

FOREWORD

In this brochure, we present the Coordination Committee for International Environmental Policy (CCIEP). The CCIEP exists since 1995 and ensures that Belgium brings well-argued opinions on environmental policy to the international scene. These coordinated standpoints require a preceding debate both at technical and political level. Over the years, a network of experts and a set of procedures have been developed. For “outsiders” or the general public, these can at times appear difficult to understand. This publication describes these often complex and generally little known mechanisms.

In the following pages, you will firstly learn how especially important the impact of international negotiations are on environmental policy. Then, we explain how Belgium organises itself in the field of the environment to optimise its participation in international negotiations. For a country where competences are shared between several authorities, coordination both at national and international level is an absolute necessity. Finally, the daily functioning of the CCIEP is concretely presented.

I also want to emphasise that through its coordination work, the CCIEP enables us to obtain a coherent implementation of international legislation at national level. The main ingredient for achieving this is using the knowledge and expertise from the different levels of power for the benefit of the whole, with mutual respect for the choices and possibilities of all those concerned. I am thus convinced that our experience within the CCIEP is a useful example for many other policy domains, we regularly involve in our activities.

Roland Moreau
Chairman of the CCIEP

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY: MORE THAN A NATIONAL THEME

Environmental policy is more than a national theme. Water, air and the other elements that make up our environment do not stop at state borders. Human activities like transport, energy and waste management that have such a great impact on our environment do not stay neatly within the boundaries of a country. Policies to protect and preserve our environment are therefore only effective if they cross borders. Moreover, increasing globalisation has shown that an international approach to the environment is the only way to stem growing problems. Thus in Belgium, environmental policy is not exclusively a matter for the regions or the federal authority. More than eighty per cent of policy lines are settled at international level.

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

International concern about the environment began in the 1970s. The creation of UNEP, the environment programme of the United Nations in 1972, was an anchor for debate and the negotiations and conclusions of treaties at international level. During the 1970s and 1980s, we saw the most important results of this, namely the conventions for the protection of the ozone layer (Vienna 1985 and its Montreal Protocol, 1987), the transboundary movements of hazardous wastes (Basel Convention 1989) and the international trade in endangered species (CITES Convention, 1973). At the 1992 World Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the conventions on climate change (UNFCCC and later the Kyoto Protocol in 1997), on biological diversity (UN-CBD and later the Cartagena Protocol in 2000) and to combat desertification (UNCCD) were adopted.

Since the 1970s, environment has often been named as one of the major elements of the debate on sustainable development. Already initiatives were being taken on a global scale to minimise human impact on the environment. With the Rio principles and Agenda 21 in 1992, the United Nations committed itself to the goal of creating a sustainable world. Agenda 21 is a global action plan. The Rio principles lay down the instruments that can be used to realise this action plan. In 2002, Agenda 21 was concretely drawn up at the *World Summit on Sustainable Development* in Johannesburg. In the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), apart from economic and social objectives, also more concrete and time-linked objectives were taken for the environment.

Most multilateral negotiation procedures about the environment now take place within the framework of sustainable development. They are often long and exacting task, but significant results can be shown: an environmental policy at international level. Many of these initiatives are well known. Think of the Kyoto Protocol, which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

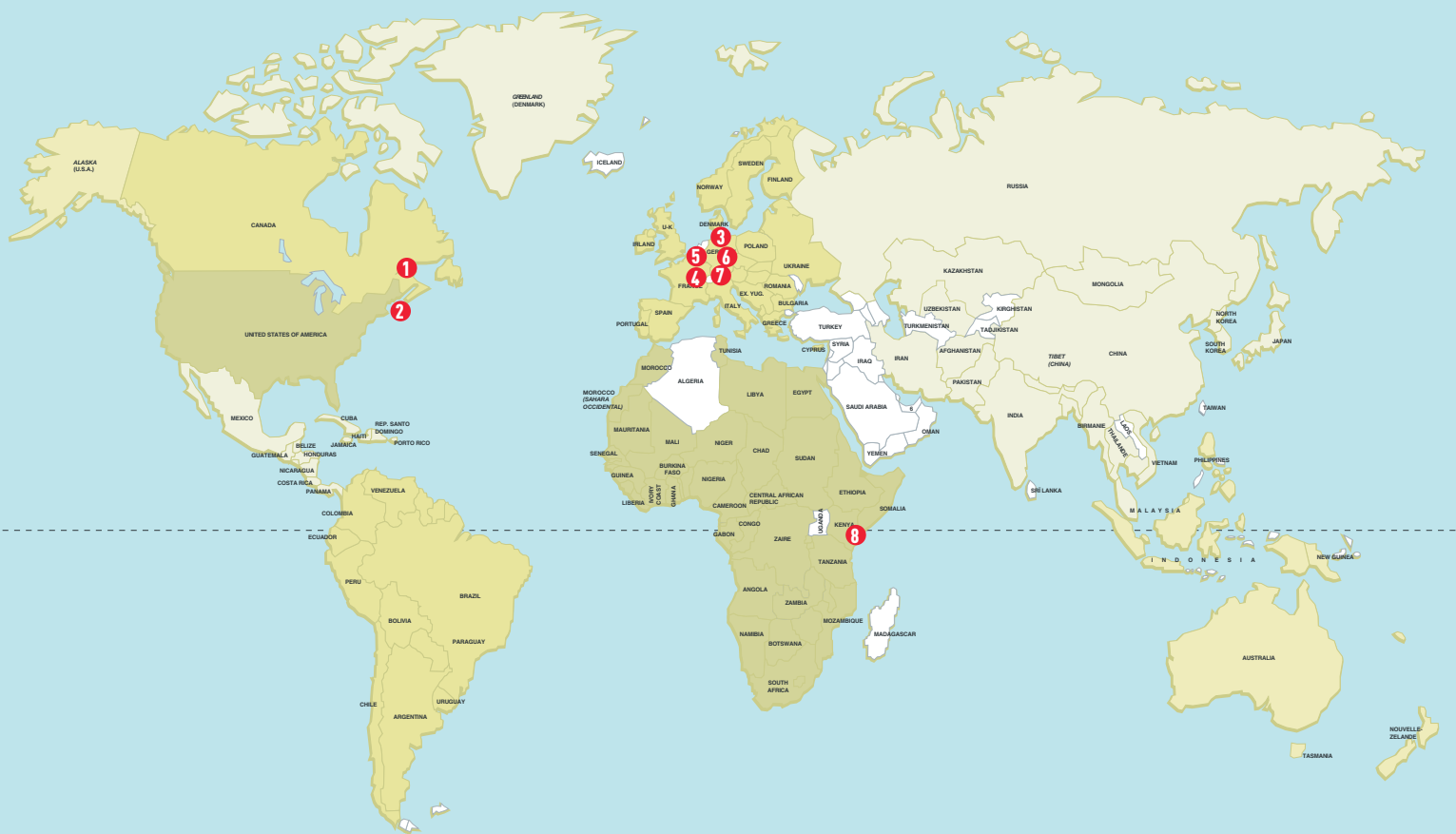
EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Negotiations on international environmental policy do not only take place within a multilateral context. As a member of the European Union, Belgium is also involved in environmental negotiations at European level. The EU frequently takes a leading role in environmental negotiations at global level which results into an ambitious internal environmental policy. Since the mid-1970s, the European Community has endorsed environmental action plans. This led to the development of an “*acquis communautaire*” on the environment, amounting to a coherent collection of legislation, action programmes and other initiatives at European level.

The diagram on page 4 lists the most important international organisations or bodies active in the definition of a global environmental policy, for instance, the United Nations and its various specialised bodies (the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the World Health Organization (WHO) etc.), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Council of Ministers of the European Union.

Therefore, Belgium does not “go it alone” when it comes to environmental policy. The largest part of environmental legislation of the regional and federal authorities – as for the other EU Member States – is a direct or indirect result of negotiations at European or multilateral level. It is therefore important to take an active role in environmental negotiations at international level. In this way our country can exert its influence on the environmental policy of today and tomorrow.





- 1** **Montreal**
UN CBD United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity and Protocol on Biosafety
www.biodiv.org

- 2** **New-York**
UN GA United Nations General Assembly
www.un.org
UN CSD United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development
www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd

- 3** **Copenhagen**
WHO Euro World Health Organisation, Regional Office for Europe
www.euro.who.int

- 4** **Paris**
OECD Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
www.oecd.org/env
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
www.unesco.org

- 5** **Brussels**
EU Council and Commission of the European Union
www.europa.eu

- 6** **Bonn**
UNFCCC United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and Kyoto Protocol
www.unfccc.int
CMS Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
www.cms.int

- 7** **Geneva**
UNECE United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
www.unece.org/env
PIC Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure of Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides
www.pic.int
POPs Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants
www.pops.int

- 8** **Nairobi**
UNEP United Nations Environment Program
www.unep.org
OZONE Montreal Protocol
www.ozone.unep.org

BELGIAN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

In Belgium, the environmental policy competences are shared between the federal government and the regions. The regions have jurisdiction for land-use planning, nature protection and conservation, and the protection of the environment. The latter is extremely wide and includes the protection of soil, water and air and the fight against noise pollution. Policy on waste management, water production and the provision and control of industrial activities also falls under the jurisdiction of the regions. The federal government has control over product standardisation policy, protection against ionising radiation, including radioactive waste, the transit of waste, animal welfare, the import/export and transit of non-indigenous plant and animal species and their remains, and the protection of the marine environment. All these authorities ensure that international environmental agreements in their areas of jurisdiction are implemented. Therefore, they must all be closely involved in the preparation of Belgian standpoints with respect to international policy.

THE FRAMEWORK: COOPERATION AGREEMENTS ABOUT “SHARED COMPETENCES”

Because competences for environmental policy in Belgium are shared between the federal and regional levels, Belgium should nevertheless speak with one voice when negotiations take place in international organisations or the European Union. In order to achieve this and to ensure all parties are equally participating, four important cooperation agreements are used in the field of the environment. Three of these agreements apply to all policy domains; the fourth specifically concerns the environment.

Representation of Belgium in the Council of Ministers of the European Union (Cooperation agreement of 8 March 1994, publication in the OJ of 17/11/1994)

The first agreement stipulates how Belgium is represented in the Council of Ministers of the European Union. The Treaty of the European Union states that only a single minister represents each Member State for the complete duration of the Council. This minister is called the ‘sitting minister’. He or she is the only one who can speak and take part in voting. The Belgian cooperation agreement of 8 March 1994 stipulates that for environmental matters, the position of sitting minister is held in turn by a different regional minister for the environment every six months. An ‘assisting minister’, namely the federal minister or state secretary responsible for the environment, accompanies this minister. The federal minister can intervene in all dossiers regarding federal competences and international dossiers. All Councils of Ministers of the European Union are prepared by the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs.

Conclusion of “shared” treaties

(Cooperation agreement of 8 March 1994, publication in th OJ of 17/12/1996)

International treaties embrace themes that implicate different levels of power in Belgium. Most environmental treaties fall under the competences of the regions and/or the federal authorities. As a result, an agreement is necessary between the federal and regional governments for the signature and ratification of international environmental treaties. Sometimes approval is also necessary at the level of the community governments. To implement these treaties, each authority must take the necessary initiatives within its respective area of competence.

This cooperation agreement provides a permanent consultative body to regulate the involvement of all parties concerned in negotiations. The conclusion of “shared treaties” is generally a long and exacting task. At the negotiation stage, this consultative body establishes which specific area of competence applies to which level of government.

Representation of Belgium at international organisations concerning shared competences
(Framework Agreement of 30 June 1994, publication in the OJ of 19/11/1994)

The third agreement is a framework agreement concerning the representation of the Kingdom of Belgium at international organisations whose activities in Belgium fall under “shared” competences.

International environmental policy*

(Cooperation Agreement of 5 April 1995, publication in the OJ of 13/12/1995)

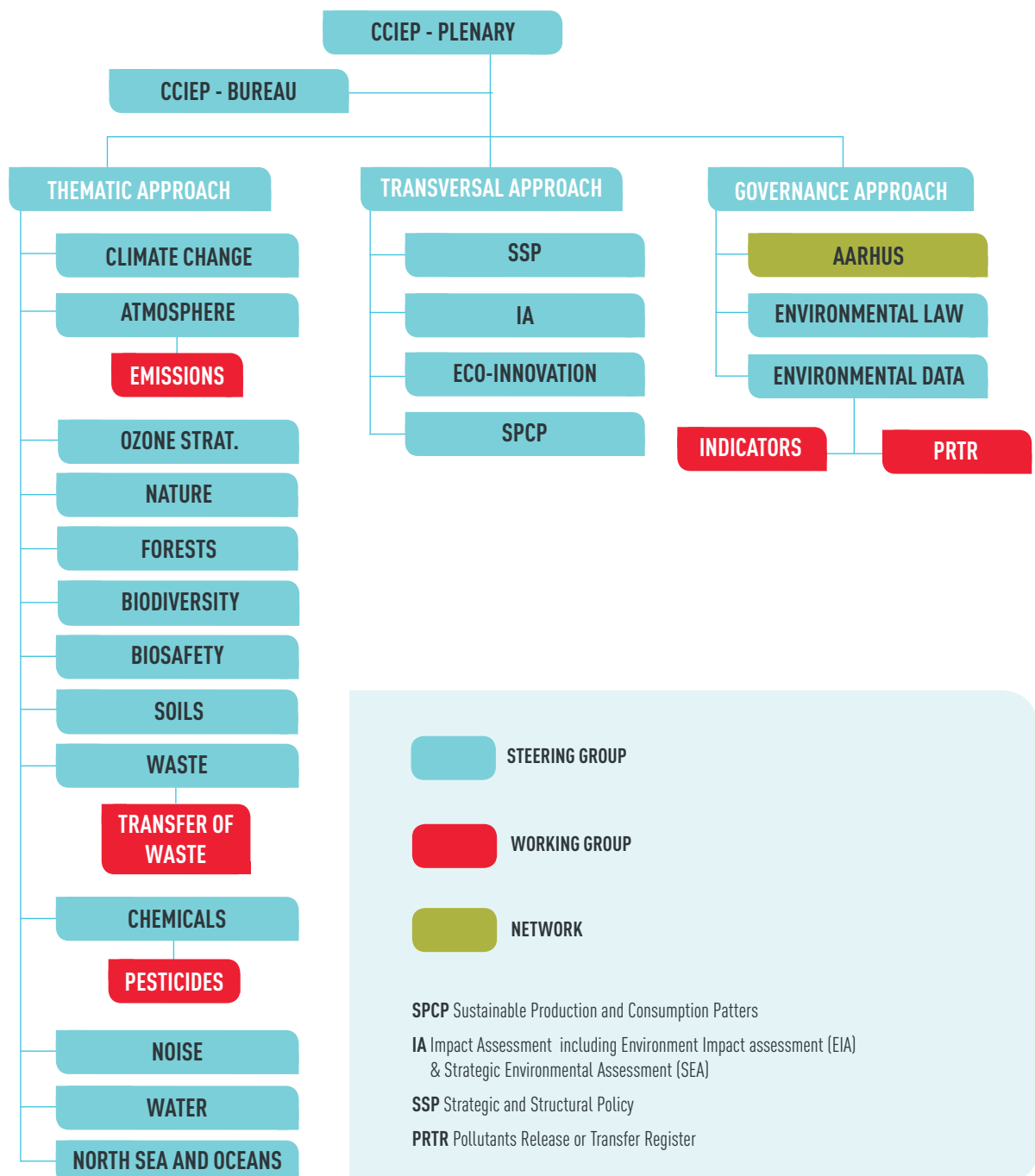
Due to the fact that the environment policy is such a specific domain, the federal government and the regional governments concluded a distinct cooperation agreement concerning international environmental policy on 5 April 1995. Because the activities of many international organisations working on the environment fall under ‘shared’ competences in Belgium, coordination is necessary in order to speak with one voice in international negotiations. For this purpose, the agreement established a new committee, the **Coordination Committee for International Environmental Policy**, in short the **CCIEP**.

* Regarding the environment and health ministerial process of the WHO, the implication of the Communities required the development of a distinct Cooperation Agreement establishing specific bodies. It was signed the 10th December 2003 by all the governments involved. For more information, see www.nehap.be



The CCIEP is the most important political body in Belgium for coordinating policy in the area of international environment. Obligations resulting from certain multilateral agreements, such as those for the protection of the ozone layer or about climate change, made it necessary to establish a cooperation body in which all the relevant Belgian policy levels involved with the environment are represented. Due to the hereby specificity of the CCIEP, a broad field of expertise available for negotiating dossiers in the area of the environment was laid down.

ORGANIGRAM



COORDINATION COMMITTEE FOR INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

The CCIEP consists of representatives of the federal and regional administrations and ministers with competences that have (directly or indirectly) an impact on environmental policy. By means of consensus, it is the responsibility of the CCIEP to ensure the coherency of the international action in the field of environmental policy of the Belgian State and its various entities.

MANDATE

The CCIEP has the following tasks, implemented by consensus:

- ▶ To prepare the standpoint of the Belgian delegation to be defended at international organisations or during Ministerial Conferences, including their potential financial consequences.
- ▶ To fix the composition of the Belgian delegation sitting at international organisations meetings or Ministerial Conferences and to designate the spokesperson for this delegation.
- ▶ To organise the consultation with a view to the coordinated implementation at national level of the recommendations and decisions taken at international level.
- ▶ To prepare the agenda for meetings of the Inter-Ministerial Environment Conference (at Belgian level).
- ▶ International organisations regularly request reports from individual countries. The CCIEP supervises the gathering of data to answer these requests and evaluates if it is necessary to draw up a single 'common' report.
- ▶ Upon request, CCIEP advises Ministers or State Secretaries represented within its fold.

COMPOSITION

The CCIEP is composed as follows:

- ▶ One delegate from each federal or regional Minister or State Secretary responsible for the environment and/or nature conservation.
- ▶ One delegate from each federal and regional administration responsible for the environment and/or nature conservation. Concretely, these are:
 - ▶ The Environment, Nature and Energy (LNE) department of the Flemish region;
 - ▶ Environment-Brussels (Brussels Institute for Management of the Environment, BIME);
 - ▶ Directorate-General Natural Resources and the Environment (MRW-DGRNE) for the Walloon region;
 - ▶ Directorate-General Environment of the Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment.
- ▶ One delegate from the federal minister responsible for foreign affairs.
- ▶ One delegate from the Directorate-General Multilateral and Global Affairs (DGM.4.1) of the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs.
- ▶ One delegate from the federal Minister or State secretary responsible for development cooperation.



- ▶ One delegate from the Directorate-General Development Cooperation (DGDC) of the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs.
- ▶ One delegate from the Permanent Representation of Belgium to the European Union.
- ▶ Sometimes, the CCIEP must confer on matters that touch upon areas of competence in the federal or regional governments other than those mentioned above. In this instance, a representative of the relevant authority is invited to assist on an ad hoc basis.
- ▶ A 'permanent expert' from the following institutions participates in the CCIEP:
 - ▶ The Flemish Environment Agency (VMM);
 - ▶ The Public Waste Agency of Flanders (OVAM).

CONCRETE WORKING

General provisions

The CCIEP meets once a month. This monthly meeting is prepared by a restricted bureau meeting every fourteen days. The Director-General of the DG Environment of the Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment chairs both meetings. The same DG provides the secretariat. The structure of the CCIEP is presented on page 7.

In conformity with the cooperation agreement and depending on requirements, the CCIEP also sets up expert groups. These groups have a specific mandate around a particular environmental theme, for example, water, climate... or treat specific cross-sector themes, for example, environment data or environment law. Depending on the composition of the expert group, the group is either called a steering group or a working group. When necessary, ad hoc groups are also set up with a time limited mandate. A list of these groups is annexed.

Preparation of a negotiation mandate

- ▶ For negotiations at **multilateral level**, the CCIEP fully prepares the standpoints of the environmental dossiers with all the parties concerned and then endorses these standpoints. In general, it is the CCIEP working groups and/or steering groups that handle these different standpoints in their specific domain (see structure on page 7).

- ▶ For negotiation procedures at **European level**, the CCIEP handles the technical preparation.
 - ▶ The CCIEP prepares the position of the Belgian representative in the working groups of the Council of the European Union and makes technical recommendations. These working groups comprise representatives from all Member States and act as a preparatory body for the Council.
 - ▶ The CCIEP participates in all the Comitology committees of the European Commission. These committees handle practical points in connection with the implementation of European legislation. All Member States are represented.
 - ▶ The CCIEP participates in the expert groups of the European Commission. These expert groups are extremely varied. They mainly work on the preparation of legislation.

The CCIEP has produced two handbooks concerning the preparation of negotiation mandates. These can be requested at the CCIEP secretariat.

Information and consultation with Stakeholders

The participation of Stakeholders is of great value in many policy domains. This is equally the case for environmental policy. In the policy preparation phase, the CCIEP actively takes this into account.

Every six months, in January and in July, an information meeting is organised with organisations concerned with environmental policy: employers federations, trade unions, environmental NGO's... Priority dossiers for the coming six months are presented at these meetings. These concern priorities of the CCIEP at multilateral level and/or priorities for the forthcoming European Presidency. These priorities are also set out in a comprehensive information note, sent to all those stakeholders invited to the meetings.

Furthermore, the CCIEP also holds specific consultations with Stakeholders. These are either spontaneously organised by CCIEP steering or working groups, or at the request of a Stakeholder about a specific dossier.



CONTACT

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