’s sustainable development, emphasising the link between producer and consumer, the local economy and employment, regional identity and the cultural landscape.

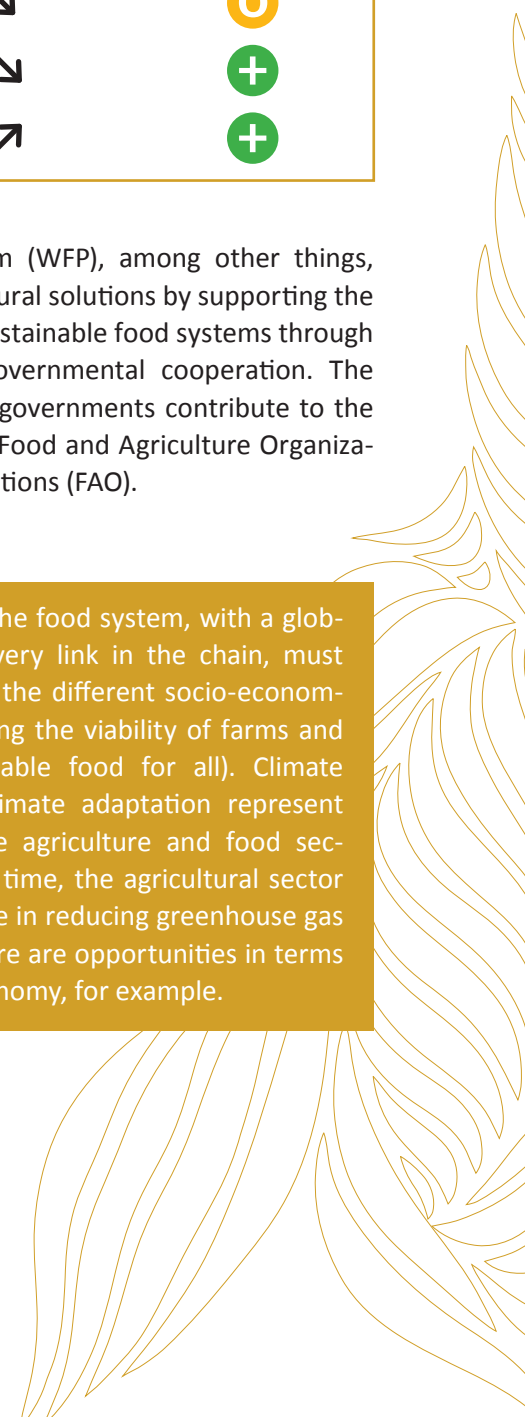
In **Wallonia**, at the end of 2022, the Collège wallon de l’alimentation durable (Walloon College for Sustainable Food) developed Food Wallonia, a participatory alliance between employment and the environment on the issue of food. To enable the transition to a sustainable food system, Food Wallonia works on the entire food chain, in all its facets: agriculture, health, access for all, environment, etc.

In **Brussels**, the Region and the Communities pool structural resources for food aid, grocery shops and social restaurants. The Brussels Region is also stepping up funding for the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived.

As the food crises are on the rise, the **federal government** is focusing both on short-term solutions, through humanitarian contributions to the

World Food Program (WFP), among other things, and long-term structural solutions by supporting the transition to more sustainable food systems through bilateral and non-governmental cooperation. The federal and Flemish governments contribute to the Flexible Fund of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

The transition of the food system, with a global approach to every link in the chain, must take into account the different socio-economic aspects (including the viability of farms and access to sustainable food for all). Climate mitigation and climate adaptation represent challenges for the agriculture and food sectors. At the same time, the agricultural sector can also play a role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and there are opportunities in terms of the circular economy, for example.





# SDG 3

## GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

SDG Indicator	Unit	Objective	Assessment
<b>i12. Healthy life years</b>	Years at birth	↗	○
<b>i15. Premature deaths due to chronic diseases</b>	Rate/100,000<65	70.1	+
<b>i22. Daily smokers</b>	%	13.2	+

**Belgium** has launched a National Action Plan on Endocrine Disruptors (NAPED) based on prevention, regulation and scientific research. These three pillars complement each other and follow a One World One Health approach, which takes into account the link between human, animal and environmental health.

**Flanders** continues to invest in mental health care, more specifically in the life and quality of life of elderly people in residential care homes. The Flanders' Care programme aims to improve the provision of high-quality care through innovation and encourage responsible entrepreneurship in the healthcare economy.

**Belgium** has supported COVAX to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines for low- and middle-income countries. The Belgian government therefore decided to send doses of vaccine to several countries with vaccine deficits. Belgium is a key player in several EU Team Europe Initiatives (TEI) in the healthcare sector.

The **federal government** places universal access to basic healthcare at the heart of its cooperation with partner countries.

The prevention and early detection of chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes or cerebrovascular disease, excess weight and obesity, and the number of premature deaths due to chronic diseases remain major challenges. And, as in other countries, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the mental health of Belgian citizens, increasing mental health problems.





# SDG 4 QUALITY EDUCATION

SDG Indicator	Unit	Objective	Assessment
<b>i23. Early school leavers</b>	%	<b>0% (18-24)</b>	—
<b>i24. Lifelong learning</b>	%	<b>15</b>	—
<b>i26. Underachievement in reading</b>	%	<b>15</b>	—

The **Flemish** and **French Communities** have been working together since 2015 in the context of global decision-making and monitoring of the implementation of SDG 4. For example, Belgium was an elected member of the SDG Education 2030 Steering Committee from 2016 to 2021 and hosted the UN Global Education Meeting in December 2018. In this context, the Flemish and French Communities took on the joint leadership of Action Track 5 (financing education) for UNESCO’s Transforming Education Summit in 2022.

The **French Community’s** compulsory school curricula include courses in environmental education and cross-curricular skills, particularly in the areas of citizenship and the media.

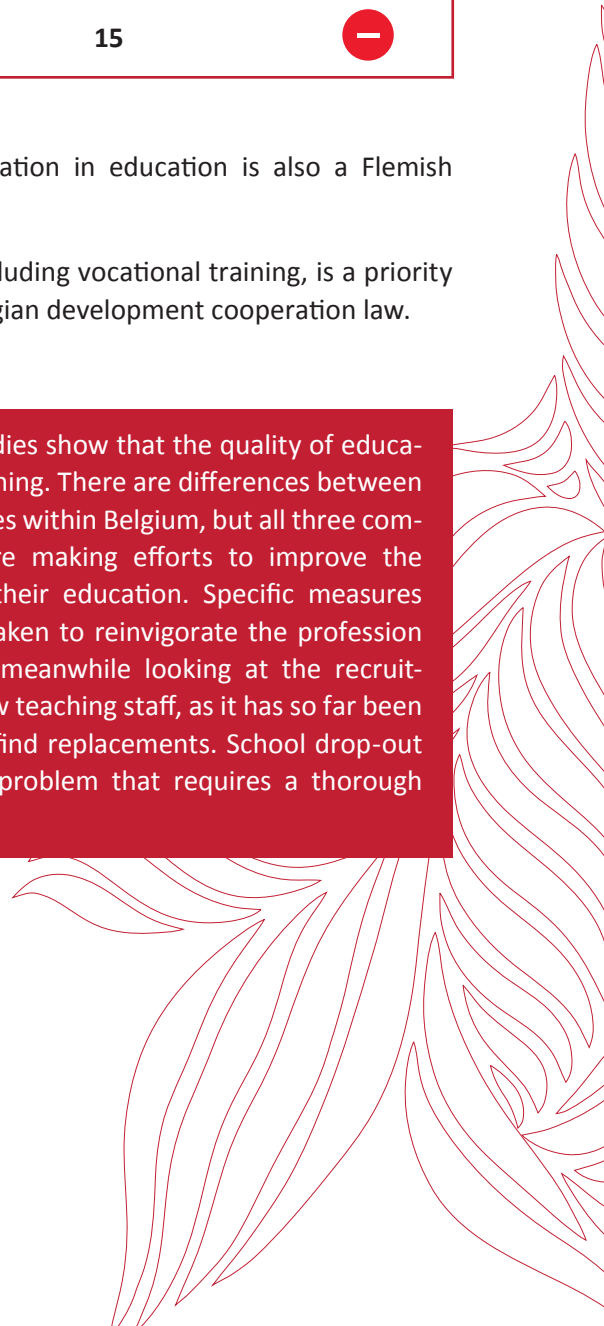
The curricula of the **German-speaking Community** include cross-curricular skills in civic education and media literacy. The German-speaking Community is improving access to high-quality, affordable education thanks to the “Learning in the workplace, support and placement from a single source” and “Integration and diversity” projects.

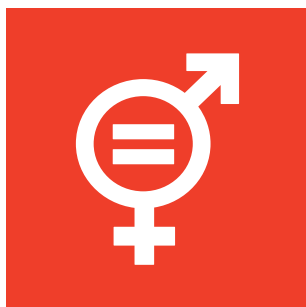
**Flanders** is committed to raising the quality of education through measures such as ambitious minimum targets imposed by the Flemish government, lowering the compulsory school age and focusing on the role and quality of the Dutch language (e.g. Koala-Screening and the Great Reading Offensive).

Quality digitisation in education is also a Flemish spearhead.

Education, including vocational training, is a priority under the Belgian development cooperation law.

Several studies show that the quality of education is declining. There are differences between Communities within Belgium, but all three communities are making efforts to improve the quality of their education. Specific measures are being taken to reinvigorate the profession of teacher meanwhile looking at the recruitment of new teaching staff, as it has so far been difficult to find replacements. School drop-out is another problem that requires a thorough approach.





## SDG 5 GENDER EQUALITY

ODD Indicator	Unit	Objective	Assessment
i27. Gender pay gap	%	0	—
i28. Inactive population due to caring responsibilities	%	↘	○
i29. Female members of parliament	%	50	—

Since 2016, the **Brussels Capital Region** has been encouraging its municipalities to analyse their budgets from a gender perspective. The Brussels Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Equality Plan (2022) guarantees greater gender equality.

The National Action Plan to Combat Gender-Based Violence 2021-2025 comprises 201 measures, including the creation of a national platform of civil society organisations. This allows independent monitoring.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights are priorities in several of the **federal authority's** cooperation portfolios. This commitment is reflected in the Belgian partnership with, among others, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). It also plays a role in financing governmental and non-governmental cooperation programmes. Belgium is an active participant in the She Decides movement and supports the mandate of the Secretary-General's Special Representative on sexual violence in armed conflict.

The scale of gender-based and sexual violence suffered by women in the public and private spheres, femicide and the growing number of reports of sex- or gender-based discrimination demonstrate the urgent need for action and an ambitious gender equality policy. In addition, the wage gap between men and women remains a major area of concern.







# SDG 6

## CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

SDG Indicator	Unit	Objective	Assessment
<b>i30. Nitrates in river water</b>	mg NO <sub>3</sub> -N/l	↘	+
<b>i31. Nitrates in groundwater</b>	mg NO <sub>3</sub> -N/l	↘	0
<b>i323. Water consumption</b>	%	20	+

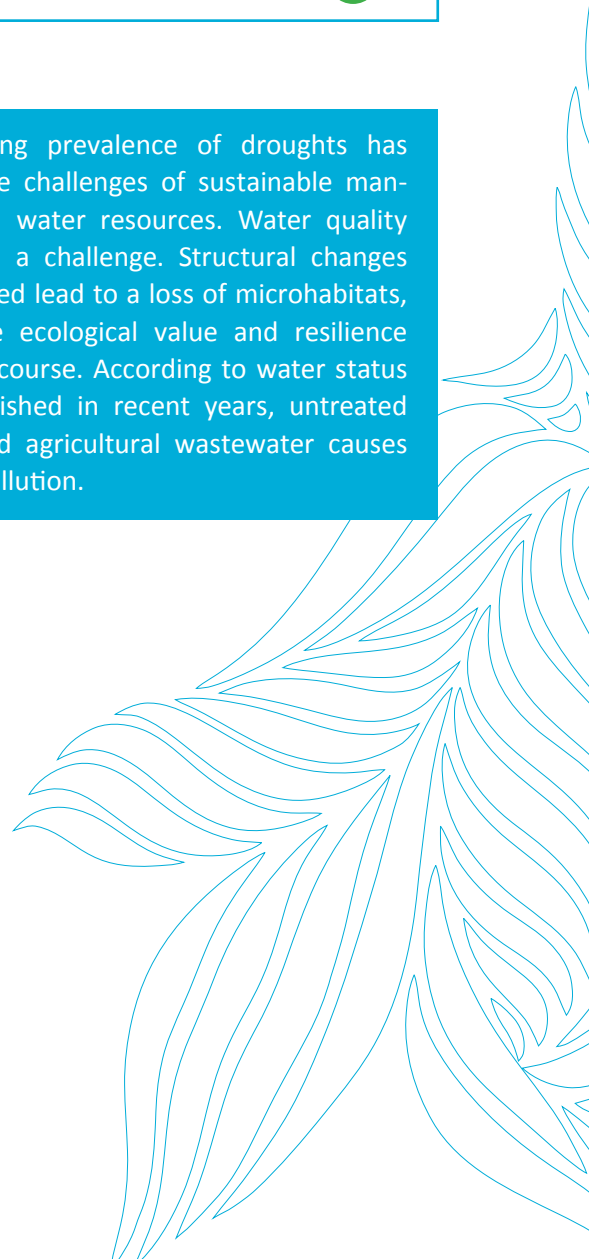
The **Flemish** Blue Deal is a comprehensive, wide-ranging action programme that includes both regulation and on-the-ground implementation to provide a structural approach to structurally address the drought issue. It is a partnership between governments, agricultural companies, knowledge institutions, citizens, local governments and (nature) associations. With the Blue Deal, Flanders is committed to reducing paving, expanding wetlands and maximising the circular use of water. These actions also benefit biodiversity and reduce flooding.

With the introduction of the **Brussels Capital Region's** disconnection ban, it is now illegal to deny access to drinking water to users who do not pay. On 1 January 2022, another set of social measures

went into effect to improve access to drinking water for all and combat the problem of water insecurity: social intervention in the payment of water bills, strengthening the social water fund, the possibility of reasonable payment plans, etc.

The Brussels-Capital Region has an International Solidarity Fund at its disposal. For every cubic meter of water billed by the water operator, 0.005 euros goes to projects on access to drinking water and adequate sanitation in developing countries. This fund was set up in 2015 and has already supported 35 projects, totalling nearly €2.5 million.

The increasing prevalence of droughts has increased the challenges of sustainable management of water resources. Water quality also remains a challenge. Structural changes to the riverbed lead to a loss of microhabitats, reducing the ecological value and resilience of the watercourse. According to water status reports published in recent years, untreated domestic and agricultural wastewater causes additional pollution.





## SDG 7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

SDG Indicator	Unit	Objective	Assessment
i34. Dwellings without adequate heating	%	0	–
i35. Renewable energy	%	17.5	+
i37. Energy productivity	€ <sub>2010</sub> /kg oil eq.	11.4	–

The **Walloon** Climate Employment Renovation Alliance (ACER, 2021) aims to achieve a carbon-neutral building stock by 2050. ACER has a participatory administration and aims to stimulate demand for sustainable renovation of both public and private buildings and strengthen the supply quantitatively and qualitatively.

**Flanders** has taken several additional measures to increase the rate of building renovation, such as combining the renovation bonus and most energy bonuses to create an integrated bonus, the Mijl VerbouwPremie (MVP).

In 2021, the **German-speaking Community** introduced a simplified energy premium system with higher subsidies for private households.

The **federal government** works within various energy partnerships, including the Benelux, the Pentatlantal Forum, the North Sea Energy Cooperation and most recently with the Esbjerg Declaration countries to expand offshore wind production capacity in the North Sea and additional interconnection capacity.

The energy policy should focus on phasing out our dependence of fossil fuels and ensuring security of supply, energy efficiency, affordable energy that is sustainable and for which supply and security is guaranteed. Decarbonising our energy supply, pushing through electrification, unlocking demand and supply flexibility, keeping energy costs affordable, an equitable and inclusive energy transition, further expanding the share of renewable energy, switching to a hydrogen economy, and achieving better energy efficiency within all sectors of society are the main challenges in this regard. The measures also need to be targeted to reach vulnerable target groups. Not only do these challenges have a national scope, they also need to be considered in a European and global context.





## SDG 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

SDG Indicator	Unit	Objective	Assessment
<b>i40. Unemployment rate</b>	%	↘	⊖
<b>i42. Youth not in employment, education or training</b>	%	9	+
<b>i43. Fatal accidents at work</b>	Rate / 100,000	↘	+

The various governments in Belgium took measures to help companies through the crisis. The **federal government** has reformed corporate tax and introduced a number of additional tax incentives. The federal government also raised the rate of the ordinary investment deduction for SMEs in 2022.

The public authorities have also developed several initiatives to increase the employment rate to 80%, including in relation to decent work and young people in NEET situations. This rate has been increasing since 2017 but shows regional disparities.

In **Wallonia**, the Coup de Boost project relaunches young people aged 18 to 25 who are far removed from the labour market. The project is producing positive results, as after one year, 71% of young people are back on the job market (employment, training leading to qualifications or returning to studying).

In order to raise the employment rate on the one hand, and to motivate low-income workers to find a job and stay in work on the other, **Flanders** launched a job bonus, targeting low-wage workers.

The federal government co-finances the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) to make the mining sector more sustainable and ensure that mining revenues benefit local communities.

The job market is under pressure: falling unemployment and rise in employment and vacancies that are more difficult to fill. A quantitative and qualitative mismatch, an ageing population, technology and digitalisation that will change the nature of jobs are just some of the challenges. In the context of a transition to a green and digital economy, constant upskilling and retraining are crucial to responding flexibly to changes in the labour market.





# SDG 9

## INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

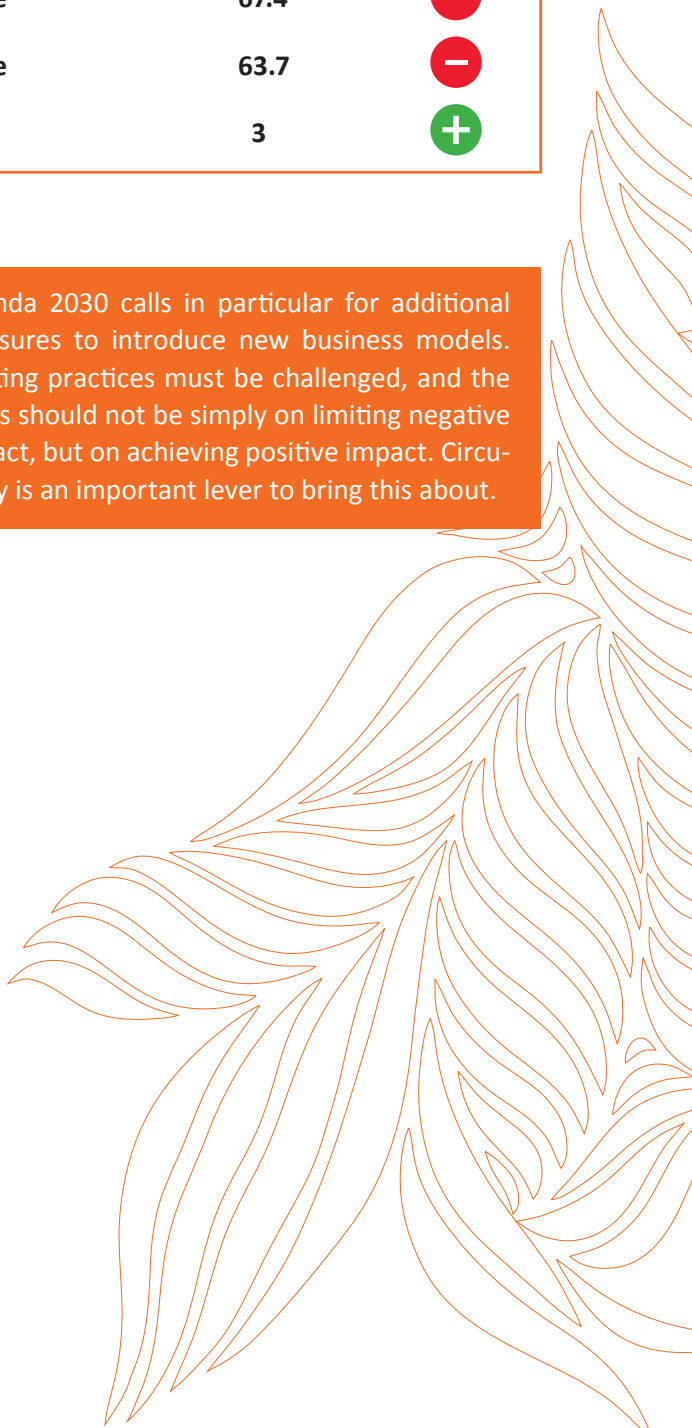
SDG Indicator	Unit	Objective	Assessment
i44. Passenger transport by car	Modal share	67.4	–
i45. Road freight transport	Modal share	63.7	–
i48. Research and development	% GDP	3	+

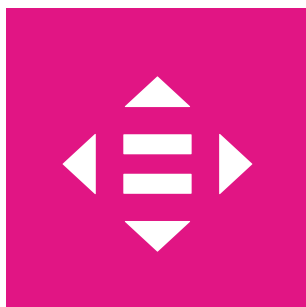
The **German-speaking Community** is investing in a sustainable digital infrastructure, including a fibre optic network, to make the region more attractive to citizens and businesses. The project also improves equal opportunities in terms of access to a quality Internet connection.

In **Flanders**, the Flemish Data Utility was set up to stimulate economic and social prosperity with innovative initiatives in the field of data use. As an independent broker, this institution should both strengthen citizens’ confidence in data sharing and simplify finding and exchanging data for businesses. Flanders also has extensive policy programmes on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Cybersecurity (CS).

The different governments in Belgium support a global digital transformation and are committed to developing and implementing integrated technological solutions for the SDGs, notably through Enabel’s D4D-Hub and the Flemish Institute for Technological Research (VITO), which is a driving force behind the international G-STIC programme (The Global Sustainable Technology & Innovation Community).

Agenda 2030 calls in particular for additional measures to introduce new business models. Existing practices must be challenged, and the focus should not be simply on limiting negative impact, but on achieving positive impact. Circularity is an important lever to bring this about.





# SDG 10

## REDUCED INEQUALITIES

SDG Indicator	Unit	Objective	Assessment
<b>i50. Risk of poverty</b>	%	↘	○
<b>i51. Depth of risk of poverty</b>	%	↘	○
<b>i52. Income inequality: Gini index</b>	Index 0-100	→ ↘	+

In 2020, **Wallonia** launched a plan to combat discrimination in access to housing, with mystery checks, training for stakeholders and information through a practical guide for landlords, tenants and estate agents.

Employers in the **German-speaking Community** who employ people at a disadvantage in the labour market, such as young people, the over-50s, the low-skilled or the long-term job seekers, receive a subsidy for this purpose.

The **federal government** is committed to the Addis Tax Initiative and has stepped up its cooperation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to strengthen tax policies in partner countries. The federal government has supported the suspension of debt servicing following the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the current context of rising energy and food prices, attention to social cohesion remains important if policies are to progress towards sustainable development, taking into account a just transition.





# SDG 11

## SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

SDG Indicator	Unit	Objective	Assessment
i54. Inadequate dwelling	%	0	⊖
i55. Exposure to particulate matter	µg PM <sub>2,5</sub> /m <sup>3</sup>	10	⊕
i57. Noise pollution	%	↘	⊕

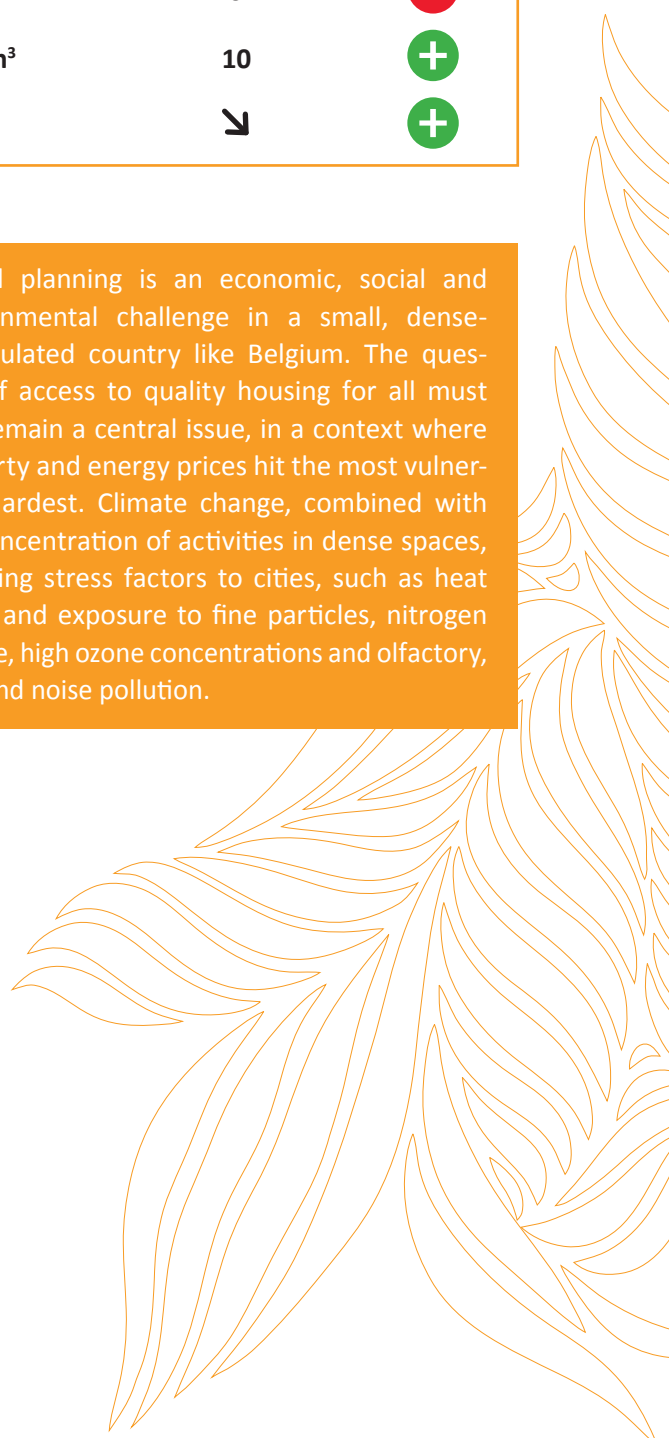
In **Brussels**, *quartiersapaises.brussels* is committed to peaceful neighbourhoods, quality of life, quality of public spaces and urban resilience. The plan prioritises residential functions, universal accessibility, road safety, air quality and health.

The Railway Vision 2040 is the result of collaboration between the **federal government**, railway companies and civil society. This vision provides a framework for rail policy over the next 20 years, with a significant reduction in carbon emissions.

With the Flemish Mobility Vision 2040, the Road Safety Plan 2021-2025, the Clean Power for Transport 2030 policy vision and the Flemish Spatial Development Plan, Flanders is committed to safe, zero-emission transport. Investments are partly being financed by the Flemish Resilience and Recovery Plan to enable the modal shift and make Flanders a cycling region.

Thanks to the UNESCO Trust Fund (FUT), **Flanders** has been supporting heritage projects (cultural, natural, intangible and underwater) for over ten years, with a geographical focus on Africa.

Spatial planning is an economic, social and environmental challenge in a small, densely-populated country like Belgium. The question of access to quality housing for all must also remain a central issue, in a context where property and energy prices hit the most vulnerable hardest. Climate change, combined with the concentration of activities in dense spaces, is adding stress factors to cities, such as heat stress and exposure to fine particles, nitrogen dioxide, high ozone concentrations and olfactory, light and noise pollution.







# SDG 12

## RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

SDG Indicator	Unit	Objective	Assessment
i58. Domestic material consumption	t / inhabitant	↘	+
i59. Hazardous waste	kg / inhabitant	↘	0
i60. Waste recycling	%	↗	0

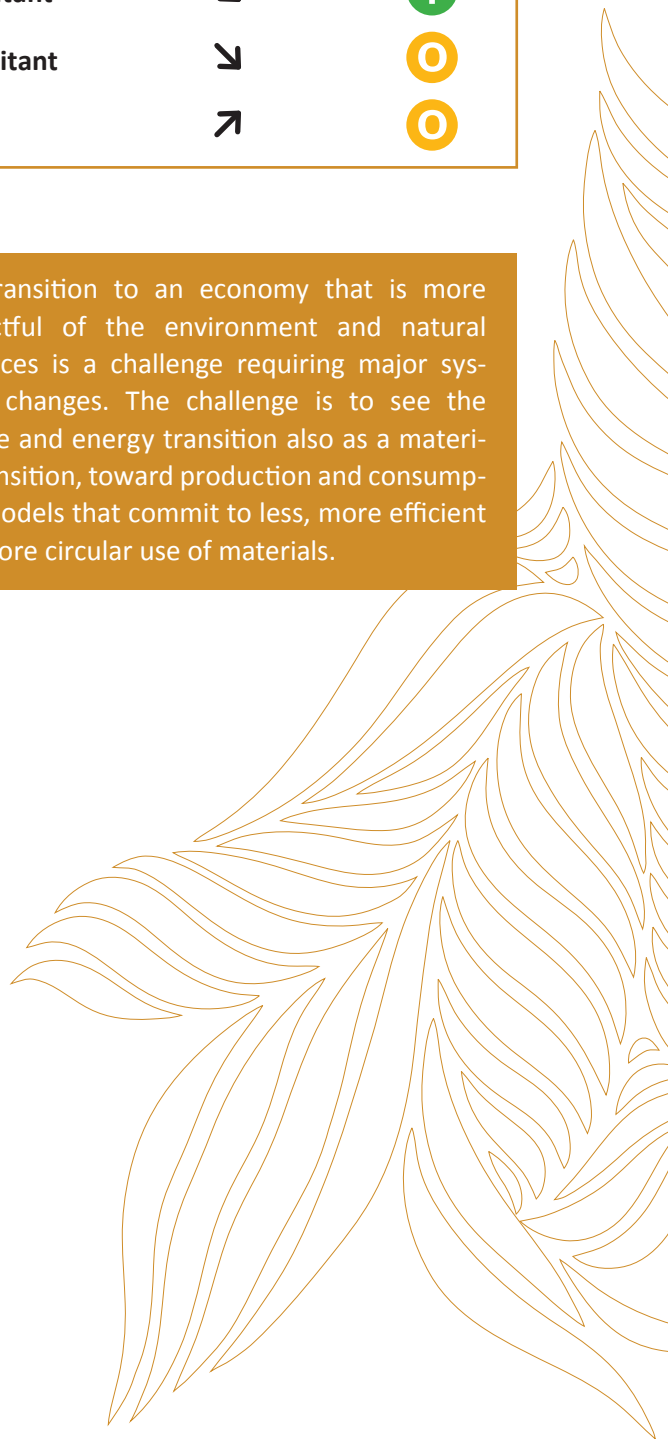
The integration of environmental clauses into public procurement contracts is one of the priorities of the **French Community's** 2021 Ecological Transition Plan

A participatory process by the **Walloon** government, with private and public stakeholders, academia, the research field and the voluntary sector led to the first strategy for a circular economy in Wallonia in 2021: Circular Wallonia.

Building on the various actions of Flanders Circular, the new policy program Circular Construction 2022-2030 continues the transition to circular construction and contributes to the **Flemish government's** goal of drastically reducing the carbon footprint, in collaboration with actors in the construction sector.

The Trade for Development Center (TDC) of the development agency Enabel is dedicated to supporting producer organisations and multi-stakeholder initiatives aimed at ensuring the sustainability of value chains and encouraging citizens and political decision-makers to develop sustainable consumption patterns. Beyond Chocolate was launched in 2018 in collaboration with Federal Development Cooperation, with the aim of making chocolate production more sustainable.

The transition to an economy that is more respectful of the environment and natural resources is a challenge requiring major systemic changes. The challenge is to see the climate and energy transition also as a materials transition, toward production and consumption models that commit to less, more efficient and more circular use of materials.





# SDG 13

## CLIMATE ACTION

SDG Indicator	Unit	Objective	Assessment
i63. Greenhouse gas emissions non-ETS	Mt CO <sub>2</sub> eq.	41.8	–
i64. Natural disaster victims	Rate / 100,000	1.97	–
i65. Contribution to international climate finance	M€	↗	+

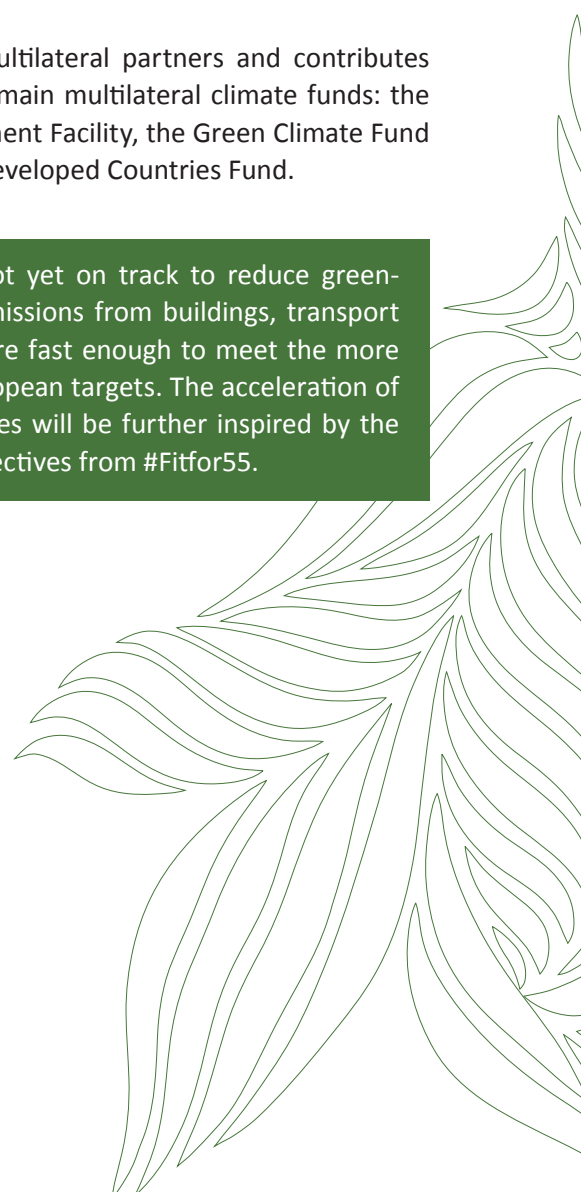
In November 2021, an additional package of climate measures was agreed to strengthen the **Flemish** Energy and Climate Plan. The target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the ESR sectors has been raised from -35% to -40% by 2030 (compared with 2005).

The Citizen Climate Panel is a panel of randomly selected citizens in **Wallonia** (50 members and 25 substitutes) who propose measures for the next version of the Air-Climate-Energy Plan (PACE 2030). This public consultation is part of the drive to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030, compared with 1990 levels. After 13 meetings, the panel made 168 recommendations to this effect.

Belgium is committed to increasing its contribution to international climate change financing for the period 2021-2024 to a minimum of €531.5 million. The **federal government** has increased its international climate funding from €70 million to €100 million during this legislative period. This funding is focused on the cross-functional strengthening of climate policy in partner countries and on climate adaptation. The federal government created a thematic Common Strategic Framework for climate and environment with non-governmental partners in federal development cooperation. The federal government has also

worked with multilateral partners and contributes to three of the main multilateral climate funds: the Global Environment Facility, the Green Climate Fund and the Least Developed Countries Fund.

Belgium is not yet on track to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from buildings, transport and agriculture fast enough to meet the more stringent European targets. The acceleration of climate policies will be further inspired by the European directives from #Fitfor55.





# SDG 14

## LIFE BELOW WATER

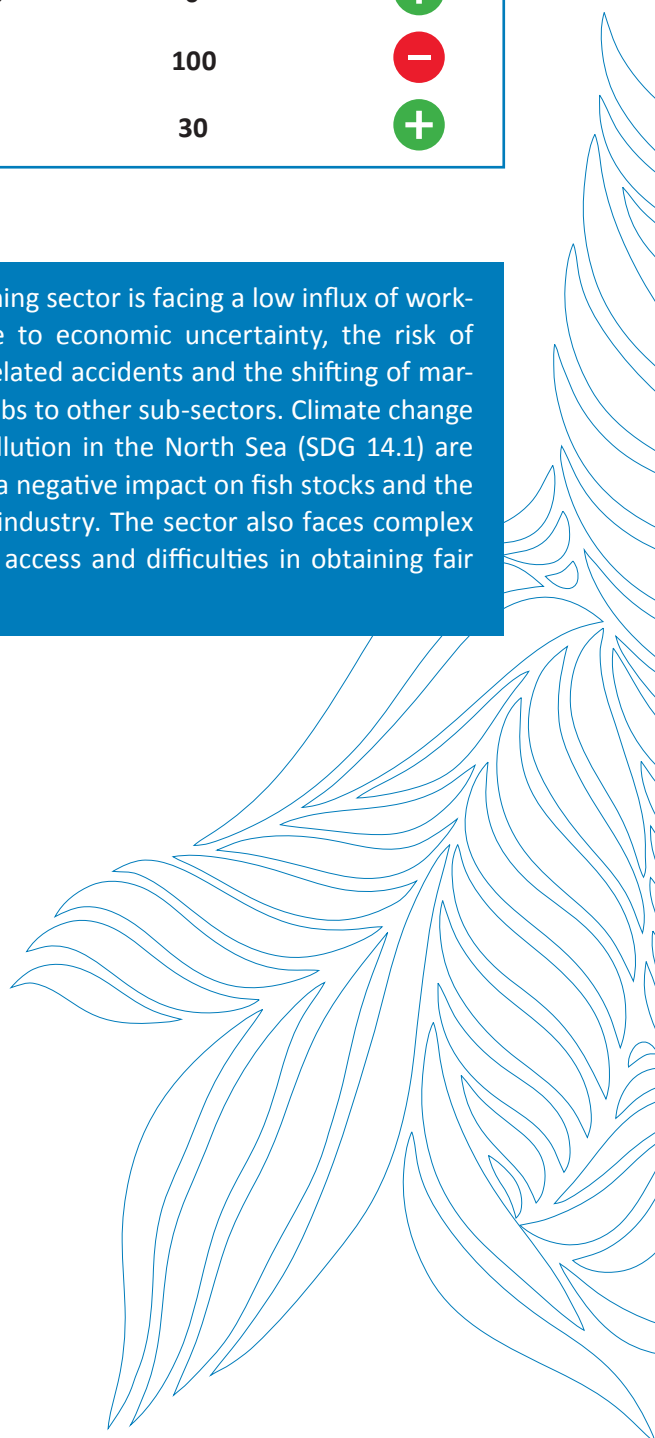
SDG Indicator	Unit	Objective	Assessment
i66. Oil pollution	Number cases	0	+
i67. Sustainable fisheries	%	100	-
i68. Natura 2000 protected marine area	%	30	+

In 2020, the requirements for sulphur content in marine fuels became more stringent. A “sniffer” aircraft takes SOx measurements to monitor compliance with European standards (with administrative fines where applicable). In addition, the *federal government* has commissioned a study on the adverse impact of scrubber wash water on water acidification in the southern North Sea.

GEOFISH is an online tool of the *Flemish* Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Research and provides the fisheries sector with a spatial visualisation of fisheries-related data and marine spatial planning, such as the status of fish stocks or possible restrictions (marine nature reserves, wind farms, Brexit) that have an economic impact on the fisheries sector.

Belgium is one of the driving forces behind the Blue Leaders Initiative, which unites countries in a call for urgent action to protect the ocean from the climate crisis, overfishing, pollution, and other threats. In collaboration with a number of partners, the *Flanders* Marine Institute (VLIZ) participates in the World Ocean Assessment, which forms the scientific basis and source of national and international policy recommendations for the United Nations Decade of Ocean.

The fishing sector is facing a low influx of workers due to economic uncertainty, the risk of work-related accidents and the shifting of maritime jobs to other sub-sectors. Climate change and pollution in the North Sea (SDG 14.1) are having a negative impact on fish stocks and the fishing industry. The sector also faces complex market access and difficulties in obtaining fair prices.





# SDG 15

## LIFE ON LAND

SDG Indicator	Unit	Objective	Assessment
i69. Natura 2000 protected land area	%	30	⊖
i70. Forests with FSC or PEFC label	%	↗	⊕
i71. Farmland bird population	Index	↗	⊖

In late 2022, the **German-speaking Community** launched a project to prepare the implementation of a sustainability fund that quantifies the loss of biodiversity when non-buildable land is converted to buildable land. Various measures should compensate for this loss and minimize the impact on biodiversity.

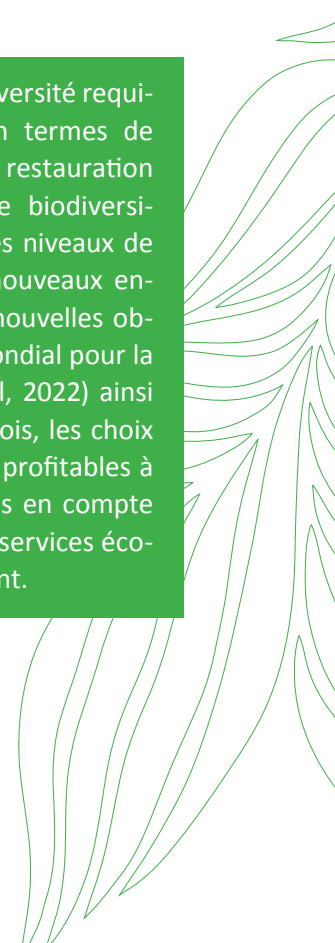
Since 2019, the “Yes we plant” project has encouraged the planting of trees and hedges in **Wallonia** via a subsidy mechanism aimed at citizens, municipalities, farmers, businesses and schools. By October 2022, over 1,400 km of hedgerows and 1,364,000 trees had been planted.

In the area of ecosystems and biodiversity, Flanders aims to achieve healthy ecosystems and implement a conservation policy. For example, it has entered into management agreements and also, from 2023, eco-schemes that farmers can use voluntarily to make extra efforts to enhance agricultural biodiversity. **Flanders** has also set itself clear targets for nature expansion: 20,000 ha of additional nature under effective management by the end of the legislature in 2024, and 10,000 ha of new forest by 2030, including 4,000 ha by 2024.

Belgium is actively involved in European and international processes aimed at halting desertification, biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation. Our country is also actively working to finance multilateral

funds such as the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility, through partner organisations such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and other non-governmental stakeholders. Within CEBIOS, a programme of the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, scientists from the North and South are working together in the area of biodiversity.

La lutte contre l'érosion de la biodiversité requiert des mesures structurelles en termes de préservation, de protection et de restauration des écosystèmes. En matière de biodiversité, la Belgique s'emploie à tous les niveaux de pouvoir à mettre en œuvre les nouveaux engagements internationaux et les nouvelles obligations internationales (cadre mondial pour la biodiversité de Kunming-Montréal, 2022) ainsi que les objectifs européens. Parfois, les choix politiques posés en Belgique sont profitables à court terme mais ne prennent pas en compte l'impact à long terme sur certains services écosystémiques, comme un sol résilient.





# SDG 16

## PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

SDG Indicator	Unit	Objective	Assessment
<b>i76. Security feeling in public spaces</b>	%	↗	+
<b>i77. Corruption perceptions index</b>	Index 0-100	↗	○
<b>i78. Trust in institutions</b>	%	↗	○

All governments are committed to peaceful and inclusive societies.

The **Federal** Minister of Defence’s STAR (Security & Service - Technology - Ambition - Resilience) Plan (2022), together with the revised Military Planning Act, will give the Ministry of Defence the long-term capabilities it needs to respond to today’s challenges.

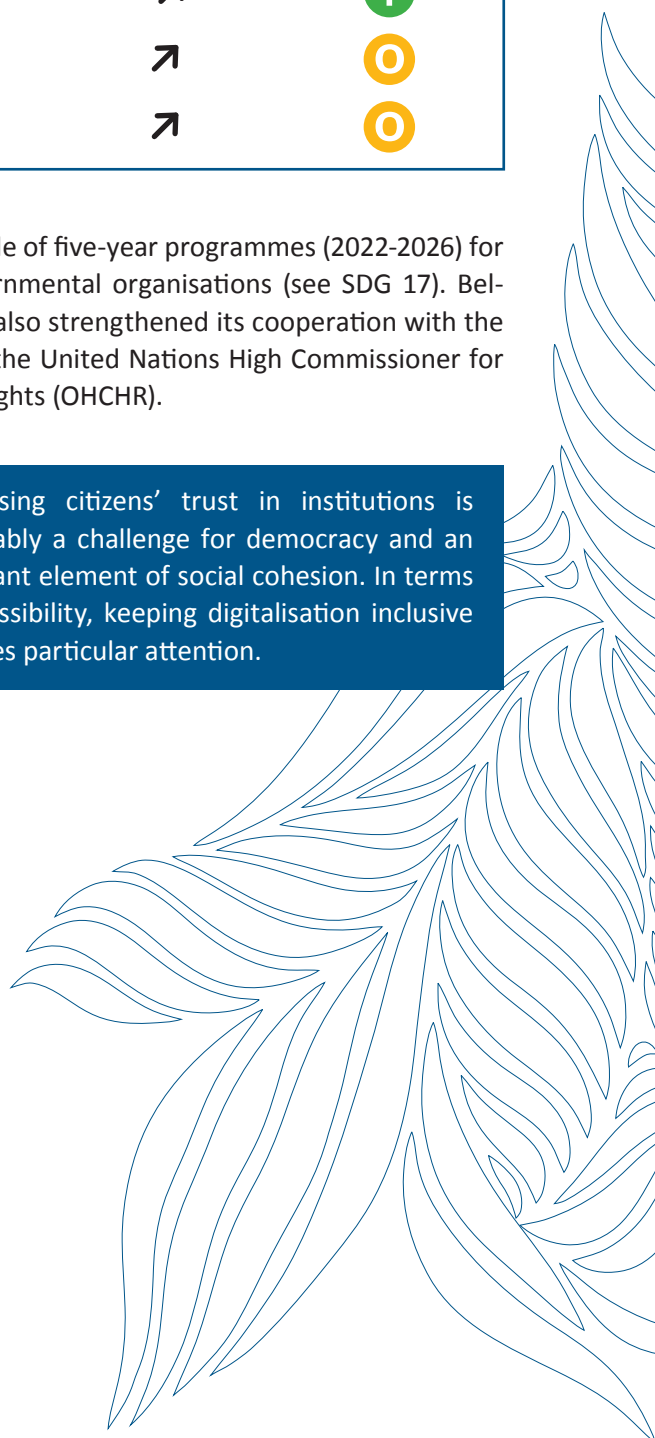
Belgium is a member of the coalition of European countries fighting serious and organised crime, alongside the Netherlands, France, Spain, Germany and Italy. On 7 October 2022, these six countries approved the joint action plan in Amsterdam. The 2018 Benelux Police Treaty (on police cooperation) will come into force in 2023.

**Flanders** is working on a transparent, digital decision-making process. Digital Flanders is the strategic partner for the implementation and supervision of digital transformation projects for Flemish and local authorities.

The federal government is working to tackle the root causes of vulnerability and strengthen the resilience of populations in fragile situations. Human rights and the voice of civil society are also taken into account in bilateral programmes and calls for projects. A quarter of the international solidarity budget will be channelled through civil society partners through

a new cycle of five-year programmes (2022-2026) for non-governmental organisations (see SDG 17). Belgium has also strengthened its cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Maximising citizens’ trust in institutions is undeniably a challenge for democracy and an important element of social cohesion. In terms of accessibility, keeping digitalisation inclusive deserves particular attention.





# SDG 17

## PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

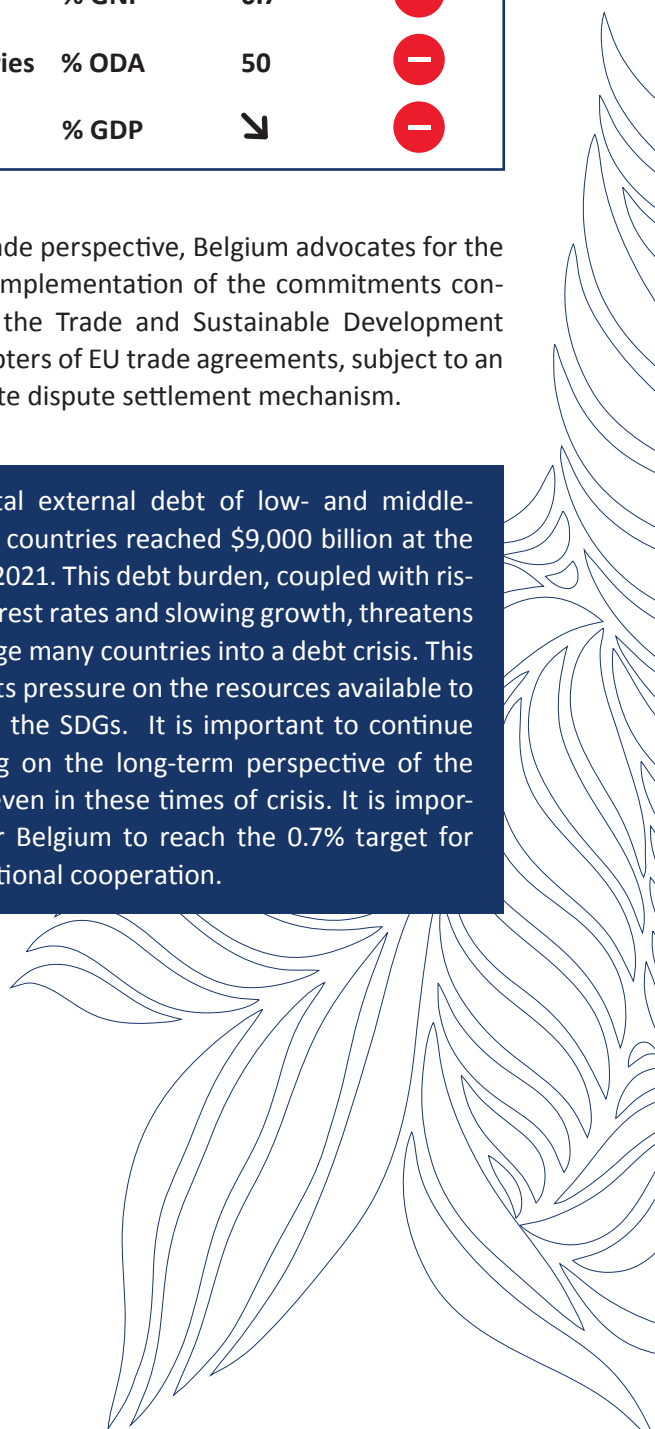
SDG Indicator	Unit	Objective	Assessment
<b>i79. Official development assistance (ODA)</b>	% GNI	0.7	—
<b>i80. Official development assistance to least developed countries</b>	% ODA	50	—
<b>i82. Public debt</b>	% GDP	↘	—

The Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board on Social Protection and the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection 2030 were set up under the auspices of the World Bank and the International Labour Organization to improve coordination at the global level. Belgium is a founding member of both.

In 2021, preparations for new **federal** government cooperation portfolios began with Tanzania, Mozambique, Uganda, Benin, Guinea, Morocco, Niger, Burkina Faso, Palestine and DR Congo. In the same year, the federal government concluded 26 geographic and four thematic common strategic frameworks with non-governmental partners and approved two thematic portfolios on climate in the Sahel and social protection in Central Africa. At the multilateral level Belgium has since 2009 mainly opted to favour non-earmarked funding. 15 international partner organisations therefore receive more than a third of Belgium’s multilateral development assistance. In addition, the different federated entities also have development programmes, each with its own priorities, such as (reproductive) healthcare, population, environmental protection, energy and education.

From a trade perspective, Belgium advocates for the effective implementation of the commitments contained in the Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) chapters of EU trade agreements, subject to an appropriate dispute settlement mechanism.

The total external debt of low- and middle-income countries reached \$9,000 billion at the end of 2021. This debt burden, coupled with rising interest rates and slowing growth, threatens to plunge many countries into a debt crisis. This also puts pressure on the resources available to achieve the SDGs. It is important to continue focusing on the long-term perspective of the SDGs, even in these times of crisis. It is important for Belgium to reach the 0.7% target for international cooperation.





# 06

## CIVIL SOCIETY'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE VNR 2023

At the request of the Interministerial Conference on Sustainable Development (IMCSD), a broad participatory process was launched in the Fall of 2022, giving civil society organisations the opportunity to contribute to the process of the Voluntary National Review (VNR). To make the process as inclusive as possible, the Federal Council for Sustainable Development (FCSD) was tasked to act as a central contact point for the participation of different societal groups<sup>1</sup>. This participation took place in two phases. The different groups first gave their views on the implementation of the SDGs, reflected in a contribution in the VNR. In the second phase, they issued a joint advisory opinion on the draft report. The integral contribution has been integrated in the VNR itself and can be found, together with other separate contributions on [www.sdgs.be](http://www.sdgs.be).

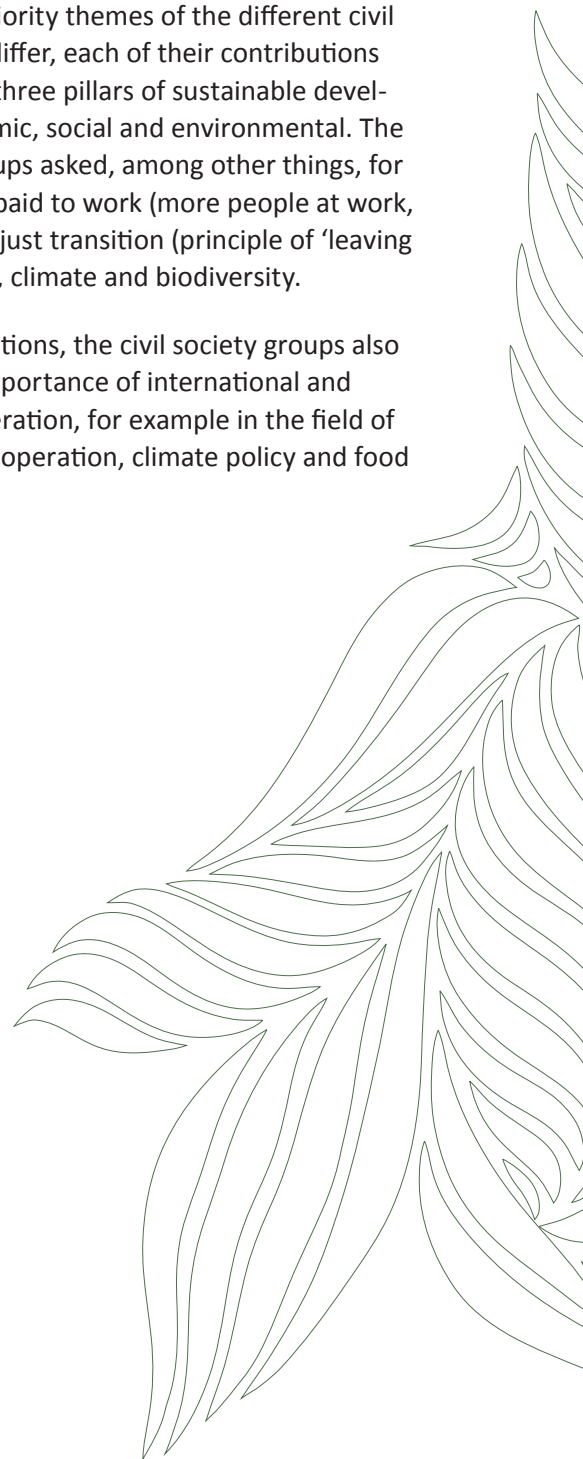
### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SDGs

Civil society organisations contribute to achieving the SDGs by integrating them into their operations. They are also important stakeholders for the authorities.

In their contributions, civil society groups call among others for greater coherence in the way different policy levels monitor the implementation of the SDGs and associated targets. The message is twofold: attention must be paid not only to the internal coherence of Belgium. This means not only attention for internal Belgian policy coherence, but also coherence with the European and international context given the economic, ecological and social impact across borders.

Although the priority themes of the different civil society groups differ, each of their contributions focused on the three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The civil society groups asked, among other things, for attention to be paid to work (more people at work, decent work,..), just transition (principle of 'leaving no one behind'), climate and biodiversity.

In their contributions, the civil society groups also point out the importance of international and European cooperation, for example in the field of development cooperation, climate policy and food policy.



<sup>1</sup> Businesses, trade unions, associations, the scientific and research communities, young people and Leave No One Behind.

# 07 LOCALIZATION OF THE SDGS

Given their responsibilities, proximity to citizens and experience of the Agenda 2030, local governments are indispensable partners in the objective of making progress towards the SDGs. At the IMCSD's request, this chapter was drafted by the local authorities and their umbrella organisations.

Belgium has 581 cities and municipalities (300 in Flanders, 262 in Wallonia and 19 in the Brussels Capital Region) and ten provinces (five in Flanders and five in Wallonia). Sustainable development is part of their core mission, as it is for other public authorities.

Several studies show that active participation at the local level is necessary for the achievement of no less than 65% of the SDGs<sup>2</sup>. This important role is also enshrined in a specific goal tailored to local authorities: SDG 11, sustainable cities and communities. The local and provincial authorities in Belgium also contribute to the Agenda 2030, both internally through their own organisation (HR, purchasing policy, public buildings, etc.) and externally through the provision of local services and international cooperation. In addition to the 17 thematic areas, they regularly include the SDGs as a cornerstone of coherent, sustainable local policies, and use the Agenda 2030 as a structural framework for policy planning. As the SDGs are interconnected, they encourage local authorities to contribute to sustainable development from all areas of their work.

Regarding the Flemish municipalities and cities the study of indicators (2010-2021)<sup>3</sup> included in the Voluntary Subnational Review of the Flemish Association for Cities and Municipalities (FACM) and the Flemish Associations for Provinces (FAP) underlines

the fact that Flemish municipalities systematically achieve better results in terms of poverty reduction (SDG 1) and employment (SDG 8), but that life on land (SDG 15) is under constant pressure. In addition, the third Walloon sustainable development strategy reflects positive developments in health (SDG 3) and housing renovation (SDG 11), as well as very positive changes in water quality (SDG 6) and renewable energy (SDG 7).

Belgium's local and provincial authorities are pursuing an ambitious SDG policy. In particular, the Public Centers for Social Welfare (PCSW) help to bridge the poverty gap by taking action on income, promoting employment and combating energy poverty, for example. And dozens of municipalities are affiliated to the "Quartiers Bienveillants / Zorgzame Buurten" programme, which focuses on strengthening the social fabric and solidarity, linking informal and formal care and cross-sectoral cooperation (e.g. social, housing, youth and spatial planning partners).

The local level is also a key player in adapting to climate change and mobility. 98% of Flemish, 68% of Walloon and 32% of Brussels municipal councils have signed the Mayors' Covenant 2030 for Climate and Energy. Flemish municipalities and the Flemish government joined forces in 2021 with the Energy and Climate Pact. 18 of Brussels' 19 municipalities have adopted a "climate" action plan and are supported by the Region in both funding and content. To encourage the use of bicycles, 116 Walloon municipalities are taking part in the "Wallonie Cyclable" programme. They receive regional subsidies for the construction of cycle paths and bicycle parking facilities, among other things. The Flemish provinces are also focusing on the extension of cycle highways

<sup>2</sup> Cities Alliance Discussion Paper — N° 3, Sustainable Development Goals and Habitat III: Opportunities for a successful New Urban Agenda, <https://www.citiesalliance.org>

<sup>3</sup> Further information can be found in the Flemish Voluntary Subnational Review of the Vereniging van Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten (VMSG) and the Vereniging van de Vlaamse Provincies (VVP). <https://www.vmsg.be/kennisitem/vmsg/vlaams-sdg-rapport-2023>

through subsidies, but also, for example, by transforming property assets into innovative mobility networks.

In order to promote energy efficiency, local authorities are setting up heating networks, organising group purchasing, supporting citizen cooperatives and hiring renovation coaches. The Walloon municipalities - as the largest forest owners in Wallonia - are promoting forest resilience. All Flemish municipalities and provinces are working on a “rainwater and drought” plan in which they commit to avoiding paving, reusing water and creating water reserves for drier periods.

The global and national challenges are also being felt at local level, and recent crises have only reinforced them. Climate change can have tragic consequences, such as the floods of July 2021, which mainly affected the province of Liège. In the wake of ongoing densification - particularly in Flanders and Brussels - local authorities are facing the major challenge of providing compact, sustainable and affordable housing, accelerating the modal shift and providing high-quality green public spaces. Local authorities are convinced of the need to redouble our efforts in areas such as renewable energy production and consumption, and building insulation. Local authorities are not yet playing a sufficiently big role as a lever for sustainable purchasing. They indicate that the producer responsibility must be extended for

polluting products, particularly in terms of water pollution. According to the local authorities, a number of challenges also remain in terms of healthcare, equality and inclusion. In many cases, increasing diversity is leading to tensions. Local authorities also have not achieved gender equality, as fewer than one in five Belgian mayors is a woman. International solidarity and spending on international cooperation are being questioned, particularly in times of budget cuts and urgent local needs. Local authorities can play an even stronger exemplary role here.



# 08

## NEW AND EMERGING CHALLENGES

Halfway through the implementation period of the 2030 Agenda, this second VNR serves not only to map out our inspiring policy initiatives, but also to highlight the challenges. These challenges may also present opportunities, which needs to be seized.

### COVID-19

COVID-19 had a substantial impact on the society, economy, and health of the Belgian people, including mental health. The pandemic highlighted the vulnerability of health care systems around the world and has delayed the implementation of the SDGs. To mitigate the impact, the governments in Belgium have taken measures to prevent the spread of the virus, support affected citizens and businesses (financially) and strengthen healthcare. For example, an effective vaccination campaign was rolled out which resulted in a high rate of vaccination.

### CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY

The IPCC reports that vulnerable communities that have historically contributed the least to current climate change are disproportionately affected. Rising land use, pollution, overexploitation of natural resources, climate change and invasive alien species are the main interconnected challenges in the area of biodiversity in Belgium. Despite international treaties and protocols signed in the past, the state of biodiversity and ecosystems continues to deteriorate. Biodiversity is essential to our well-being and health.

### GEOPOLITICAL UNCERTAINTY

Russia's aggression against Ukraine has prompted a global rise in geopolitical tensions, and has raised questions about the framework for international cooperation. Combined with the COVID-19 pandemic, this war has had major implications for supply chains, the price of goods, energy supply and food security of millions of people.

### INEQUALITY

The just transition to sustainable development is a challenge for Belgium. The various governments have a duty to leave no one behind.

### DIGITALISATION

The digital revolution is gaining momentum, bringing about changes in the labour market in particular, with consequences for the nature of jobs and the skills required. Closing the digital divide to avoid vulnerable groups being further excluded is critical to achieving fundamental social rights and creating stronger and more inclusive public services. Moreover, according to the UN, the growing use of digital technologies raises the question of their environmental and energy impact.

### EDUCATION

Although most indicators put Belgium above the European average, several studies show that the quality of education here is declining. There are differences at the community level in Belgium, but all three communities are making efforts to enhance the quality of their education.

# 09

## IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS



Between 2017 and 2021, Belgian spending on development cooperation (ODA) rose from 1.94 billion euros to 2.19 billion euros. ODA as a percentage of Belgium's gross national income fluctuated between 0.41% and 0.48% over this period. Although relatively stable, this rate is still a long way from the official target of 0.70%.

The FPS Foreign Affairs and its Directorate General for Development Cooperation and Aid account for 60% of Belgian spending on development cooperation. The rest of Belgian development cooperation spending is controlled by the regions and other federal public services.

Development cooperation spending alone cannot reduce inequality or improve respect for human rights worldwide. Diplomacy, trade, agriculture, migration, environment and security are all areas that have a major impact on development. This is why all Belgian authorities are setting up partnerships with the private sector and academia.

Belgium is also in favour of expanding development-sensitive statistical accounting through Total Official Support for Sustainable Development, to include other sources of financing for sustainable development, including non-traditional donor funding, private sector investment and South-South cooperation.

# 10

## CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The High Level Political Forum at which this VNR is presented comes mid-way through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The global efforts have so far proven insufficient. Although Belgium as a federal state starts from a privileged position, thanks in part to its strong institutional framework on sustainable development, it also needs to put forward solutions in response.

Peace and security are a necessary pre-condition for sustainable development: There can be no sustainable development without peace. Anthropogenic climate change, including the higher frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, has led to widespread negative effects and associated loss and damage to nature and people beyond the natural climate variability.

We are halfway through the 2030 Agenda and the clock is ticking. This VNR demonstrates the commitment of all governments in Belgium to the full and timely implementation of the 2030 Agenda and that active participation at the local level is necessary for the realisation of the 2030 Agenda. Belgium reaffirms its determination to pursue the 17 SDGs with a long-term, holistic approach and recognizes at the same time that achieving these goals requires active participation of all actors of society. This time of converging crises underscores the need for a systemic approach. Sustainable development requires a transversal approach and long term vision.

This second VNR illustrates that governments in Belgium have adopted many policy initiatives that contribute positively to the SDGs, yet many challenges also lie ahead of us. The indicators show that much remains to be done. The different governments commit to continuing and strengthening their action towards this goal, within their respective powers. Dialogue among policy levels and with civil society groups is essential and will be continued.

Belgium remains resolutely convinced of multilateralism, and an international order based on the rule of law, the founding principle of the United Nations. Only through multilateralism will we find long-term solutions to today's complex crises.



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