

CCIEP

One unique



voice

on the international environmental scene





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Foreword

This brochure introduces you to the workings of the Coordination Committee for International Environmental Policy (CCIEP). The CCIEP was set up in 1995 and helps ensure that Belgium can put forward well-argued positions on environmental policy on the international scene. These shared views require prior debate at both the technical and political levels. Over the years, a network of experts has gathered and developed a set of procedures that are sometimes difficult for outsiders or the general public to fathom. This publication therefore describes these sometimes complex and generally little-known mechanisms.

In the following pages, you will first learn about the importance of the impact of international negotiations on environmental policy. It then explains how Belgium organises itself in the environmental field to optimise its participation in international negotiations. For a country with powers divided among several governments, coordination at both the national and international levels is an absolute necessity. Finally, the day-to-day operation of the CCIEP is explained in concrete terms.

I would like to emphasise that the CCIEP, with its proven experience as a coordinating body, is an instrument ideally suited to successfully addressing the major societal challenges of recovery and transition to a sustainable and resilient society. In this context, the sharing and pooling of knowledge and expertise among the different levels of government, with mutual respect for the choices and capabilities of the partners involved, is of great importance. I am convinced that the coordinated action developed through the CCIEP can serve as a source of inspiration for other policy areas. The task of meeting the societal challenges of the pandemic and the necessary transition is considerable. Only by joining forces will we be able to create the conditions for a sustainable and lasting recovery.

Pierre Kerkhofs
Chair of the CCIEP



1 ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY: MORE THAN A NATIONAL TOPIC

Environmental policy is more than a national issue. Water, air and the other elements that make up our environment do not stop at state borders. Human activities that have a major impact on our environment, such as transport, energy and waste management, do not remain neatly delineated within the borders of a single country either. Policy measures to protect and preserve our environment are therefore only truly effective if they are taken across national borders. In addition, increasing globalisation has meant that an international approach to environmental issues is the only policy that can deal with the growing problems. In Belgium, environmental policy is therefore not a solely regional or federal matter. A large number of the policies are set out at an international level.





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Environmental policy at a global level

International concern for the environment has a long history. In the 1970s, the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP, provided an international platform for debating and concluding treaties. During the 1970s and 1980s, the initial results of this were the conventions on the hole in the ozone layer (Montreal Protocol, 1987), international waste transport (Basel Convention, 1989) or the convention on the international trade in endangered species (CITES, 1973) and the conventions on climate change (UNFCCC), biodiversity (UN-CBD) and the battle against desertification (UNCCD) adopted at the 1992 World Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

The environment is one of the key elements in the sustainable development debate. With the Rio Principles and Agenda 21 in 1992, the United Nations (UN) set out to create a sustainable world.

These agreements were further embedded at subsequent summits, in Rio at the Millennium Summit (2000) and at the World Summits on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (2002) and Rio (2012). The United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA), established in 2012, includes all 193 UN member states and meets every two years to guide international environmental policy and make new agreements.

In 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 (SDGs), which include targets for sustainable water management, sustainable energy for all, sustainable production and consumption patterns, combating climate change, conserving terrestrial and marine biodiversity and the health of these ecosystems.

Most multilateral negotiating processes on the environment are now framed within sustainable development. This work often takes a long time, but the result is a stronger environmental policy at the international level. In 2003, the Biodiversity Day was complemented by the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, and in 2010 by the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Equitable and Balanced Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilisation.

In implementing the UNFCCC, the 2015 Paris Agreement agreed to limit global warming to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels; and to continue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C.

2017 saw the establishment of the Minamata Convention, which brings into frame and strictly restricts the trade, production, import and export of mercury-containing products worldwide.



Environmental policy at the European level

As a member of the European Union, Belgium is also involved in environmental negotiations at the European level. The EU often takes the lead in environmental negotiations at the global level and also translates this internally into an ambitious environmental policy. Since the mid-1970s, the European Community, and later the European Union, has also been drawing up environmental action programmes. This has enabled the creation of a common position on the environment. This is a coherent set of legislation, action programmes and other initiatives at the European level.

In 2019, the Von der Leyen Commission launched the European Green Deal, a roadmap for addressing current climate and environmental challenges through a just and inclusive green transition. This initiative aims to achieve climate neutrality in the European Union by 2050 and promote sustainable growth. The pact proposes an action plan for promoting resource efficiency by shifting to a clean and circular economy, restoring biodiversity and reducing pollution. This shows the Commission's determination to put an ambitious environmental policy at the heart of Europe's new growth strategy.

The diagram on p. 8 shows the main international organisations responsible for implementing an international environmental policy: the United Nations and its various specialist bodies (the UN Programme for the Environment (UNEP); the Economic Commission for Europe – UNECE; the World Health Organization – WHO; etc.), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and, of course, the European Union.



**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

2 BELGIAN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

In Belgium, environmental powers are divided between the federal government and the regions. The regions have been assigned powers over land development, nature protection and conservation, and environmental protection in their respective territories. The latter power is very broad and includes the protection of soil, water and air and combating against noise pollution. Waste policy, water production and supply, and the control of industrial activities are also among the regions' powers. The federal government is responsible for protecting the environment through its product standardisation policy, protection from ionising radiation, including radioactive waste, the import, export and transit of foreign plant and animal species and their carcasses, and protection of the marine environment.

These governments ensure that international environmental agreements are implemented for topics over which they have jurisdiction. They must therefore be closely involved in the preparation of Belgium's positions in the formation of international policy.



The framework: cooperative agreements on joint powers

Despite the division of intra-Belgian powers on environmental policy between the federal government and the regions, Belgium must negotiate with one voice in international organisations and within the European Union. In order to accomplish this in a way where all levels of authority have sufficient say, Cooperation Agreements have been established. In terms of the environment, four major cooperation agreements apply. Three of these agreements apply to all policy areas, while the fourth deals specifically with environmental policy.

The representation of Belgium in the Council of Ministers of the European Union (EU)

(Cooperation Agreement of 8 March 1994, published in the Official Gazette on 17/11/1994)

The first agreement determines how Belgium is represented in the Council of Ministers of the European Union. The Treaty on European Union provides for Member States to be represented in the Council by a representative at ministerial level¹. The Belgian Cooperation Agreement of 8 March 1994 stipulates that Belgium shall be represented by a single Minister during the entire duration of the Council's term.

This is known as the 'sitting minister'. He or she is the sole spokesperson of the delegation authorised to bind Belgium in the votes. The annex to the Belgian Cooperation Agreement of 8 March 1994 stipulates that, for the environmental councils, the sitting minister is one of the regional Ministers for the Environment in rotation. The sitting minister may be assisted by a minister-assessor, which in the case of the Environmental Council is the minister or secretary of state in charge of environmental policy in the federal government. Coordination of the Belgian position for the Councils of Ministers of the European Union takes place in advance of DGE meetings chaired by the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs².

Concluding joint treaties

(Cooperation Agreement of 8 March 1994, publication in BOG on 17/12/1996)

International treaties deal with issues that affect competences of different levels of power at the Belgian level. Most environmental treaties fall under the powers of the regions and/or the federal government. As a result, the signing and ratification of international environmental treaties requires an agreement between the federal and regional governments. Sometimes, approval is also needed at the community level. For the implementation of these treaties, each government should take the necessary initiatives for its powers.

- 1 See TEU Art. 16, 2. The Council shall consist of a representative of each Member State at ministerial level, who shall be empowered to bind the government of the Member State they represent and to exercise the right to vote.
- 2 The Directorate-General for European Affairs (DGE) of the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs formally endorses Belgium's positions within the framework of the Council of the European Union.

This cooperation agreement establishes a permanent consultative body that regulates the involvement of all interested parties in negotiations. The conclusion of joint treaties is usually a long-term process. In the negotiation phase, this consultative body specifically defines which powers apply at which level of government.

Belgium's representation in international organisations of joint powers

(Framework agreement of 30 June 1994, publication in BOG on 19/11/1994)

The third agreement is a framework agreement on the representation of the Kingdom of Belgium in International Organisations whose work involves joint competences.

International environmental policy³

(Cooperation Agreement of 5 April 1995, publication in BOG on 13/12/95)

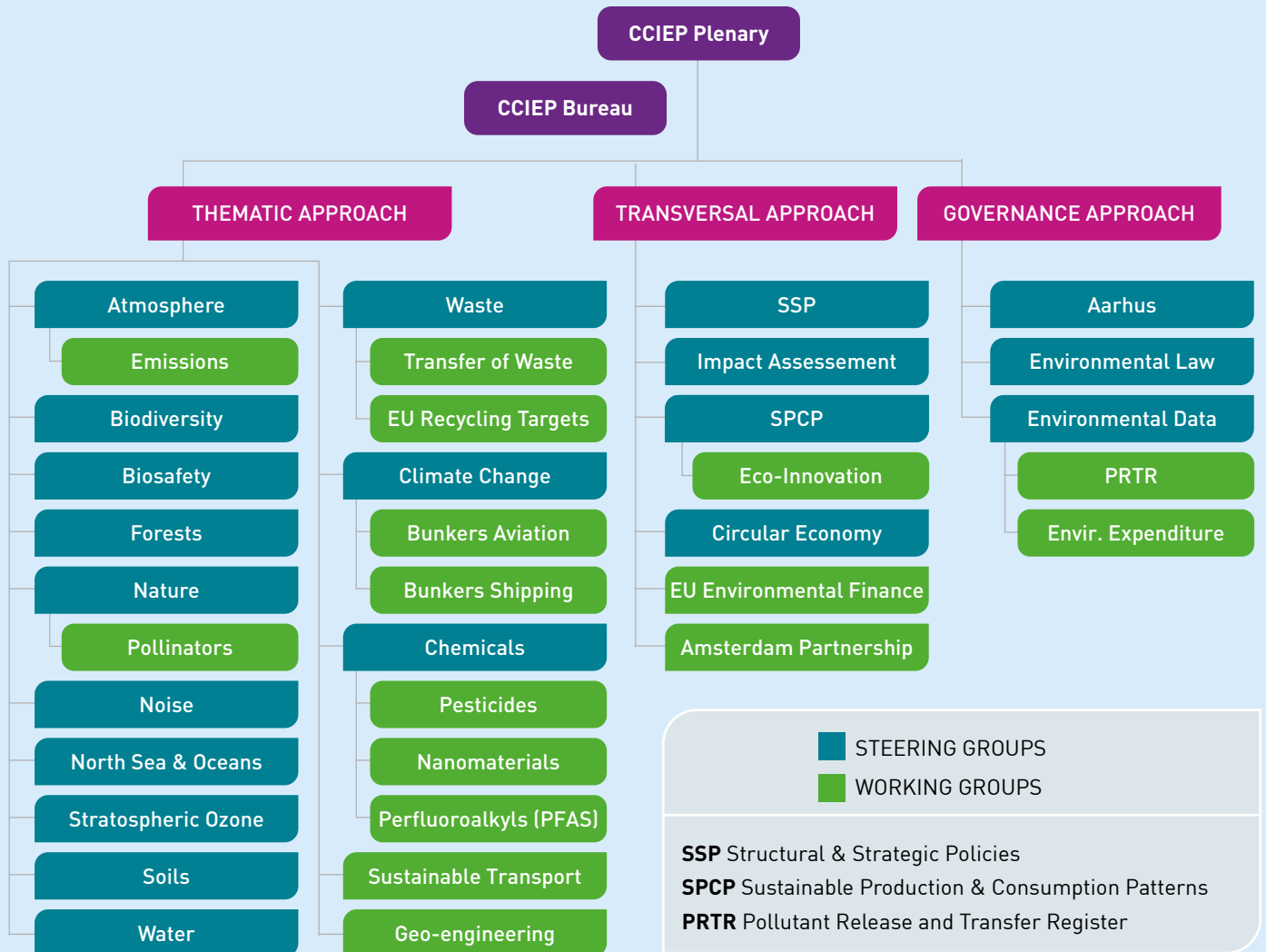
Because the environment is such a specific issue, the federal government and the three regions concluded a separate cooperation agreement on international environmental policy on 5 April 1995. The starting point of this agreement is that the work of the many international organisations concerned with the Environment poses such challenges, in light of the division of power in Belgium, that prior coordination is needed in order to speak with one voice in international negotiations. A new structure was therefore created, the Coordinating Committee on International Environmental Policy, hereafter referred to as CCIEP.



³ The WHO ministerial process requires that Communities also be involved. This led to the development of a specific cooperation agreement, which was signed on 10 December 2003 by all the authorities involved. For more info, please visit the website www.nehap.be.

The CCIEP is the main political body in Belgium for coordinating international environmental policy. The obligations arising from certain multilateral agreements, such as those on the protection of the ozone layer or climate change, have made it necessary to set up a coordination body in which all the relevant Belgian policy levels relating to the environment are represented. The CCIEP offers it a wide expertise on negotiation cases in the field of Environment.

ORGANIGRAM



■ STEERING GROUPS

■ WORKING GROUPS

SSP Structural & Strategic Policies

SPCP Sustainable Production & Consumption Patterns

PRTR Pollutant Release and Transfer Register

3

COORDINATION COMMITTEE FOR INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

The CCIEP consists of representatives from the federal and regional administrations and cabinets with powers that have an impact (directly or indirectly) on environmental policy. It is the CCIEP's responsibility to ensure, through consensus, that the international action of the Belgian State and its components with regard to environmental policy is coherent.

Mandate

The CCIEP has the following tasks, which are carried out by consensus:

- **Preparing the position to be defended by the Belgian delegation at international organisations or Ministerial Conferences, including the financial implications.**
- **Determining the composition of the Belgian delegation to international organisations or Ministerial Conferences and appointing the spokesperson for this delegation.**
- **Organising consultations for the coordinated implementation at the international level of the recommendations and decisions taken at the international level.**
- **Preparing the agenda items for the meetings of the Interministerial Conference on the Environment (at the Belgian level).**
- **Supervising the collection of data requested by international organisations from Member States and evaluating the need for a coordinated Belgian report.**
- **Advising Ministers or Secretaries of State represented on the CCIEP when requested.**





Composition

The CCIEP is composed as follows:

- One delegate from each federal or regional minister or secretary of state responsible for the environment and/or nature conservation.
- One delegate from each federal and regional administration in charge of tasks related to the environment and/or nature conservation. Specifically, these are:
 - ◊ The administration of the Flemish Region in charge of Environment and Nature;
 - ◊ The administration of the Brussels-Capital Region in charge of Environment and Nature;
 - ◊ The Walloon Public Service in charge of Environment and Nature;
 - ◊ The Federal Public Service in charge of Environment;
- One delegate from the federal minister in charge of foreign affairs;
- One delegate from the Climate and Environment Directorate (MD8), depending on both the Directorate-General for Multilateral Affairs (DGM) and the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGD) at the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation;
- One delegate from the federal minister or secretary of state responsible for development cooperation;
- One delegate from the Directorate-General responsible for Development Cooperation at the FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation;
- One delegate from the Permanent Representation of Belgium to the European Union;
- One delegate from the Directorate-General responsible for European Affairs at the FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation;

Sometimes, the CCIEP must deliberate upon matters affecting the powers of members of the federal or regional governments other than those listed above. In such an event, these government members are invited to designate a representative on an ad hoc basis to deal with the agenda items in question.

Depending on the internal provisions on the division of responsibilities, specific to each level of authority, between the Administrations and Institutions charged with policy tasks relating to the environment and nature conservation, these institutions may appoint a “permanent expert”. Such an expert may act to represent a permanent member upon timely notification or may participate in an advisory capacity to assist a permanent member or, upon invitation, participate as an expert from an expert group for items for which the contribution of their expertise is appropriate.

Practical operation

General operation

The CCIEP meets once a month in a plenary session. This monthly meeting is prepared by a limited Bureau, which meets every two weeks. Both meetings are chaired by the Director-General of the DG Environment at the FPS Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment. The secretariat is provided by that same DG. The organisational chart for the CCIEP is shown on p. 12.

In accordance with the cooperation agreement and depending on the needs, the CCIEP will establish expert groups. These are given a specific mandate around a particular environmental theme, e.g. water and climate, or deal with specific cross-cutting – i.e. cross-theme – domains, e.g. environmental data and

environmental legislation. Depending on the structure of the expert group, the group is called a steering group or a working group. When necessary, an ad hoc group with a temporary mandate is sometimes established too.

Preparing a negotiating mandate

- For negotiations at the multilateral level, the CCIEP fully prepares the cases related to the environment and approves the positions taken. It is generally the CCIEP’s thematic working and steering groups that deal with various agreements relating to their domain (see organisational chart on p. 8) For each specific subject, the CCIEP appoints a multilateral pilot who, along with the experts from the steering or working group, prepares the unanimous Belgian position for multilateral negotiation and, if applicable, for the Council’s European international working group (International Environmental Issues Working Party).
- For the negotiation procedures on European environmental policy, the CCIEP provides the technical preparation.
- The CCIEP prepares the position of the Belgian representation in the working groups of the EU Councils and gives its technical advice. These working groups consist of representatives from all European Member States and are a preparation for the Council of the European Union.

How does this happen?

For each case negotiated at an Environmental Working Group for the Council (Working Party on the Environment), the CCIEP establishes a network of experts, broadly composed of officials from all the



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relevant regional and federal departments. It is a pilot, the expert appointed by the CCIEP who is responsible for the coordination of a specific case or sub-aspect of a case, who coordinates the substantive Belgian position with this expert network.

In order to prepare the Environment Councils, the CCIEP pilots, in collaboration with their network, draw up a sheet for each theme with a proposal of points for

intervention for the Minister, which are later politically checked by DGE⁴.

The CCIEP handles the participation in the European Commission's Comitology Committees. These committees deal with practical issues relating to the implementation of European legislation. All Member States are represented in it. The CCIEP appoints the Belgian representative per Committee, who monitors

4 The Directorate-General for European Affairs (DGE) of the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs formally endorses Belgium's positions within the framework of the Council of the European Union. When the subject of Environment is addressed, consultation takes place in advance within the CCIEP.

the work of a Comitology Committee with a CCIEP expert network.

The CCIEP also handles the Belgian participation in the European Commission's expert groups. These expert groups are highly diverse. They often work to prepare legislation.

European and multilateral issues increasingly require cross-cutting work and collaboration with other federal and regional departments, such as mobility, economy, finance, agriculture and energy. To this end, the CCIEP works continuously with officials from these policy areas. They are included in the relevant working groups and networks to systematically bring together the necessary expertise.

The CCIEP has prepared vade mecums describing the structures and processes for preparing negotiating mandates. These can be requested from the secretariat.

Information and consultation with stakeholders

Civil society participation is of great value to the quality of new policies in many domains. This also applies to environmental policy. In the policy negotiation phase, the CCIEP contributes to this.

Every six months, in January and July, an information meeting is organised with organisations involved in environmental policy: business federations, trade unions, environmental organisations, etc. In these meetings, the priority negotiation cases for the next six months are explained in the first instance. These are the CCIEP's priorities at the multilateral level, as well as the priorities of

the upcoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

This meeting will also take a closer look at cases with a significant social impact. Policy-makers are invited to present these current European and international cases or processes to representatives from civil society and from several administrations.

Finally, at these meetings, civil society is also given the floor to voice their questions and comments, as well as their priorities for these cases.

Furthermore, the CCIEP specifically consults with stakeholders. This is organised either spontaneously by a particular CCIEP steering or working group, or at the request of a stakeholder in a specific case. The CCIEP is part of a comprehensive coordination structure for environmental policy in Belgium



Other intra-Belgian coordination bodies are active in the area of the environment, whether in policy implementation at the national level, evaluation, reporting, etc.

The following is a brief overview of some of the main bodies active in this field alongside or in cooperation with the CCIEP.

THEME	INTRA-BELGIAN COORDINATION BODY	CONTACT / INFO
Implementation of environmental policy	Interministerial Conference for the Environment (ICE).	https://www.health.belgium.be/en/interministerial-conference-environment-ice
Climate	National Climate Commission (NCC)	https://www.cnc-nkc.be/en
Environment – Public Health	(Joint) Interministerial Conference on Environment and Health (JICEH)	https://www.nehap.be/en/about-us/nehap-its-mission-functions-and-actors/jiceh
Sustainable Development	Interdepartmental Commission on Sustainable Development (ICSD).	https://www.developpementdurable.be/nl/icdo
Monitoring and reporting of emissions	Belgian Interregional Environment Agency (IRCEL)	https://www.irceline.be/en/front-page?set_language=en
Geographical information	INSPIRE Coordination Committee	https://www.geopunt.be/voor-experts/inspire/organisatie https://www.geo.be/about/inspire?l=en
Packaging waste	Interregional Packaging Commission (IRPC)	https://www.ivcie.be/en/
Energy	Consultation on energy between the federal state and the regions (ENOVER)	https://economie.fgov.be/nl/themas/energie/energiebeleid/belgische-context/overleg-over-energie-tussen-de
Agriculture	Interregional Ministerial Consultation (IMC) Interministerial Conference on Agricultural Policy (ICAP)	https://www.etaamb.be/nl/samenwerkingsakkoord-van-30-maart-2004_n2004035571.html
Economy	Interministerial Economic Commission (IEC)	https://www.ccecrb.fgov.be/dpics/fichiers/nl/doc15-900.pdf
Mobility	BE4MOVE	https://mobilite-mobiliteit.brussels/en/node/2530

4 CONTACT

For inquiries about the CCIEP's areas of work, please contact the Secretariat::

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AND ENVIRONMENT**