



Report on the implementation of AEWA for the period 2021-2024

The format for reports on the implementation of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) for the period 2021-2024 was approved by the 8th Session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP8, 26-30 September 2022, Budapest, Hungary) through Resolution 8.3 and modified by the Standing Committee at its 23rd and 24th meetings (June 2023 and July 2024, respectively) as mandated by the MOP. This format has been compiled following the AEWA Annex 3 (Action Plan), the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027 and resolutions of the MOP.

In accordance with article V(c) of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds, each Party shall prepare to each ordinary session of the MOP a National Report on its implementation of the Agreement and submit that report to the Agreement Secretariat. Through Resolution 8.3 the deadline for submission of national reports to the 9th Session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP9) was set at 180 days before the opening of the meeting. MOP9 is scheduled to take place on 10-14 November 2025; therefore, the deadline for submission of National Reports is **13 May 2025**.

As per Resolution 7.1 of the MOP, Chapter 3 of the National Report Format on the numbers and trends of native and non-native species of waterbirds was developed as a stand-alone online reporting module, which is due for submission to every second MOP session. The next submission of this module is scheduled for delivery to MOP10 and will take place in 2026-2027 through a stand-alone reporting process. Therefore, the current Report on the implementation of AEWA for the period 2021-2024 does not contain Chapter 3.

As per the decision of the 23rd meeting of the Standing Committee (26-27 June 2023), reporting of waterbird harvest data for the period 2019-2023 was undertaken as a stand-alone module of the national report and administered through a separate reporting process in the course of 2024.

The AEWA National Reports 2021-2024 were compiled and submitted through the AEWA Online National Reporting System, which is part of the broader CMS Family Online Reporting System. The CMS Family Online Reporting System was developed by the UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) in close collaboration with and under the guidance of the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat.

1. General Information

Name of reporting Contracting Party

>>> Belgium

Date of entry into force of AEWA in the Contracting Party

>>> 01.06.2006

List any reservations that the Contracting Party has made (if any) in respect of any population(s) listed in Table 1 of Annex 3 or any specific provision of the AEWA Action Plan - either upon deposition of its instruments of accession (per AEWA, Article XV) or subsequent to any amendment of Table 1 or the AEWA Action Plan, as adopted by a session of the Agreement's Meeting of the Parties (per AEWA, Article X.6).

EU member states should list also all reservations entered by the European Commission on behalf of the European Union.

>>> No reservations specific for Belgium, only reservations entered by the EC on behalf of the EU:

- Reservation of the EU in relation to amendments in Table 1 of Annex 3 following Resolution 5.6, concerning 2 (populations of) huntable species under the EU Birds Directive: North-East Europe/North-West Europe population of Taiga Bean Goose and North-East Europe/Black Sea, SW Asian & Eastern Africa population of Lesser Blackbacked Gull.
- Reservation of the EU in relation to amendments in Table 1 of Annex 3 following Resolution 6.1, concerning 4 (populations of) huntable species under the EU Birds Directive: Western Siberia/North European population of Long-tailed duck, Western Siberia & Northern Europe/NW European population of Velvet Scoter, North-west & Central Europe population of Red-brested Merganser and Common Redshank.
- Reservation of the EU in relation to amendments in Table 1 of Annex 3 following Resolution 7.3, concerning nine huntable species under EU Birds Directive: Common Eider, Red-breasted Merganser, Common Pochard, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Northern Lapwing, Bar-tailed Godwit, Black-tailed Godwit, Red Knot, and Spotted Redshank.
- Reservation of the EU in relation to amendments in Table 1 of Annex 3 following Resolution 8.2, concerning five (populations of) huntable species under the EU Birds Directive: Iceland/UK&Ireland population of Greylag Goose, North-east Europe/North-west Europe populations of Taiga Bean goose, Black Sea & East Mediterranean population of Red-crested Pochard, C & E Siberia/SW Asia, Eastern & Southern Africa population of Grey Plover and SE Eur & W Asia/SW & S Asia & NE Africa population of European Oystercatcher.

2. Institutional Information

Please update information on the National AEWA Administrative Authority, the National Focal Points, the Designated National Respondent and the other contributors to this report.

Designated National AEWA Administrative Authority

Full name of the institution

>>> Agency For Nature and Forests, Flemish Government

Name and title of the head of institution

>>> Goedele Van der Spiegel, Administrateur-generaal

Mailing address - Street and number

>>> Havenlaan 88

P.O.Box

>>> bus 75

Postal code

>>> 1000

City

>>> Brussels

Country

>>> Belgium

Telephone

>>> (0032) 2 / 553 81 02

E-mail

>>> anb@vlaanderen.be

Website

>>> www.natuurenbos.be

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

<http://www.natuurenbos.be>

Designated National Focal Point (NFP) for AEWA matters

Name and title of the NFP

>>> Floris Verhaeghe, Species Policy Expert

Affiliation (institution, department)

>>> Agency for Nature and Forests, Flemish Government

Mailing address - Street and number

>>> Koning Albert I-laan 1/2

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>>> bus 74

Postal code

>>> 8200

City

>>> Bruges

Country

>>> Belgium

Telephone

>>> +32 479 89 01 09

E-mail

>>> Floris.Verhaeghe@vlaanderen.be

Website

>>> www.natuurenbos.be

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

<http://www.natuurenbos.be>

Designated National Focal Point for AEWA Technical Committee (TC NFP) matters

Name and title of the TC NFP

>>> Mr. Floris Verhaeghe

Affiliation (institution, department)

>>> Agency for Nature and Forests, Flemish Government

Mailing address - Street and number

>>> Koning Albert I-laan 1/2

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>>> bus 74

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>>> 8200

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>>> Brugge

Country

>>> Belgium

Telephone

>>> +32 479 89 01 09

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>>> Floris.Verhaeghe@vlaanderen.be

Website

>>> www.natuurenbos.be

Designated National Focal Point for Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA NFP) matters

Name and title of the CEPA NFP

>>> Floris Verhaeghe

Affiliation (institution, department)

>>> Agency for Nature and Forests, Flemish Government

Mailing address - Street and number

>>> Koning Albert I-laan 1/2

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>>> +32(0)479.89.01.09

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>>> Floris.Verhaeghe@vlaanderen.be

Website

>>> www.natuurenbos.be

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

<http://www.natuurenbos.be>

Designated National Respondent (DNR) in charge of the compilation and submission of the AEWA National Report 2021-2024

Please select from the list below as appropriate.

The National Focal Point (NFP) has been designated as the National Respondent

Other contributors to the AEWA National Report 2021 - 2024

Please list the names and affiliations (institution, organisation) of the other contributors to this report. For Contracting Parties in which nature conservation is not an exclusive competence of national/federal government, Designated National Respondents are encouraged to seek input from other relevant levels of government.

>>> Xavier Vermeersch (Brussels Government, Brussels Environment), Mathias Engelbeen (Brussels Government, Brussels Environment), Catherine Debruyne (Public Service of Wallonia, Walloon Government), Mieke Degloire (Federal Government, DG Environment / Milieu Marin), Floris Verhaeghe (Flemish Government, Agency for Nature and Forest), Sandrine Liégeois (Public Service of Wallonia, Walloon Government).

Pressures and Responses

4. Species Conservation

4.1 Legal Measures

1. Following MOP8, was a review undertaken in your country of the relevant domestic legislation against the provisions of the latest version of the Agreement text and its annexes, including Table 1 in Annex III, taking into account all amendments adopted by MOP8? (AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Actions 1.1 (a), 1.1 (b), 2.2(a) and 2.2(b))

Yes

Please indicate the outcome of this review

Relevant national legislation was fully in line with the Agreement text and its annexes

2. Was your country's national legislation reviewed following the Guidance on Measures in National Legislation for Different Populations of the Same Species, Particularly with Respect to Hunting and Trade (Resolution 6.7)?

See Appendix 1 / Appendix 2 / Appendix 3

Notice: Before clicking on the above hyperlink, please keep pressing the **Ctrl button** on your keyboard to open the link in a new tab.

Yes

Did this require adjusting your national legislation?

No

Please describe how your current national legislation is compatible with the advice provided in the Guidance

>>> Only few species of migratory waterbirds are huntable in BE (Flanders, Wallonia). All of the populations of the species that can be harvested through the open hunting season, are populations listed in Column C (with no overlap with populations in Column A or B) with the exception for the Northern Lapwing (Column A) for which hunting is restricted to the context flight safety at airports.

Field for additional information (optional)

>>> Anser anser (only in Flanders): the open hunting period in august and september is targeting the breeding/resident population that is part of the NW Europe/SW Europe population, listed in Column C. Migratory specimens are not present yet at this time of year, at least not in significant numbers, and these are also largely part of the same population.

- Anas platyrhynchos: In BE the NW Europe and Northern Europe/West Mediterranean populations are concerned, both of which are listed in Column C.

- Anas crecca: was huntable in Wallonia in 2018-2020 (now suspended) - bigger numbers hibernate in Flanders, where the species cannot be hunted.

- Anas penelope: hunting is only possible in exceptional cases where the species causes damage to other crops than grasslands, leading to very limited offtake. It concerns birds from the W Siberia & NE Europe/NW Europe population, Column C.

- Vanellus vanellus: Only 1 population, Column A: Hunting is only possible on the territory of airports when they pose risks to flight-safety, leading to very limited yearly offtake.

- Fulica atra: hunting is only possible in Wallonia, even though the major wintering population occurs in Flanders. Taking is limited. The birds are part of the NW European population - Column C, with no overlap with other populations.

- Eurasian woodcock: hunting is only possible in Wallonia, in concerns the Europe/S&W Europe & North Africa population (no overlap), listed in Column C.

3. Please confirm the protection status under your country's national legislation of each population listed in the Excel file linked below. This list contains all the AEWA Table 1, Column A populations that are regularly occurring in your country (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 2.1.1; AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Target 1.1).

Guidance on responding to this question:

1- Please click here and download the Excel file starting with your country's name.

(Notice: before clicking on this hyperlink, please keep pressing the Ctrl button on your keyboard to open the link in a new tab.)

2- Fill in the Excel template comprehensively;

3- Upload the completed Excel file as an attachment here. For uploading please click on the little blue icon

below containing a paper clip.

I confirm that I have downloaded the Excel file with my country's name, filled it in as necessary and uploaded the completed file as an attachment to this question.

You have attached the following documents to this answer.

[Belgium_Q3_AEWA_NR_2021-2024_PopCoIA.xlsx](#)

4. Please confirm for each population, listed in the Excel file linked below, whether there is an open hunting season (birds and/or eggs) in your country. This list contains all the AEWA Table 1, Column A, category 2 or 3 with an asterisk or category 4 that are regularly occurring in your country (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 2.1.1; AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Target 1.1).

Guidance: Open hunting season in the context of this inquiry means that the waterbird population is allowed to be hunted for a certain period in the year in accordance with the respective domestic legislation of the country. Some populations, even if huntable according to the legislation, in certain circumstances may be subject to a year-round closed season for management reasons.

Guidance on responding to this question:

1- Please click here and download the Excel file starting with your country's name.

(Notice: before clicking on this hyperlink, please keep pressing the Ctrl button on your keyboard to open the link in a new tab.)

2- Fill in the Excel template comprehensively;

3- Upload the completed Excel file as an attachment here. For uploading please click on the little blue icon below containing a paper clip.

I confirm that I have downloaded the Excel file with my country's name, filled it in as necessary and uploaded the completed file as an attachment to this question.

You have attached the following documents to this answer.

[Belgium_Q4_AEWA_NR_2021-2024_PopCoIA-Cat2_3_4.xlsx](#)

5. Please confirm for each population, listed in the Excel file linked below, whether taking is regulated in your country. This list contains all the AEWA Table 1, Column B populations that are regularly occurring in your country (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 2.1.2; AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Target 1.1).

Guidance on responding to this question:

1- Please click here and download the Excel file starting with your country's name.

(Notice: before clicking on this hyperlink, please keep pressing the Ctrl button on your keyboard to open the link in a new tab.)

2- Fill in the Excel template comprehensively;

3- Upload the completed Excel file as an attachment here. For uploading please click on the little blue icon below containing a paper clip.

I confirm that I have downloaded the Excel file with my country's name, filled it in as necessary and uploaded the completed file as an attachment to this question.

You have attached the following documents to this answer.

[Belgium_Q5_AEWA_NR_2021-2024_PopCoIB.xlsx](#)

6. Please indicate which modes of taking are prohibited in your country (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 2.1.2(b); AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Target 1.1)

One or more modes of taking have been prohibited

Please provide details to each mode of taking in the list below:

Snares

Yes, fully

Please indicate the legislation under which the mode of taking is prohibited

>>> Different legislation per region, but consistent through the whole of the country: FLANDERS: Decree on species protection and species management d.d. 15/05/2009. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: Royal Decree concerning the species protection in the maritime regions under the jurisdiction of Belgium d.d. 21 December 2001. WALLONIA: Loi du 12 juillet 1973 sur la conservation de la nature. BRUSSEL: Ordinance on Nature Conservation, 1/03/2012.

Limes

Yes, fully

Please indicate the legislation under which the mode of taking is prohibited

>>> Different legislation per region, but consistent through the whole of the country: FLANDERS: Decree on species protection and species management d.d. 15/05/2009. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: Royal Decree concerning the species protection in the maritime regions under the jurisdiction of Belgium d.d. 21 December 2001. WALLONIA: Loi du 12 juillet 1973 sur la conservation de la nature. BRUSSEL: Ordinance on Nature Conservation, 1/03/2012.

Hooks

Yes, fully

Please indicate the legislation under which the mode of taking is prohibited

>>> Different legislation per region, but consistent through the whole of the country: FLANDERS: Decree on species protection and species management d.d. 15/05/2009. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: Royal Decree concerning the species protection in the maritime regions under the jurisdiction of Belgium d.d. 21 December 2001. WALLONIA: Loi du 12 juillet 1973 sur la conservation de la nature. BRUSSEL: Ordinance on Nature Conservation, 1/03/2012.

Live birds which are blind or mutilated used as decoys

Yes, fully

Please indicate the legislation under which the mode of taking is prohibited

>>> Different legislation per region, but consistent through the whole of the country: FLANDERS: Decree on species protection and species management d.d. 15/05/2009. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: Royal Decree concerning the species protection in the maritime regions under the jurisdiction of Belgium d.d. 21 December 2001. WALLONIA: Loi du 12 juillet 1973 sur la conservation de la nature. BRUSSEL: Ordinance on Nature Conservation, 1/03/2012.

Tape recorders and other electronic devices

Yes, fully

Please indicate the legislation under which the mode of taking is prohibited

>>> Different legislation per region, but consistent through the whole of the country: FLANDERS: Decree on species protection and species management d.d. 15/05/2009. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: Royal Decree concerning the species protection in the maritime regions under the jurisdiction of Belgium d.d. 21 December 2001. WALLONIA: Loi du 12 juillet 1973 sur la conservation de la nature. BRUSSEL: Ordinance on Nature Conservation, 1/03/2012.

Electrocuting devices

Yes, fully

Please indicate the legislation under which the mode of taking is prohibited

>>> Different legislation per region, but consistent through the whole of the country: FLANDERS: Decree on species protection and species management d.d. 15/05/2009. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: Royal Decree concerning the species protection in the maritime regions under the jurisdiction of Belgium d.d. 21 December 2001. WALLONIA: Loi du 12 juillet 1973 sur la conservation de la nature. BRUSSEL: Ordinance on Nature Conservation, 1/03/2012.

Artificial light sources

Yes, fully

Please indicate the legislation under which the mode of taking is prohibited

>>> Different legislation per region, but consistent through the whole of the country: FLANDERS: Decree on species protection and species management d.d. 15/05/2009. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: Royal Decree concerning the species protection in the maritime regions under the jurisdiction of Belgium d.d. 21 December 2001. WALLONIA: Loi du 12 juillet 1973 sur la conservation de la nature. BRUSSEL: Ordinance on Nature Conservation, 1/03/2012.

Mirrors and other dazzling devices

Yes, fully

Please indicate the legislation under which the mode of taking is prohibited

>>> Different legislation per region, but consistent through the whole of the country: FLANDERS: Decree on species protection and species management d.d. 15/05/2009. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: Royal Decree concerning the species protection in the maritime regions under the jurisdiction of Belgium d.d. 21 December 2001. WALLONIA: Loi du 12 juillet 1973 sur la conservation de la nature. BRUSSEL: Ordinance on Nature Conservation, 1/03/2012.

Devices for illuminating targets

Yes, fully

Please indicate the legislation under which the mode of taking is prohibited

>>> Different legislation per region, but consistent through the whole of the country: FLANDERS: Decree on species protection and species management d.d. 15/05/2009. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: Royal Decree concerning the species protection in the maritime regions under the jurisdiction of Belgium d.d. 21 December 2001. WALLONIA: Loi du 12 juillet 1973 sur la conservation de la nature. BRUSSEL: Ordinance on Nature Conservation, 1/03/2012.

Sighting devices for night shooting comprising an electronic image magnifier or image converter

Yes, fully

Please indicate the legislation under which the mode of taking is prohibited

>>> Different legislation per region, but consistent through the whole of the country: FLANDERS: Decree on species protection and species management d.d. 15/05/2009. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: Royal Decree concerning the species protection in the maritime regions under the jurisdiction of Belgium d.d. 21 December 2001. WALLONIA: Loi du 12 juillet 1973 sur la conservation de la nature. BRUSSEL: Ordinance on Nature Conservation, 1/03/2012.

Explosives

Yes, fully

Please indicate the legislation under which the mode of taking is prohibited

>>> Different legislation per region, but consistent through the whole of the country: FLANDERS: Decree on species protection and species management d.d. 15/05/2009. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: Royal Decree concerning the species protection in the maritime regions under the jurisdiction of Belgium d.d. 21 December 2001. WALLONIA: Loi du 12 juillet 1973 sur la conservation de la nature. BRUSSEL: Ordinance on Nature Conservation, 1/03/2012.

Nets

Yes, fully

Please indicate the legislation under which the mode of taking is prohibited

>>> Different legislation per region, but consistent through the whole of the country: FLANDERS: Decree on species protection and species management d.d. 15/05/2009. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: Royal Decree concerning the species protection in the maritime regions under the jurisdiction of Belgium d.d. 21 December 2001. WALLONIA: Loi du 12 juillet 1973 sur la conservation de la nature. BRUSSEL: Order on Nature Conservation, 1/03/2012.

Traps

Yes, fully

Please indicate the legislation under which the mode of taking is prohibited

>>> Different legislation per region, but consistent through the whole of the country: FLANDERS: Decree on species protection and species management d.d. 15/05/2009. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: Royal Decree concerning the species protection in the maritime regions under the jurisdiction of Belgium d.d. 21 December 2001. WALLONIA: Loi du 12 juillet 1973 sur la conservation de la nature. BRUSSEL: Ordinance on Nature Conservation, 1/03/2012.

Poison

Yes, fully

Please indicate the legislation under which the mode of taking is prohibited

>>> Different legislation per region, but consistent through the whole of the country: FLANDERS: Decree on species protection and species management d.d. 15/05/2009. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: Royal

Decree concerning the species protection in the maritime regions under the jurisdiction of Belgium d.d. 21 December 2001. WALLONIA: Loi du 12 juillet 1973 sur la conservation de la nature. BRUSSEL: Ordinance on Nature Conservation, 1/03/2012.

Poisoned or anaesthetic baits

Yes, fully

Please indicate the legislation under which the mode of taking is prohibited

>>> Different legislation per region, but consistent through the whole of the country: FLANDERS: Decree on species protection and species management d.d. 15/05/2009. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: Royal Decree concerning the species protection in the maritime regions under the jurisdiction of Belgium d.d. 21 December 2001. WALLONIA: Loi du 12 juillet 1973 sur la conservation de la nature. BRUSSEL: Ordinance on Nature Conservation, 1/03/2012.

Semi-automatic or automatic weapons with a magazine capable of holding more than two rounds of ammunition

Yes, fully

Please indicate the legislation under which the mode of taking is prohibited

>>> Different legislation per region, but consistent through the whole of the country: FLANDERS: Decree on species protection and species management d.d. 15/05/2009. Jachtvoorwaardenbesluit van 25 april 2014. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: Royal Decree concerning the species protection in the maritime regions under the jurisdiction of Belgium d.d. 21 December 2001. No hunting allowed at all. WALLONIA: Loi du 12 juillet 1973 sur la conservation de la nature. - Arrêté du Gouvernement wallon de 22 septembre 2005 réglementant l'emploi des armes à feu et de leurs munitions en vue de l'exercice de la chasse, ainsi que certains procédés ou techniques de chasse. BRUSSEL: Ordinance on Nature Conservation, 1/03/2012. No hunting allowed at all.

Hunting from aircraft, motor vehicles, or boats driven at a speed exceeding 5 km p/h (18 km p/h on the open sea)

Yes, fully

Please indicate the legislation under which the mode of taking is prohibited

>>> Different legislation per region, but consistent through the whole of the country: FLANDERS: Decree on species protection and species management d.d. 15/05/2009. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: Royal Decree concerning the species protection in the maritime regions under the jurisdiction of Belgium d.d. 21 December 2001. No hunting allowed at all. WALLONIA: Loi du 12 juillet 1973 sur la conservation de la nature. BRUSSEL: Ordinance on Nature Conservation, 1/03/2012. No hunting allowed at all.

Other non-selective modes of taking

Yes, fully

Please specify which other non-selective modes of taking have been prohibited

>>> If any taking is allowed, taking should be done according to the methods that have been legally allowed. Any other means of taking, than the allowed methods, is prohibited. FLANDERS: the Governmental Decree of 15 May 2009 on species protection and species management (Soortenbesluit) prohibits under article 16 §1 any other non-selective mode of taking, even when not mentioned as such in the listed prohibited modes of taking in annex 2A of this Decree. WALLONIA: According to Article Art. 8. of the Hunting Act, it is prohibited, at all times, to transport and use nets, "foot snare traps", leghold traps", "snares", poisoned or non poisoned baits or any other mean for taking, destroying or facilitate the capture or destruction of any game. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: Art 5 of the Royal Decree concerning the species protection in the maritime regions under the jurisdiction of Belgium (d.d. 21/12/2001) prohibits any taking of in the wild living birds BRUSSELS REGION: Ordinance on Nature Conservation, 1/03/2012: No taking of wild birds is allowed at all. FLANDERS: the Governmental Decree of 15 May 2009 on species protection and species management (Soortenbesluit) prohibits under article 16 §1 any other non-selective mode of taking, even when not mentioned as such in the listed prohibited modes of taking in annex 2A of this Decree. WALLONIA: According to Article Art. 8. of the Hunting Act, it is prohibited, at all times, to transport and use nets, "foot snare traps", leghold traps", "snares", poisoned or non poisoned baits or any other mean for taking, destroying or facilitate the capture or destruction of any game. The possession, sale and offer for sale of "pièges à machoires" are prohibited. Hunting from a motored vehicle is prohibited. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: Art 5 of the Royal Decree concerning the species protection in the maritime regions under the jurisdiction of Belgium (d.d. 21/12/2001) prohibits taking of in the wild living birds BRUSSELS REGION: Ordinance on Nature Conservation, 1/03/2012: No taking of wild birds is allowed at all.

7. Has your country granted exemptions from any of the above prohibitions in order to accommodate livelihoods uses? (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 2.1.2(b); AEWA Strategic Plan

2019-2027, Target 1.1)

No

8. Has a review of enforcement of and compliance with the domestic legislation relevant for AEWA implementation, [in particular the legislation which caters for the obligations under paragraphs 2.1 and 4.1 of the AEWA Action Plan], been undertaken in your country after MOP8? (AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Actions 1.1(c) and 2.2(c))

No

Please explain the reasons

>>> There was no need for a review as domestic legislation was already in line with the obligations. Enforcement of and supervising compliance with this legislation is conducted on a permanent basis as part of the job of the enforcement officers.

Was a review undertaken before MOP8?

No

Please explain the reasons

>>> There was no need for a review as domestic legislation was already in line with the obligations. Enforcement of and supervising compliance with this legislation is conducted on a permanent basis as part of the job of the enforcement officers.

9. Has your country used the AEWA Conservation Guidelines on National Legislation for the Protection of Species of Migratory Waterbirds and their Habitats?

Notice: Before clicking on the above hyperlink, please keep **Ctrl button** on your keyboard to open the link in a new tab.

No

Please explain the reasons. What other guidance has been used instead?

>>> Legislation was already covering the recommendations of the Guidelines.

4.2. Species Action and Management Plans

10. Please report on the progress of turning the International Single Species Action and Management Plans (ISSAP and ISSMP), as well as International Multi-species Action Plans (IMSAP), listed below, into National Action or Management Plans. If no action or management plan is listed below, this is because your country is not considered to be a Principal Range State for any species currently covered by an AEWA plan. In such a case, please proceed to the next question. (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 2.2; AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Action 1.2 (d))

Please report on all listed ISSAP, ISSMP and IMSAP

Greylag Goose / Anser anser

National Plan for Greylag Goose / Anser anser

No NP, but actions implemented

Please explain the reasons for having no NP in place

>>> For the greylag goose population targets (wintering numbers) for Flanders have been set in 2010 as part of the implementation of the EU Natura2000-policy (Birds Directive). These population goals are directive for actions in Flanders and have been so since 2010. Later on the ISSMP came along and was tuned with these national goals.

Please provide a description of the actions implemented

>>> Site protection, wetland restoration, damage compensation, winter counts, summer counts and breeding success estimates (as input for the population model).

Please rate the degree of current implementation of the plan taking into account the time schedule of the ISSAP

Moderate implementation - some of the actions are underway as per the time schedule of the ISSAP

Please provide details and reasons for the lower degree of implementation.

>>> Lack of data from certain range states makes it difficult to complete the population model and to consequently set clear management goals that can guide national implementation.

Pink-footed Goose / *Anser brachyrhynchus* **National Plan for Pink-footed Goose / *Anser brachyrhynchus***

No NP, but actions implemented

Please explain the reasons for having no NP in place

>>> For the pinkfooted goose, population targets for Flanders (the species rarely occurs outside this region) have been set in 2010 as part of the implementation of the EU Natura2000-policy (Birds Directive). These population goals are directive for actions in Flanders and have been so since 2010. Later on the AEWA-plan came along and was tuned with these national goals. Actions carried out focus on wintering habitat restoration, in line with the objectives for Belgium in the flyway plan.

Please provide a description of the actions implemented

>>> As the focus in Belgium lies on the conservation of the species rather than on its management, actions carried out are mostly about habitat restoration, education, goose-based tourism, population counts, damage compensation, reporting of neckbands, ...

Please rate the degree of current implementation of the plan taking into account the time schedule of the ISSAP

Advanced implementation - most of the actions are underway as per the time schedule of the ISSAP

Please provide details and reasons for the high degree of implementation.

>>> Actions fit well within a broader policy of nature conservation and align with the waterbird monitoring initiatives that are already present in the field.

Ferruginous Duck / *Aythya nyroca* **National Plan for Ferruginous Duck / *Aythya nyroca***

No NP and no action implemented

Please explain the reasons

>>> The Ferruginous Duck is a rare vagrant in Belgium. As such, no specific actions can be identified or implemented.

Barnacle Goose / *Branta leucopsis* **National Plan for Barnacle Goose / *Branta leucopsis***

No NP, but actions implemented

Please explain the reasons for having no NP in place

>>> The species winters in relative low numbers compared to other goose species. Actions focusing on providing a suitable wintering habitat for other goose species also benefit the barnacle geese.

Please provide a description of the actions implemented

>>> Wintering habitat restoration, education, goose-based tourism, population counts, reporting of neckbands, damage compensation schemes ...

Please rate the degree of current implementation of the plan taking into account the time schedule of the ISSAP

Advanced implementation - most of the actions are underway as per the time schedule of the ISSAP

Please provide details and reasons for the high degree of implementation.

>>> Actions for this species fit well within a broader policy of nature conservation with regards to wintering waterbirds, and align with the waterbird monitoring initiatives that are already present in the field.

Tundra Swan / *Cygnus columbianus* **National Plan for Tundra Swan / *Cygnus columbianus***

No NP, but actions implemented

Please explain the reasons for having no NP in place

>>> The species only hibernates irregularly and in smaller numbers and is mostly feeding on crop remains. As such, the exact location of wintering groups changes from year to year which makes it hard to target actions. The species is strictly protected and regular wintering sites have been designated and protected.

Please provide a description of the actions implemented

>>> The species benefits from actions that target the restoration of the semi-natural wintering habitat for other waterbirds and provide rest in important areas for wintering waterbirds (site protection).

Please rate the degree of current implementation of the plan taking into account the time schedule of the ISSAP

Advanced implementation - most of the actions are underway as per the time schedule of the ISSAP

Please provide details and reasons for the high degree of implementation.

>>> The species is strictly protected, key sites have been identified and protected. The wintering population is monitored in the waterbird census, lead shot has been banned, ...

Field for additional information (optional)

>>> Most actions implemented are in general targeted at and benefitting multiple waterbird species.

Great Snipe / Gallinago media **National Plan for Great Snipe / Gallinago media**

No NP and no action implemented

Please explain the reasons

>>> The great snipe is a rare vagrant in Belgium. As such, no specific actions can be identified or implemented.

Black-tailed Godwit / Limosa limosa **National Plan for Black-tailed Godwit / Limosa limosa**

NP in place and being implemented

When was the plan approved and published? Please provide a web link or attach a file, if available. Please provide contact details for any person or organisation coordinating its implementation. Please list any activities and/or achievements over the past triennium.

>>> In the end of 2020 a Species action plan for wet grassland breeding birds, with Black-Tailed Godwit and Eurasian Curlew as umbrella-species, has been approved. It will be implemented in the years 2021-2025. (https://natuurenbos.vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/documenten/sbp_weidevogels.pdf). Coordinator of implementation: Mrs. Lotte Gielis (Lotte.Gielis@vlaanderen.be). Subsequently key breeding sites in agricultural use have been reassessed in order to target species-specific agri-environmental schemes supporting the breeding success. An ad hoc subsidy scheme has been started to stimulate farmers to delay mowing at nesting sites where no AES are taken.

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

<https://www.natuurenbos.be/sbpweidevogels>

Please rate the degree of current implementation of the plan taking into account the time schedule of the ISSAP

Advanced implementation - most of the actions are underway as per the time schedule of the plan

Please provide details and reasons for the high degree of implementation.

>>> For the breeding population in agricultural fields, specific agri-environmental schemes have been promoted for more than a decade. Also nature reserves have been established in key breeding areas for black-tailed godwits. Both have resulted in raising awareness and gaining knowledge about the species and suitable measures.

Eurasian Curlew / Numenius arquata **National Plan for Eurasian Curlew / Numenius arquata**

NP in place and being implemented

When was the plan approved and published? Please provide a web link or attach a file, if available. Please

provide contact details for any person or organisation coordinating its implementation. Please list any activities and/or achievements over the past triennium.

>>> In the end of 2020 a Species action plan for wet grassland breeding birds, with Black-Tailed Godwit and Eurasian Curlew as umbrella-species, has been approved. It will be implemented in the years 2021-2025. (https://natuurenbos.vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/documenten/sbp_weidevogels.pdf). Coordinator of implementation: Mrs. Lotte Gielis (Lotte.Gielis@vlaanderen.be). Subsequently key breeding sites in agricultural use have been reassessed in order to target species-specific agri-environmental schemes supporting the breeding success. Scientific research (radio-tracking) has started to get a better insight in the landscape use of breeding curlews. An ad hoc subsidy scheme has been started to stimulate farmers to delay mowing at the nesting sites.

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

<https://www.natuurenbos.be/sbpweidevogels>

Please rate the degree of current implementation of the plan taking into account the time schedule of the ISSAP

Advanced implementation - most of the actions are underway as per the time schedule of the plan

Please provide details and reasons for the high degree of implementation.

>>> The Eurasian curlew is breeding in low densities, many relic-populations have become very small. It takes more effort than for Black-tailed Godwits to get a good sight on nesting areas and consequently target measures. Case-studies at several key breeding sites improve key knowledge and also stimulate broader attention for the species.

White-headed Duck / *Oxyura leucocephala* **National Plan for White-headed Duck / *Oxyura leucocephala***

No NP, but actions implemented

Please explain the reasons for having no NP in place

>>> The only thing that can be done in Belgium, as the country is not part of the range of the species, is to help reduce the risk of hybridisation with the ruddy duck by eradicating this species.

Please provide a description of the actions implemented

>>> The 'national plan' consists of only 1 action namely the eradication of the ruddy duck in order to prevent its spread to the native populations of the whiteheaded duck in southern Europe. The eradication plan is successful, Ruddy ducks have become very rare.

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

[Ruddy Duck in Flanders](#) - Overview of the sightings and removals of the Ruddy Duck in Flanders

Please rate the degree of current implementation of the plan taking into account the time schedule of the ISSAP

Full implementation - all actions are underway as per the time schedule of the ISSAP

Please provide details and reasons for the full implementation.

>>> The only thing that can be done in Belgium is to help reduce the risk of hybridisation with the ruddy duck by assisting in the eradication of the latter.

Eurasian Spoonbill / *Platalea leucorodia* **National Plan for Eurasian Spoonbill / *Platalea leucorodia***

No NP, but actions implemented

Please explain the reasons for having no NP in place

>>> For the Eurasian spoonbill, population targets (breeding birds) for Flanders have been set in 2010 as part of the implementation of the EU Natura2000-policy (Birds Directive). The population goal is directive for actions in Flanders and has been so since 2010.

Please provide a description of the actions implemented

>>> Protection of nesting sites against land predators, restoration and development of suitable wetlands as foraging areas.

Please rate the degree of current implementation of the plan taking into account the time schedule of the

ISSAP

Advanced implementation – most of the actions are underway as per the time schedule of the ISSAP

Please provide details and reasons for the high degree of implementation.

>>> As a result of large scale nature restoration projects, a small number of colonies have established over the past decades. Where necessary, actions have been carried out to protect these colonies for disturbance and predation and to provide supplementary safe nesting habitat. Key breeding sites have been identified and protected, minimum population targets have been set, guiding further site restoration and management measures.

11. Has your country provided assistance for the coordination and implementation of International Species Action or Management Plans through funding of AEWA International Species Working and Expert Groups? (Resolution 7.5)

Yes

Please provide details, including amount of funds donated

>>> In the European Goose Management Platform Belgium assisted through financial support of the data center and through delivering information on the necessary parameters (e.g. population counts).

12. Has your country provided financial or in-kind assistance for the development of new International Species Action or Management Plans? (Resolution 7.5)

Yes

Please provide details, including amount of funds donated

>>> In the European Goose Management Platform Belgium assisted through financial support of the data center and through delivering information on the necessary parameters (e.g. population counts), more particular the revision and update of the ISSMP for the Pinkfooted goose.

13. Has your country been involved in the development and/or implementation of any flyway-scale projects to implement Single or Multi-Species Action Plans? (AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Action 1.2(f))

Yes

Please provide details on each of the respective projects and the target Species Action Plan

>>> - European Goose Management Platform: Belgium is active in the implementation of the plans for Pinkfooted goose, Greylag goose and Barnacle goose.

- Black-tailed Godwit & Eurasian Curlew: Belgium takes part in the IWGs for Eurasian Curlew and Black-tailed Godwit.

14. Has a review and prioritization been undertaken in your country of the resources needed to develop national action plans in response to ISSAPs, implement those plans and coordinate their implementation? (AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Action 1.2(g))

No

Please explain the reasons.

>>> Priority goes to the implementation of the species of the EU Birds Directive and more specific to the species from Annex I whose populations are in unfavourable condition. Often these are overlapping though with the AEWA ISSAP species (e.g. Corncrake, Spoonbill, Pinkfooted goose, ...).

15. Does your country have in place or is your country developing a National Single Species Action Plan for any species/population for which an AEWA ISSAP has not been developed? (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 2.2.2)

Yes

Please provide information on each species for which relevant action has been undertaken

Belgium

Spotted Crake / Porzana porzana

National Single Species Action Plan for Spotted Crake / Porzana porzana

NSSAP in place and being implemented

Please provide details

>>> Species Protection Programme for the Flemish region, aiming at targetting focus areas for the recovery of the species and reaching the Flemish population target (min. 70 territoria), supporting managers for suitable habitat management and tackle knowledge gaps. The programme was running from 2018 till 2023, but initiated actions are still running after this formal period.

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

[Species Protection Programme for the spotted crane in Flanders](#)

16. Has your country used the AEWA Guidelines for the preparation of National Single Species Action Plans for migratory waterbirds?

Notice: Before clicking on the above hyperlink, please keep pressing **the Ctrl button** on your keyboard to open the link in a new tab.

No

Please explain the reasons. What has been used instead as a basis for the preparation of NSSAPs?

>>> FLANDERS: an own quality handbook for 'species protection or species management programmes' is used. It also takes in account the legal requirements on species protection and management programmes as foreseen in the own regional legislation.

Optionally you can provide additional information on section 4.2. Single Species Action Plans

>>> FLANDERS: all official species action plans can be found at www.natuurenbos.be/sbp.

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

<http://www.natuurenbos.be/sbp>

4.3 Emergency Measures

18. Please report on any emergency situation that has occurred in your country over the past triennium and has threatened waterbirds. (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 2.3)

Please indicate whether an emergency situation threatening waterbirds, such as botulism, chemical pollution, earthquake, extreme weather, fire, harmful algal bloom, infectious disease, introduction of alien species, lead poisoning, nuclear accident, oil spill, predation, volcanic activity, war or other emergency (please specify), has occurred in the country over the past triennium.

No emergency situation has occurred

19. Are there any other emergency response measures, different from the ones applied in response to the emergency situations reported above, that were developed and are in place in your country so that they can be used in future in emergency cases?

Yes

Please provide information on each emergency situation for which measures have been developed and are in place

Measures for Oil spill

Shortly describe the emergency measures in place in your country

>>> Oil spill intervention plan: emergency plan that can be rolled out immediately if needed, with description of the different actors, their responsibilities and respective tasks, the procedures, chain of command etc.

20. Has your country used the AEWA Conservation Guidelines on identifying and tackling emergency situations for migratory waterbirds?

Notice: Before clicking on the above hyperlink, please keep pressing the **Ctrl button** on your keyboard to open the link in a new tab.

No

Please explain the reasons. What was used instead as a basis for dealing with emergency situations?

>>> FLANDERS, WALLONIA and BRUSSELS REGION: Most of the emergency situations that can occur, will affect more than only the waterbirds. We have or are developing systems for diseases in wild animals, introduction of alien species and fire. On sea there's a oil spill intervention plan for birds that can be activated alongside other measures to prevent environmental pollution after big oil spills. BRUSSELS: In the Brussels Region protocols exist for monitoring zoonoses or diseases caused by waterbirds.

4.4 Re-establishments

21. Is your country maintaining a national register of re-establishment projects occurring or planned to occur wholly or partly within your country? (Resolution 4.4)

Yes

Please provide details on the register

>>> FLANDERS: For re-introduction a derogation from the regional legislation has to be given. Therefore re-introduction programs are listed in the register of derogations. No re-establishment projects concerning waterbirds or wetlands have taken place. WALLONIA:- No re-introduction project has taken place concerning waterbirds.- Re-introductions prohibited by article 5 ter of the law on nature conservation BRUSSELS REGION:- No re-introduction project has taken place BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA:- No re-introduction project has taken place

22. Is there a regulatory framework for re-establishments of species, including waterbirds, in your country (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 2.4)?

Yes

Please provide details

>>> FLANDERS: the Government of Flanders Decree concerning species protection and species management regulates the re-establishment of species in the wild. Guidance has been developed (Mergeay & Verbist, 2021). WALLONIA: Art. 5ter of Law on Nature Conservation : it is forbidden to re introduce any indigenous species into the wild. A derogation system exists for this article. In Wallonia the articles 5 and 5 bis of the nature conservation law give the possibility to derogate from some of the bans of this law (i.e. to capture, to hold, to transport some individuals). It is necessary to respect the three conditions fixed by the birds directive (no other satisfactory solution, respect the aim, not to put the species in danger). BRUSSELS REGION: the Ordinance on Nature Conservation (1/3/2012) regulates the re-establishment of species in the wild. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: Royal Decree concerning the species protection in the maritime regions under the jurisdiction of Belgium d.d. 21/12/2001 regulates the re-establishment of species in the wild

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

[Guidance on translocations for biodiversity in Flanders](#)

23. Has your country considered, developed or implemented re-establishment projects for any species/population listed on AEWA Table 1? (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 2.4)

No

24. Has your country used the AEWA conservation Guidelines on the translocation of waterbirds for conservation purposes?

Notice: Before clicking on the above hyperlink, please keep pressing the **Ctrl button** on your keyboard to open the link in a new tab.

Not applicable

Please explain

>>> No re-establishments or translocation of waterbird species were planned or took place

4.5 Introductions

25. Does your country have legislation in place, which prohibits the introduction into the environment of non-native species of animals and plants which may be detrimental to migratory waterbirds? (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 2.5.1)

Yes, and being enforced

Please provide the following details: title of legislation, year of adoption, institution that adopted it, institution that enforces it. Please clarify whether legislation applies to/is consistent throughout the entire country or only to particular states/provinces.

>>> BELGIUM: Regulation (EU) No 1143/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2014 on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species , adopted in 2014, enforced from 2015 FLANDERS: the Government of Flanders Decree concerning species protection and species: Art. 17 prohibits the deliberate introduction into the wild of species under the scope of this Decree, while Art. 21 states that specific derogations for the introduction of alien species can be granted, provided that a prior investigation of the impact demonstrates that there is no chance on adverse consequences for the natural habitats in their range of distribution in the Flemish Region or for animal or plant species that naturally occur in the wild in the Flemish Region. Adopted in 2009, enforced by the Nature Inspection of the Agency for Nature and Forests and the federal judiciary when necessary WALLONIA: Art. 5ter. of the law on nature conservation : The introduction of non-indigenous species or indigenous species of non-indigenous origin in nature is forbidden except for species used for agriculture and forestry. BRUSSELS REGION: Art. 77. of the

Ordinance on nature conservation (1/12/2015) : The introduction of nonindigenous invasive species is forbidden. Art. 75.: the introduction of non-indigenous species is submitted to an authorization. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: Marine Environment Act regarding the protection the marine environment and for marine spatial planning in maritime areas under Belgian jurisdiction (11 December 2022 - Art 15), legal prohibition to deliberately introduce invasive species / legal ground to prohibit the undeliberate introduction of invasive alien species via ballast water, adopted by Parliament, enforced by authorities having a competency at sea (MUMM, DG Environment, Navy, Shipping Police, DG Shipping), applicable to the Belgian maritime area; Royal Decree concerning the species protection in the maritime regions under the jurisdiction of Belgium d.d. 21/12/2001 The Ballast water convention has also been implemented in Belgian law; Royal Decree in execution of the Ballast water convention, 2017, enforced by DG Shipping, applicable to the Belgian maritime area.

26. Does your country impose legislative requirements on zoos, private collections, etc. in order to avoid the accidental escape of captive animals belonging to non-native species which may be detrimental to migratory waterbirds? (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 2.5.2)

Yes, and being enforced

Please provide the following details: title of the document, year of adoption, institution that adopted it, institution that enforces it. Please clarify whether legislation applies to/is consistent throughout the entire country or only to particular states/provinces.

>>> - Article 3 of the Royal decision of 10/08/1998 on the recognition of zoos states that all animal enclosures must be designed and kept in a way that in all circumstances escaping of animals is impossible and the safety of the animals, visitors and staff is guaranteed at all times. Enforcement in Flanders by the Animal welfare Service of the Government of Flanders and in the Brussels Region by the Service of Animal Welfare of Brussels Environment.- Regulation (EU) No 1143/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2014 on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species , adopted in 2014, enforced from 2015, states in Article 8 that licences for researching or keeping alien species are subject to the condition that they are physically isolated and cannot escape and that an emergency plan in case of escape should be made by the applicant. Enforcement in Flanders by the Nature Inspection of the Agency for Nature and Forests; in Wallonia by the Public Service of Wallonia, in Brussels by Environment Brussels and at the Federal level by the Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment. WALLONIA: Government bill of 14 January 2014 on the captivity conditions for non pets alien animal species: it specifies the measures for zoos and other animal parks; Its article 3 is on the the infrastructures and buildings to host those animals and to prevent their escape.

27. Has your country considered, developed or implemented programmes to control or eradicate non-native species of waterbird so as to prevent negative impacts on indigenous species? (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 2.5.3)

Yes

Please provide information on each non-native species for which relevant action has been undertaken

Ruddy Duck / *Oxyura jamaicensis*

For Ruddy Duck / *Oxyura jamaicensis*

Control or eradication programme developed and being implemented

African Sacred Ibis / *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

For African Sacred Ibis / *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

Control or eradication programme developed and being implemented

28. Has your country considered, developed or implemented programmes to control or eradicate other non-native species (in particular aquatic weeds and terrestrial predators) so as to prevent negative impacts on migratory waterbirds? (AEWA Action Plan, paragraphs 2.5.3 and 4.3.10 and Resolution 5.15)

Yes

Please list the non-native species for which relevant action has been undertaken

>>> Although no formal program has been implemented with regards to invasive, aquatic plants so far, numerous public authorities have engaged in its control, especially in response to the listing of such species on the Union list in 2016 (EU Regulation nr. 1143/2014). Target species for eradication/management are: Lagarosiphon major, Elodea callitrichoides, Elodea canadensis, Elodea nuttallii, Egeria densa, Hydrilla verticillata, Crassula helmsii, Lemna minuta, Lemna turionifera, Azolla filiculoides, Hydrocotyle ranunculoides, Ludwigia grandiflora.

Please provide further information for each relevant programme

>>> BELGIUM (all regions): an early warning system has been connected to the citizen-science data gathering platforms <https://waarnemingen.be/species/invasieve-exoten/> - <https://observations.be/species/invasieve-exoten/>. Information on invasive species and the assessment of their potential impact on native biodiversity is gathered on <https://ias.biodiversity.be/>.

FLANDERS: Information on management of invasive species is disseminated via the website www.ecopedia.be and a technical handbook on the management on invasive alien plants, available in print and pdf.

WALLONIA: Preventive and control actions against invasive alien species are coordinated through a dedicated interdepartmental unit (CiEi) that has been established in 2009 within the strategic plan of the Administration. This unit is in charge of the following tasks: . Identify priority pathways and develop preventive and regulatory measures accordingly, including guidelines for plantations, soil movement, green waste management, etc. Prepare a coherent legislative framework to regulate preventive and control actions against invasive alien species in Wallonia. . Set up an early warning system in cooperation with the other regions in the country and nature conservation NGOs. Identify and disseminate best practices for the management of invasive alien plants and animals; . Coordinate control action plans against priority species like giant hogweed, Japanese mosquito, Canada goose or muskrat. . Conduct studies to assess non-native species invasiveness in the field and compile information for risk analyses of priority species. . Communicate and develop capacity building actions towards field managers and the general public. Nature Parks, many River Contracts and cities which have either a Municipality Plan for Nature Conservation or a 'Roadside management plan' actively manage invasive alien species at a local scale.

BRUSSELS REGION: participation on the Early Warning/Rapid Response installed on the Belgian Level by waarnemingen.be/observations.be. Daily management of invasive alien species in urban parks, Natura 2000 sites and nature reserves.

29. Has your country used the AEWA Guidelines on avoidance of introductions of non-native waterbird species?

Notice: Before clicking on the above hyperlink, please keep pressing the **Ctrl button** on your keyboard to open the link in a new tab.

No

Please explain the reasons. What was used instead as a basis for dealing with the issue?

>>> There is no specific approach for waterbirds. Different laws on nature conservation already forbid in general the introduction in nature of all non-native species.

4.6 Seabirds

The country has maritime territories and the AEWA seabird conservation priorities are relevant for the country:

Yes

30. Does your country have comprehensive data on seabird by-catch? (Resolution 7.6)

No

Please explain the reasons.

>>> There is no monitoring for the by-catch of seabirds because the risk of by-catch has been assessed as very limited for the used gear-types (mainly trawling).

When and how do you plan to fill these data gaps?

>>> No actions planned. A desktop assessment has been done on the effects of fisheries on seabirds indicating no significant risk for the methods used. See: Depestele, J.et al. (2008). WAKO: Evaluatie van de milieu-impact van WARrelneten boomKOrvisserij op het Belgisch deel van de Noordzee: Eindrapport. ILVO-Visserij.

31. Have you assessed the impact of by-catch by artisanal fisheries to AEWA-listed seabirds? (Resolution 7.6)

No

Please explain the reasons.

>>> The risk of by-catch is very limited for the methods used by recreational fisheries (fishing rod, small-scale shrimp trawlers ...).

When and how do you plan to do that?

>>> As the risk is assessed low for the artisanal methods used, no immediate actions are planned.

32. Have you assessed the impact of artisanal/recreational fisheries on seabirds' prey? (Resolution 7.6)

No

Please explain the reasons.

>>> Recreational fisheries target other species than seabirds do.

When and how do you plan to do that?

>>> As the impact is assessed low, no immediate actions are planned.

33. Has your country undertaken steps towards the adoption/application of measures to reduce the incidental catch of seabirds and combat Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing practices in the Agreement Area? (Resolution 3.8)

No

Please explain the reasons

>>> Incidental catch was assessed a very low risk with the fishing methods that are used by professional and recreational fisheries.

Field for additional information (optional)

>>> For an assessment of the impacts see: Depestele, J.et al. (2008). WAKO: Evaluatie van de milieu-impact van WARrelneten boomKORvisserij op het Belgisch deel van de Noordzee: Eindrapport. ILVO-Visserij.

34. Does your country have data on illegal killing and egg harvesting of AEWA-listed seabirds? (Resolution 7.6)

Not Applicable

Please explain the reasons.

>>> With regards to seabirds, no hunting or egg harvesting is allowed at all. No illegal hunting or egg harvesting has been observed as well.

35. Have you assessed the extent and impact of hunting, egg harvesting, and any illegal taking (of birds and/or eggs) on AEWA-listed seabirds? (Resolution 7.6)

- Extent of hunting
- Extent of egg harvesting
- Extent of illegal taking of birds
- Extent of illegal taking of eggs
- Impact of hunting
- Impact of egg harvesting
- Impact of illegal taking of birds
- Impact of illegal taking of eggs

Extent of hunting:

Not applicable

Please explain the reasons.

>>> With regards to seabirds, no hunting or egg harvesting is allowed at all. No illegal hunting or egg harvesting has been observed as well.

Extent of egg harvesting:

Not applicable

Please explain the reasons.

>>> With regards to seabirds, no hunting or egg harvesting is allowed at all. No illegal hunting or egg harvesting has been observed as well.

Extent of illegal taking of birds:

Not applicable

Please explain the reasons.

>>> With regards to seabirds, no hunting or egg harvesting is allowed at all. No illegal hunting or egg harvesting has been observed as well.

Extent of illegal taking of eggs:

Not applicable

Please explain the reasons.

>>> With regards to seabirds, no hunting or egg harvesting is allowed at all. No illegal hunting or egg harvesting has been observed as well.

Impact of hunting:

Not applicable

Please explain the reasons.

>>> With regards to seabirds, no hunting or egg harvesting is allowed at all. No illegal hunting or egg harvesting has been observed as well.

Impact of egg harvesting:

Not applicable

Please explain the reasons.

>>> With regards to seabirds, no hunting or egg harvesting is allowed at all. No illegal hunting or egg harvesting has been observed as well.

Impact of illegal taking of birds:

Not applicable

Please explain the reasons.

>>> With regards to seabirds, no hunting or egg harvesting is allowed at all. No illegal hunting or egg harvesting has been observed as well.

Impact of illegal taking of eggs:

Not applicable

Please explain the reasons.

>>> With regards to seabirds, no hunting or egg harvesting is allowed at all. No illegal hunting or egg harvesting has been observed as well.

36. Have you identified those seabird colonies at risk from invasive non-native species? (Resolution 7.6)

Not Applicable

Please explain the reasons.

>>> There are only a few seabird colonies in Belgium. These are well monitored, no immediate general risk from invasive non-native species has been identified.

There was as possible predation problem with an individual American mink that was identified quickly during the monitoring, and was dealt with promptly.

37. Have you identified the key coastal and at-sea areas where responses to oil spills would be most urgently required in relation to the presence of AEWA-listed seabirds? (Resolution 7.6)

Yes

Please provide details, including reference or attach a file, if available.

>>> The relative importance of coastal and at-sea areas are known, as well as their temporal use by seabirds. As such, in case of oil spills, it is possible to prioritize in relation to the risk to seabirds.

Are AEWA seabirds and seabird sites adequately represented within existing oil spill response plans?

Yes

Please provide details, including references or attach a file, if available.

>>> In the procedure for oil spills, it is foreseen that the institution who has the knowledge of the important sites for seabirds is represented, in order to advise from this expertise on the adequate response.

On top of the more general oil spill response plans with regards to the broad environment, there's also a specific oil spill response plan with regards to seabirds, in order to have a quick response chain to scale up the treatment of soiled birds if necessary.

38. (Applicable only to countries bordering the North or Baltic Sea) Has your country undertaken a program of data-collection to validate models of population level impacts of offshore windfarms in the North and Baltic Seas on AEWA seabirds? (Resolution 7.6)

Yes

Please provide details, including references or attach a file, if available.

>>> The licence of offshore windfarms is linked with an extensive monitoring program of the environmental impact (including effects on birds). This monitoring program is coordinated by the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS).

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

https://odnature.naturalsciences.be/downloads/winmonbe2013/winmonbe_report.pdf

39. Have you identified priority sites by filling gaps in the Critical Site Network for seabirds (breeding, non-breeding, pelagic and coastal areas)? (Resolution 7.6)

Not Applicable

Please explain the reasons.

>>> Priority sites were already identified and have been designated as SPA under the EU Birds Directive or as Ramsar site.

Pressures and Responses

5. Habitat Conservation

5.1 Habitat Inventories

40. Has your country identified the network of all sites of international and national importance for the migratory waterbird species/populations listed on Table 1? (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 3.1.2)

Yes

Please provide full reference, e.g. title, year, authors, etc. or a web link

>>> FLANDERS: Most sites of international importance have been designated as SPA in the framework of the EU Birds Directive, some also in the framework of the Ramsar convention. In 2007, an extensive book about nature in a European Union Natura 2000 context in Flanders and the Belgian part of the North Sea has been published by the Institute for Nature and Forest Research (INBO).

Based on the results of waterbird monitoring projects, a list of internationally important waterbird sites in Flanders is yearly updated by INBO. Most of these sites are also listed as Important Bird Areas (Birdlife), although a formal update of this list is needed.

There are no clear criteria for sites of national importance, although most of them are part of an ecological network and designated as nature reserves.

WALLONIA:- There are 4 sites registered on the Ramsar List of wetland's of international importance in Wallonia: "Les Marais d'Harchies Hensies Pommeroel", the "Vallée de la Haute-Sûre", the "Hautes Fagnes" and the "Grotte des Emotions" which are respectively marshes, a transboundary wetland, peatlands and a karst.

The 3 first sites are particularly important for migratory birds. Besides these, there are Nature reserves (government nature reserve and chartered nature reserve) and wetland's of biological interest. Natura 2000 sites are also of great importance in Wallonia for migratory waterbirds

BRUSSELS CAPITAL REGION: No nationally or internationally important sites were identified - Brussels has no designated Birds Directive areas.

FEDERAL LEVEL - BELGIAN MARINE TERRITORY : Two inventories have been made:-- Deraus S., Verfaillie E., Van Lancker V., Courtens W., Stienen E.W.M., Hostens K., Moolaert I., Hillewaert H., Mees J., Deneudt K., Deckers P., Cuvelier D., Vincx M., Degraer S., 2007, A biological valuation map for the Belgian part of the North Sea: BWZee, Final report, Research in the framework of the BELSPO programme "Global chance, ecosystems and biodiversity"- SPSD II, March 2007, pp. 99 (+ Annexes). - Courtens, W. en E.W.M. Stienen. 2006. Marine biological valuation of seabirds in the Belgian Part of the North Sea. INBO rapport A.2005.122: 25pp.

41. If your country has identified or is currently identifying the networks of sites of international and national importance, were the AEWA Conservation Guidelines on the preparation of site inventories for migratory waterbirds used?

Notice: Before clicking on the above hyperlink, please keep pressing the **Ctrl button** on your keyboard to open the link in a new tab.

Yes

Please provide details

>>> The review was done according to the method reached out by the secretariat.

Field for additional information (optional)

>>> The site list is quite up to date but the species-list per site needs some update, due to real changes (dynamics of bird presence, sometimes in relation to site management, ...). This is planned in the near future but takes more dedicated work and time than was available during the review period. For Birds Directive sites, all Standard Data Forms for Flanders have been updated recently.

42. Has your country reviewed and confirmed to the AEWA Secretariat its inventory of the known nationally and internationally important sites through the process developed by the Technical Committee and launched by the Secretariat in August 2020? (AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Action 3.1(a))

YES, it was accepted and concluded

Please indicate when it was submitted and when it was accepted

>>> The inventory was submitted on the 31st of December 2020. Some clarifications on this version were asked, these have been sent to the Secretariat on the 5th of January 2021. As we did not get further questions, we assume the inventory was accepted. As far as we can check, we did not receive a formal confirmation of acceptance.

5.2. Conservation of Areas and Habitats

43. Has your country assessed the future implications of climate change for protected areas and other sites important for waterbirds (i.e. resilience of sites to climate change)? (Resolution 5.13)

For one or more single sites

Yes

Please give details as to where relevant information about these assessments have been published (either as publications or web-link).

>>> FLANDERS: From May 2017 until April 2021, the project FutureFloodplains was carried out by different scientific partners, focusing on the modelling of changing ecosystem services of floodplains (including biodiversity), by considering different mid- and long-term scenarios of socio-ecological changes (including climate change). The research output is meant to help decision making in order to sustainably manage these floodplains.

The Life project Sparc (www.natuurenbos.be/sparc) studies climate change effects along the Scheldt river and focuses on enhanced flood safety by restoring flooding areas that are designed as wetlands with high nature values. The project started in 2017, would run until 2022, but has been extended to 2025.

WALLONIA: a measure from the Air and Climate Plan foresees the protection and restoration of peatlands.

For the national protected area network

Yes

Please give details as to where relevant information about these assessments have been published (either as publications or web-link).

>>> FLANDERS: general implications of climate change on biodiversity have been assessed in the 2014 Nature Report by the Institute of Nature and Forest research WALLONIA: Développement d'indicateurs de l'impact des changements climatiques sur les oiseaux en Wallonie; Aves, pôle ornithologique de Natagora - LAUDELOUT A., PAQUET J.Y. BRUSSELS REGION: general implications of climate change on biodiversity have been assessed in the 2012 Nature Report by Brussels Environment.

44. Which sites that were identified as important, either internationally or nationally, for Table 1 migratory waterbird species/populations have been designated as protected areas under the national legislation and have management plans that are being implemented, including with the aim to increase resilience to the effects of climate change? (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 3.2.1, AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Target 3.3)

Please report separately on internationally important sites, nationally important sites and buffer zones.

Reporting on designation and management of internationally important sites

All sites of international importance

(sites recognized as having international importance for migratory waterbirds following criteria of, for instance, the AEWA Critical Site Network, the Ramsar Convention, the EU Birds Directive (SPAs), the Bern Convention Emerald Network, the BirdLife International's Important Bird Areas)

Total number

>>> 252

You have attached the following documents to this answer.

[Sites_of_international_importance_for_migratory_waterbirds_-_rationaleMOP9_reporting.docx](#) - Rationale for number and surface of protected sites included

Total area (ha)

>>> 344180

Number of internationally important sites under national protection designation

>>> 208

Area of international importance under national protection designation (ha)

>>> 344180

Please rate the effectiveness of the national protection designation

High

Please provide details and reasons for the high level of effectiveness.

>>> All plans or programmes that might have an impact on the birds or their habitat in SPA or Ramsar-sites

have to be assessed thoroughly. No significant impact is allowed.

Internationally important protected sites with a management plan in place which is being implemented

Number of sites

>>> 208

Area (in ha)

>>> 344180

Please rate the effectiveness of the management measures

Moderate

Please provide details and reasons for the lower level of effectiveness.

>>> Management plans offer clear objectives for the site but do not directly impose a certain management in the field.

Internationally important sites with a management plan in place which is being implemented and includes management objectives related to maintaining or increasing the resilience of existing ecological networks, including resilience to climate change

Number of sites

>>> 208

Area (in ha)

>>> 344180

Please rate the effectiveness of the climate resilience measures

Moderate

Please provide details and reasons for the lower level of effectiveness.

>>> Management objectives for the site do not imply directly water management outside of the sites. For lowlying areas that depend on water supply from upstream, the water management upstreams, especially in longer dry periods, may have a significant impact.

DESIGNATION GAP FILLING

Being developed

Please provide starting date and expected date of finalisation

>>> In 2021, the 50th anniversary-year of the Ramsar-agreement, a re-assessment of important waterbird areas has been carried out in 2021 to identify potential new Ramsar sites in Flanders, based on the Ramsar-criteria. The assessment also analysed if the relevant sites already had another protected status in order to assess the possible added value in terms of protection. See <https://purews.inbo.be/ws/portalfiles/portal/95963849/INBO.A.4660AG%20v2.pdf>
A review of the nationally important and other IBA's has been foreseen but has not started yet. Exact timing depends on finding funding for dedicated staff to do this task.

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

[Re-assessment of sites to the Ramsar criteria for waterbirds](#)

MANAGEMENT GAP FILING

Being developed

Please provide starting date and expected date of finalisation

>>> In 2021, the 50th anniversary-year of the Ramsar-agreement, a re-assessment of important waterbird areas has been carried out in 2021 to identify potential new Ramsar sites in Flanders, based on the Ramsar-criteria. The assessment also analysed if the relevant sites already had another protected status in order to assess the possible added value in terms of protection. See <https://purews.inbo.be/ws/portalfiles/portal/95963849/INBO.A.4660AG%20v2.pdf>
A review of the nationally important and other IBA's has been foreseen but has not started yet. Exact timing depends on finding funding for dedicated staff to do this task.

46. Is the network of nationally and internationally important sites for migratory waterbirds integrated into your country's water- and land-use policies and planning and decision-making processes? (AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Target 3.4)

Yes, partially

Please provide details and reasons for partial integration

>>> Internationally important sites have a formal status and are integrated through the implementation of the EU Birds Directive. There is no formal status for nationally important sites giving them a general protection, although (parts of) specific sites are often protected as nature conservation areas in land use planning, and as such involved in decision-making processes.

47. Has your country used the AEWA Conservation Guidelines on the management of key sites for migratory waterbirds?

Notice: Before clicking on the above hyperlink, please keep pressing the **Ctrl button** on your keyboard to open the link in a new tab.

No

Please explain the reasons. What guidance has been used instead?

>>> Since the reported sites of international importance are Natura 2000 sites, they will be managed based on EU guidance.

48. Has the Critical Site Network (CSN) Tool for the AEWA area been accessed and used in your country? (Resolution 7.9)

Notice: Before clicking on the above hyperlink, please keep pressing the **Ctrl button** on your keyboard to open the link in a new tab.

Yes

Please give examples of how you have used the CSN Tool

>>> To check whether all relevant sites were involved.

49. Has your country identified priority measures required to maintain or increase the extent and quality of waterbird habitats in the wider environment? (AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Action 4.3(a))

Yes

Please provide details, alternatively attach a file or a link to a resource presenting the outcomes of the prioritisation

>>> In the management plans for the Birds Directive sites, priority measures to reach a favorable habitat for the species have been identified, within and - where applicable- also outside the boundaries.

In the recent context of the EU Nature Restoration Regulation, restoration measures for habitats of waterbird species and for rivers/water courses in general will be worked out in the National Restoration Plan.

50. Following MOP7, has your country been involved in the establishment of innovative, international, multi-stakeholder partnerships to guide the development and implementation of habitat management, creation and restoration projects in the wider environment? (AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Action 4.4(a))

No

Please explain the reasons

>>> Relevant projects were already running before MOP7.

Optionally you can provide additional information on section 5.2. Conservation of Areas and Habitats

>>> The number of sites of international importance contains sites which completely or partly overlap (Ramsar vs SPA).

For the Flemish region, Special Protection Areas under the Birds Directive that protect at least one of the AEWA species have been considered, together with the Ramsar-sites.

For the selection of sites of (inter)national importance in the Walloon region, the criteria used for the SPA's: at least 15 % of the total amount wintering birds of one species or at least 1000 birds counted. Also included are the sites of international importance (Ramsar) in the Walloon region.

For the Federal level (Belgian part of the North Sea) the 3 Birds Directive SPA's were included, one with overlap with a Ramsar-site at sea.

The area (surface) reported is the area of the SPA's; no correction has been made for the parts of Ramsar-sites that might fall outside of the boundaries of the SPA's- this was due to GIS-technical difficulties to sum up the whole and avoid double-counting. More detail about the rationale: see the AEWA-sites report of 2020, or the rationale provided at question 44.

Pressures and Responses

6. Management of Human Activities

6.1. Hunting

51. Does the legislation of your country implement the principle of sustainable use of waterbirds, as envisaged in the AEWA Action Plan, taking into account the full geographical range of the waterbird populations concerned and their life history characteristics? (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 4.1.1; AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Target 2.2)

Yes

Please provide details on how this is achieved and reference to the relevant legislation

>>> Hunting laws fully implement the sustainable use principle for waterbird species. Hunting is only allowed on a limited number of abundant species.

In Flanders, the most important region for migratory waterbirds, all hunting in sites of international importance for wintering waterbirds is suspended from 15 november on, so that the most important sites are free from hunting and/or hunting disturbance during the period with the biggest concentrations of migratory waterbirds (that are most often not the target of hunting).

Wallonia: hunting is only allowed for the following waterbird species in Wallonia and only for the time period specified: *Anas platyrhynchos* (from 15 August until 31 January); *Fulica atra* (from Octobre until 31 January) and *Branta canadensis* (invasive alien species: from 1 August until 15 March).

In the Brussels Capital Region and at sea (Federal) no hunting is allowed at all.

Field for additional information (optional)

>>> FLANDERS: Hunting Decree of 24/07/1991: WALLONIA: Loi sur la chasse dd 28 Février 1882, BRUSSELS CAPITAL REGION: Ordinance on Nature Conservation, 1/03/2012. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: Royal Decree concerning the species protection in the maritime regions under the jurisdiction of Belgium d.d. 21 December 2001.

52. Has your country phased out the use of lead shot for hunting in wetlands? (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 4.1.4; AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Action 2.2(d))

Fully

When was lead shot use in wetlands banned?

>>> FLANDERS: A total ban on the use of leadshot has been adopted in 2003. WALLONIA: A ban on the use of leadshot in wetlands has been adopted in 2005, it has been extended to 100m around wetlands in 2024 (use and possession during hunting). BRUSSELS: Hunting is not allowed in the Brussels region. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: All hunting is prohibited since 1999

What legislation is in place?

>>> FLANDERS: A total ban on the use of leadshot has been adopted in 2003, by a Flemish Government Decree from September 19, 2003, on the use of firearms and ammunition for hunting in the Flemish Region. The ban on leadshot is repeated in the Decision of the Flemish government of 25 april 2014 - holding the conditions for hunting practices. This law is enforced by Nature Inspection. WALLONIA: Walloon Government arrest on the use of firearms and shots (22 September 2005). Article 5bis of this arrest forbids the use of lead shots at less than 100 meters from a marsh, a lake, a pond, a water reservoir, a river or a canal. BRUSSELS: Hunting is not allowed in the Brussels region. It is enforced by the Nature and Forest department. BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: all hunting is prohibited since 1999

Who enforces this legislation?

>>> FLANDERS: the Nature Inspection of the Agency of Nature and Forest. WALLONIA: L'unité anti-braconnage (UAB) du Département de la Nature et des Forêts (DNF)

Has assessment of compliance with the legislation been undertaken?

Yes

Please explain how this was assessed.

>>> FLANDERS: Nature Inspection controls hunters in the field, amongst others, on the use of the appropriate munition and the species that have been shot.

Please explain what the compliance with legislation was found to be:

Good (almost full compliance)

Please provide details and reasons for the high level of compliance.

>>> In Flanders, all lead shot is forbidden for hunting, so for a hunter there's no possibility to mistake. There

has also been awareness raising within the hunting community of the detrimental effects of lead shot, poisoning wildlife.

Please indicate any known reasons for good compliance or any barriers to compliance. Please attach any published or unpublished references.

>>> FLANDERS: The fact that buying and owning lead-shot is not forbidden (only the use for hunting practices is forbidden, not for e.g. sport shooting) makes it not easy to act strongly. Only lead-shot in the gun barrel or lead-pellets in the shot animal can lead to proper prosecution.

Has measurement of impact of the legislation been undertaken i.e. where there was a problem of lead poisoning in waterbirds, has this been reduced?

No

If appropriate, please explain the reasons for not doing this.

>>> FLANDERS: there is no information of sites where there were significant problems with lead poisoning in waterbirds, so the impact of the ban of lead shot could not be assessed.

53. Are there measures in your country to reduce/eliminate illegal taking? (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 4.1.6; AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Action 2.2(e))

Yes

How would you rate the effectiveness of the measures?

High

Please provide details and reasons for the high level of effectiveness.

>>> There is a long tradition of strict legal provisions for hunting and taking and thorough control. In order to keep hunting socially acceptable, the hunting community itself also pursues high standards for the hunting practice.

54. Is legally binding proficiency testing for hunters, including amongst other things bird identification, in place in your country? (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 4.1.8; AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Target 2.2)

Yes

Please provide details and reference to the relevant legislation

>>> In order to have a hunting permit, you have to pass an exam, which involves species identification.

FLANDERS: Decision of the Flemish Government of 25 April 2014 on the administrative organisation of hunting (chapter V: hunting exam). WALLONIE: Arrêté du Gouvernement wallon de 2 Avril 1998 organisant l'examen de chasse en Région wallonne.

55. Are best practice codes and standards for hunting in place in your country in support of enforcement of hunting laws and regulations? (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 4.1.7; AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Target 2.3)

Yes

What do these cover?

Club Affiliation

Emergency closure of hunting in cases of exceptionally unfavourable or endangering conditions

Please provide details on each item selected above

>>> FLANDERS, WALLONIA: Hunters need to pass a hunting exam before being entitled to a hunting licence. This exam consists of a theoretical part, including bird identification, and a practical part, including safety procedures and shooting competence. Independent hunters and game management units need to provide a 'fauna management plan' which contains population goals for each huntable species, data on habitat quality and quantity, measures for a sustainable game management, ... In the 'game report', game management units and independent hunters also need to report the estimated spring population state of game species within their hunting ground. FLANDERS: club affiliation is encouraged as not affiliated hunters have (limited) restrictions on hunting opportunities.

Please rate the degree of application of these best practice codes and standards:

High (almost always applied)

Please provide details and reasons for the high degree of application

>>> Most hunters are affiliated in clubs.

Please rate the effectiveness of these best practice codes and standards in supporting enforcement of hunting laws and regulations:

High (very effective in supporting enforcement of hunting laws and regulations)

Please provide details and reasons for the high degree of effectiveness

>>> Hunting clubs stimulate self-control of the hunters and high standards for the hunting practice.

56. Has your country used the AEWA Conservation Guidelines on sustainable harvest of migratory birds?

Notice: Before clicking on the above hyperlink, please keep pressing the **Ctrl button** on your keyboard to open the link in a new tab.

Yes

Please provide details

>>> FLANDERS: Participation in the AEWA International Species Management Plan for the Svalbard population of the pink-footed goose, Greylag Goose and Barnacle Goose. Reporting of the number of harvested species mentioned is required for the operational plans. In other regions of Belgium: no hunting of these birds.

6.2. Ecotourism

57. Is wetland- and waterbird-related ecotourism integrated into your country's national tourism development strategies or other relevant national strategies? (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 4.2.1; AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Action 2.5(c))

Yes

Please describe and provide details

>>> In general ecotourism and biodiversity is gaining interest in national tourism strategies. For a limited amount of sites, waterbirds are used as the unique selling point (USP).

58. Are there existing ecotourism initiatives in your country specifically based on migratory waterbirds and their habitats? (AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Target 2.5)

Yes

Please describe how many initiatives are in place and provide details for each of them (add links to relevant online resources or attach other available materials)

>>> Visitors centers around larger wetlands focusing on wetlands and large amounts of migrating waterbirds as USP: Zwin, Blankaart, Uitkerkse Polders, marais d'Harchies, the Virelles Mere, the natural parc of the Haute Sure Valley, ...

Were any of the initiatives described above launched after 2018?

No

Please rank the degree to which these initiatives are designed to deliver both conservation and community benefits:

Low

Please provide details and explain the reasons

>>> Initiatives come mostly from the nature reserve management; the rural community surrounding it is often not very involved in the design of the ecotourism initiatives and sometimes do not support (publicly) the nature conservation initiatives as it often conflicts with modern agricultural practices. On the other hand, initiatives come out independently from the local community without involving the nature reserve management (e.g. dairy farm products, bed & breakfast, bicycle rental, ...).

Please rank the degree to which these dual benefits are being delivered in practice:

Medium

Please provide details and the reasons for successful delivery and barriers to fuller delivery

>>> Ecotourism based on the presence of large numbers of migratory waterbirds has a seasonal component, especially when based on seasonal presence of birds (mainly winter). For investors a year-round approach is generally more economic.

6.3. Other human activities

59. Have restrictions on use of lead fishing weights been introduced in your country? (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 4.3.12). When answering this question please also consider question

80 in chapter 7 - Research and monitoring.

No

If appropriate, please provide further details.

>>> Although no official restrictions have been introduced, the Advising Interparliamentary Council of the Benelux has requested the governments to promote the use of ecological and degradable alternatives in sport fishing practice and to sensitize all actors involved in sport fishing for the problems and harmful consequences of lead weights.

60. Does your country have legislation in place, which provides for Strategic Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Assessment (SEA/EIA) of activities potentially negatively affecting natural habitats or wildlife? (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 4.3.1; AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Target 3.5)

Yes and being implemented

Does this legislation apply to the entire country or only to particular states/provinces thereof?

Entire country

Please provide details

>>> Each region has its own legislation, based on European Directives. European directive 2001/42/CE of 27 June 2001 ensures that plans and programmes likely to have significant effects on the environment are made subject to an environmental assessment, prior to their approval or authorisation. Consultation with the public is a key feature of environmental assessment procedures. FLANDERS: Decree concerning general provisions relating to environmental policy Decree of 5 April 1995 concerning general provisions relating to environmental policy and the Government of Flanders Decree of 10/12/2004 provide the procedure and a list of activities for which an Environmental Impact Report has to be written. According to art. 36ter of the Decree for Nature Conservation, for every activity, plan or program that needs to be licenced and that might have a negative impact on a SPA, there has to be made an appropriate assessment. Federal level: Belgian marine territory: royal Decrees (in pursuance of the MMM law of 11/12/2022): the RD of 09/09/2003 establishing the rules related to the environmental impact assessment and the royal decree of 26/04/2024 establishing the procedures for granting permits and authorisations for some activities in the marine spaces. WALLONIA: Environmental assessments of plans and programs are under the Walloon environmental code. This directive has been transposed in the BCR in the order of 18 March 2004. BRUSSELS REGION: Ordinance of 1er mars 2012 on nature conservation, Titre II, Chapitre 5 'Evaluation appropriée des incidences des plans et projets sur les sites protégés et critères de décision', which covers the appropriate impact assessment of plans and projects on Natura 2000 sites and natural and forest reserves + art. 85 appropriate impact assessment on derogations of article 47 §2 and of article 48.'

Do the SEA/EIA processes consider waterbirds and habitats on which they depend?

Yes

Please provide details

>>> European directive 2001/42/CE of 27 June 2001 ensures that plans and programmes likely to have significant effects on the environment are made subject to an environmental assessment, prior to their approval or authorisation. Consultation with the public is a key feature of environmental assessment procedures. FLANDERS: Decree concerning general provisions relating to environmental policy Decree of 5 April 1995 concerning general provisions relating to environmental policy and the Government of Flanders Decree of 10/12/2004 provide the procedure and a list of activities for which an Environmental Impact Report has to be written. According to art. 36ter of the Decree for Nature Conservation, for every activity, plan or program that needs to be licenced and that might have a negative impact on a SPA, there has to be made an appropriate assessment. Federal level: Belgian marine territory: royal Decrees (in pursuance of the MMM law of 20/01/1999): the RD of 09/09/2003 establishing the rules related to the environmental impact assessment and the royal decree of the 07/09/2003 establishing the procedures for granting permits and authorisations for some activities in the marine spaces. WALLONIA: Environmental assessments of plans and programs are under the Walloon environmental code. This directive has been transposed in the BCR in the order of 18 March 2004. BRUSSELS REGION: Ordinance of 1st March 2012 on nature conservation, Titre II, Chapitre 5 'Evaluation appropriée des incidences des plans et projets sur les sites protégés et critères de décision', which covers the appropriate impact assessment of plans and projects on Natura 2000 sites and natural and forest reserves + art. 85 appropriate impact assessment on derogations of article 47 §2 and of article 48.'

Do the SEA/EIA processes include cumulative impact assessment?

Other

Please provide details

>>> All impacts from the existing activities in the current (reference) situation at the site level are taken into account. Cumulative effects on e.g. flyway level are not.

Do the SEA/EIA processes include public participation?

Yes

Please provide details

>>> The European Union has established a mix of mandatory and discretionary procedures to assess environmental impacts. European Union Directive on Environmental Impact Assessments (known as the EIA Directive) has been codified in Directive 2011/92/EU of 13 December 2011. Under the EU directive, an EIA must provide certain information to comply. This Directive has been transposed in Regional policy, and is applied through the environmental and the urbanistic permit procedures. Assessment of the plans and projects in relation to NATURA 2000 sites is provision of the European Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), in particular its article 6(3) and 6(4). The aim of these articles is to reveal negative impacts of plans and projects to coherence of NATURA 2000 network through appropriate assessment (AA) of their possible effects on integrity of the NATURA 2000 sites and in particular in regards to their effect on species and habitats that are sites target features. If impacts are detected such plans and projects have to be either avoided or amended, or if imperative reasons of overriding public interest are proved compensatory measures in favour of NATURA 2000 have to be taken to ensure overall coherence of the NATURA 2000 network. FLANDERS, WALLONIA: EIA are required under the Environmental code or regional decree (environment and urban permits required). BRUSSELS REGION: Transposed in the Ordinance of 1st March 2012, this principle of the directive has been extended in the Brussels Capital Region to the nature and forest reserves. FLANDERS: The procedure for the Environmental Impact Report includes public consultation. The request for a licence that might have an influence on a SPA is published for public consultation together with the appropriate assessment. FEDERAL: Belgian marine territory: royal Decrees of 09/09/2003 establishing the rules related to the environmental impact assessment and of 26 April 2024 establishing the procedures for granting permits and authorizations for some activities in the marine spaces clearly specify in which cases a public consultation has to be organized.

61. Are there any other legal and/or administrative measures in your country to avoid, mitigate and compensate for adverse impacts of development activities on the sites of national and international importance for migratory birds? (AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Target 3.5)

Yes

Please describe each measure and provide details for each of them

>>> For activities that do not need an SEA/EIA, but that can have an impact and as such need a permit, administrative advice on legal constraints is part of the process to get a permission. The administrative legal advice can lead to small changes to avoid or mitigate the impact or can lead to the refusal of the permission.

Please rank the effectiveness of these measures:

High

Please provide details and the reasons for the high effectiveness

>>> The administrative legal advice is part of a legal procedure. High risk activities or activities at high risk places, need a legal advice in the process and are as such thoroughly assessed.

62. In the last three years, has your country used SEA/EIA for all relevant projects, including energy sector projects such as renewable energy developments and power lines installation, to assess the impact of proposed projects on migratory waterbird species listed on Table 1 and/or habitats/sites on which they depend? (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 4.3.1, Resolution 5.11 and Resolution 5.16; AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Action 3.5(b))

Yes, all proposed projects

Where an SEA/EIA has identified a likelihood of significant negative impacts on migratory waterbirds, have steps been taken to avoid these impacts, including avoidance of protected areas and other sites of importance for migratory waterbirds?

Yes

Please describe the measures put in place

>>> High-voltage powerlines: avoiding important areas, trajectories underground where they pass (near) important bird habitats, putting markers on air lines when power lines cross areas with high collision risks.

63. Do you maintain a record of the cases of adverse impacts of development activities and other pressures on sites of national and international importance for migratory waterbirds in your country? (AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Action 3.5(a))

No

Please explain the reasons.

>>> Legal protection of international important sites prevents such adverse impacts. There can be more general pressures on species though; these pressures and their impact are assessed per species, rather than per site, with every article 12 reporting cycle of the EU Birds Directive.

Estimated number of sites

>>> Through EIA and/or the administrative process to get permits for risky activities, adverse impacts of development activities are assessed and avoided, mitigated or compensated.

Please list those sites with their names, central geographic coordinates and observed impacts.

>>> Effective avoidance, mitigation or compensation is implemented everywhere if it is part of the EIA in order to get a permit.

Estimated number of sites avoided

>>> There is no comprehensive oversight of all administrative advices in permit processes to answer this question. For every activity that might have an impact on a SPA or Ramsar site, the impact is assessed and the permit can only be granted in case there is no significant impact. Because the activity is assessed safe, or through granting conditions are formulated to adjust the plans so negative impact is avoided or mitigated.

Estimated number of sites mitigated

>>> There is no comprehensive oversight of all administrative advices in permit processes to answer this question. For every activity that might have an impact on a SPA or Ramsar site, the impact is assessed and the permit can only be granted in case there is no significant impact. Because the activity is assessed safe, or through granting conditions are formulated to adjust the plans so negative impact is avoided or mitigated.

Estimated number of sites compensated

>>> Compensation, in case for activities that have a significant negative impact, is rare for SPA's as it requires - according to EU legislation - thorough motivation and no other possible less detrimental solutions.

Estimated number of sites

>>> 0

64. Has your country used the AEWA Conservation Guidelines on how to avoid, minimize or mitigate impact of infrastructural developments and related disturbance affecting waterbirds?

Notice: Before clicking on the above hyperlink, please keep pressing the **Ctrl** button on your keyboard to open the link in a new tab.

No

Please explain the reasons. What other guidance has been used instead?

>>> Effective avoidance, mitigation or compensation is implemented everywhere if it is part of the EIA or permit process in order to get a permit granted.

65. Please report on the implementation of Resolution 5.11 on Power Lines and Migratory Waterbirds.

65.1. Are relevant stakeholders, including government agencies, scientific bodies, nongovernmental organisations and the energy sector, being regularly consulted in order to monitor jointly the impacts of power lines on waterbirds and to agree on a common policy of action?

Yes

Please provide details

>>> Elia, the manager of the high-voltage electricity transmission system in Belgium, has required the nature NGOs Aves, Natuurpunt and Vogelbescherming Vlaanderen as well as the Flemish Research Institute for Nature and Forest (INBO) to produce a report "Reducing bird mortality caused by high- and very-high-voltage power lines in Belgium" and map the 'black lines' on the power line network. The first report with national sensitivity map was published in 2012. All available data from bird monitoring projects were put together to build this map. Bird species were classified according to their specific collision risk. According to the local abundance of each species, a "Bird Collision Risk" score has been calculated for each line section. Most of the dangerous power lines are located in areas where major concentrations of waterbirds occur. Elia will use the sensitivity map to adjust the network by placing markers or "diverters" on the lines with high risk in order to try to reduce the number of collision fatalities drastically. For the power lines with the highest risk on the sensitivity map, mitigation measures are progressively applied. The results of the gradually applied mitigation measures are also monitored and evaluated. The project is regularly evaluated and updated.

65.2. Has a baseline of waterbird distribution, population sizes, migrations and movements (including

those between breeding, resting and feeding areas) been established as early as possible in the planning of any power line project, over a period of at least five years, and with particular emphasis on those species known to be vulnerable to electrocution or collision?

Yes

Please provide details

>>> FLANDERS: Methodology is described in the guidelines for EIA for above ground power lines (Richtlijnenboek Bovengrondse Hoogspanningsleidingen; Dienst MER; oktober 2007; 62pag.). Basis is the setting up of a population-ecological modelling and population structure for the baseline situation which then should be compared with the situation after the establishment of the power line. In Flanders a bird-collision risk atlas has been made where waterbird concentrations and seasonal/dayle movements are visualised. This atlas can be consulted any time on <https://geo.inbo.be/windturbines/> in order that early on in every project one can evaluate the possible impact/risks at a given site. WALLONIA: SEA and EIA are applicable for power lines and is supposed to take this information into account.

65.3 If such studies, as described in the question above, have identified any risks, has every effort been made to ensure these are avoided?

Yes

Please provide details.

>>> In the single relevant case, the powerline went underground on the passing through the sensitive area.

65.4. Have the location, route and direction of new power lines been designated on the basis of national zoning maps?

Yes

Please provide details

>>> Location of power lines must be integrated in national zoning maps and the system of land use planning. This process must always be accompanied by a SEA at the level of the spatial planning and EIA for the concrete project.

65.5. Has, wherever possible, the construction of power lines along major migration flyways and in habitats of conservation importance* been avoided, where such construction is likely to have significant effects on waterbirds?

* such as Special Protection Areas under the EU Birds Directive, Important Bird Areas, protected areas, Ramsar sites, the West/Central Asian Site Network for Siberian Crane and other waterbirds and other critical sites as identified by the Critical Site Network (CSN) Tool for the African-Eurasian region.

Not applicable

Please explain the reasons.

>>> The situation of new construction of powerlines has not occurred in the reporting period.

65.6. Are bird-safe designs in the construction of new power infrastructure, including measures designed to reduce electrocution and collisions being used in your country?

Yes

Please provide details

>>> Balls, curls and firefly's on the power lines are and will be progressively being installed on the most sensitive stretches of high-voltage power lines.

65.7. Have those sections of existing power lines that are causing relatively high levels of waterbird injury and/or mortality due to electrocution and/or collision been identified?

Yes

Please provide details

>>> This is an ongoing process. Based on the monitoring of bird mortality due to high- and very-high-voltage power lines in Belgium, a sensitivity map was prepared, indicating those sections that are causing relatively high levels of (water)bird injury and/or mortality due to electrocution and/or collision. The report with national sensitivity map was published in 2012 (see web link). Elia, the manager of the high-voltage electricity transmission system in Belgium, will use the sensitivity map to adjust the network by placing markers or "diverters" on the most dangerous lines in order to try to reduce the number of collision fatalities drastically. For the power lines with the highest risk on the sensitivity map, in 2014 a field study was performed to determine the actual risk, so that Elia can prioritize mitigation measures further. The results of the gradual applied mitigation measures are also monitored and evaluated on a project level.

65.8. Where sections of existing power lines have been identified to cause relatively high levels of waterbird injury and/or mortality due to electrocution and/or collision, have they been modified as a matter of priority?

Partially

Please provide details.

>>> The modification process is ongoing. First the trajectories with the highest risks are modified, others follow step by step.

65.9. Is there in your country regular monitoring and evaluation of the impact of power lines on waterbird populations at the national scale?

Partial

Please provide details.

>>> There is an evaluation of the risk at national level in order to determine the priority for mitigation measures, but there is no assessment on population level.

Bird collisions with powerlines are registered through citizen science platforms. In case of regular reported mortality, the specific power line is subject to more regular monitoring to assess the priority of the line for mitigation measures.

65.10. Is there in your country regular monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of mitigation measures put in place to minimise the impact of power lines on waterbird populations?

Yes

Please provide details.

>>> By monitoring of dead birds, before and after modification of powerlines, the impact of the measures is assessed.

65.11. Have the measures contained in Resolution 5.11. been included in your country's National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and relevant legislation?

No

Please explain the reasons. What are the constraints preventing implementation of this activity?

>>> Strategic Environmental Assessment for power lines is already covered by legislation in force. Other aspects of Resolution 5.11 are covered by the Elia project.

66. Has your country used the AEWA Conservation Guidelines on how to avoid or mitigate impact of electricity power grids on migratory birds in the African-Eurasian region?

Notice: Before clicking on the above hyperlink, please keep pressing the **Ctrl button** on your keyboard to open the link in a new tab.

No

Please explain the reasons. What other guidance has been used instead?

>>> FLANDERS: The Flemish Government has published own methodological guidance documents on EIA for above ground power lines, 2007 and underground tubes, 2007.

67. Please report on the implementation of Resolution 5.16 on Renewable Energy and Migratory Waterbirds.

67.1. Has a national sensitivity and zoning mapping to avoid overlap of renewable energy developments with areas of importance for migratory waterbirds been developed in your country?

Yes

Please provide details

>>> FLANDERS: The Research Institute for Nature and Forest (INBO) has produced an update report of the bird sensitivity map in 2015. The instrument includes information and recommendations concerning the possible effects of planned wind turbines on birds and bats in Flanders. The instrument makes clear what essential steps have to be undertaken for new projects and plans of wind farms, and where the necessary information can be found to proceed these steps. The sensitivity map has several component maps, and can be consulted in a geographical web application on the INBO website. WALLONIA: the impacts of Wind mills and Wind mill farms are included in EIA; BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: In 2023, bird sensitivity maps were produced for the Belgian part or the North Sea as input for the review process of the marine spatial plan. These maps are publicly available and can be used in the EIA. Impacts of windmills and windmill farms are included in the EIA

67.2. Have any international environmental guidelines, recommendations and criteria been followed in

your country for impact assessment of renewable energy developments and the utilization of renewable energy sources?

Yes

Please describe which guidelines, recommendations and criteria have been followed.

>>> FLANDERS: The risk atlas that was already made for Birds (to evaluate windfarm risks), has been enlarged in order to also cover bat collision risks. For this the Eurobats-guidelines provided a major input.

67.3. Is post-construction monitoring being undertaken of the renewable energy installations and associated infrastructure in your country?

Yes

Please share information and lessons learnt from the post-construction monitoring (attach files or add weblinks, if available)

>>> In the permit for wind farms at sea, an obligation for the establishment of a monitoring program to assess the impact on the environment has been integrated.

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

[Project to monitor the effects of wind farms at sea on avifauna](#)

Has adverse effect on migratory waterbirds and their habitats been identified?

No

67.4. Where damage cannot be avoided or mitigated, has compensation for damages to biodiversity been provided?

Not applicable

Please explain

>>> When there is a significant impact, granting a permit is not legally possible.

Operate wind farms in ways that minimise bird mortality, for example by introducing shortterm shutdowns during peak migration and minimising lighting in wind farms.

Not applicable

Please explain the reasons

>>> Windfarms are placed outside migration corridors, so that there is no need for operational shutdowns.

Dismantling of wind turbines in existing installations, should waterbird mortality have an effect on the population status of a species and other mitigation measures have proved insufficient.

Not applicable

Please explain the reasons

>>> No situations have been detected that would require dismantling or greater operational changes. Throughout the building permit process, places with big risks are avoided.

Focusing research efforts on alleviating the negative effects on waterbirds from wind farms, such as the mapping of the main migration corridors and migration crossings for waterbirds also allowing the optimising of wind farm layouts.

Yes

Please provide details

>>> FLANDERS: The areas with important waterbird concentrations, migration corridors and crossings have been mapped and are available as a risk atlas via a web application (<https://geo.inbo.be/windturbines/>)

67.6. Have any specific measures been put in place to assess, identify and reduce potential negative impacts of biofuel production on migratory waterbirds and their habitats?

No

Please explain the reasons. What are the constraints preventing implementation of this activity?

>>> Priority is given to a general approach on the impact of biofuel production on biodiversity. This has been included in the National Biodiversity Strategy: 'Belgium will defend a position aiming at the compulsory inclusion of new environmental criteria within the framework of the revision of Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC. Incentives should be restricted to the promotion of biofuels produced from feedstock that do not create an additional demand for land and do not compete with other uses like food, materials, biodiversity.'

68. Has your country used the following AEWA Conservation Guidelines - Renewable Energy Technologies and Migratory Species: Guidelines for Sustainable Deployment (Resolution 6.11)?

Notice: Before clicking on the above hyperlink, please keep pressing the **Ctrl button** on your keyboard to open the link in a new tab.

No

Please explain the reasons. What other guidance has been used instead?

>>> EU guidances on renewable energy and nature have been used.

69. Is by-catch of waterbirds in fishing gear taking place in your country? (Resolution 3.8) (Please respond to this question only with respect to species, which are NOT considered seabirds. Seabird by-catch is dealt with in section 4.6 Seabirds)

Not applicable

Please explain

>>> In freshwater only the fishing line is authorized which has a low risk of by-catch as it is always supervised.

71. Has any project / initiative been implemented in your country that promotes the integration of cultural and provisioning ecosystem services of migratory waterbirds into policy and decision-making affecting them or their habitats? (AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Target 2.6)

Yes

Please provide details for each project / initiative

>>> In general wetland restoration projects are initiated with nature conservation or flood control as main driver. In the design, possibilities for nature based recreational use are usually integrated (walking trails, bird hides, visitors centers, educational facilities, ...). E.g. flood control areas of the SIGMA-project in the Scheldt-basin.

Rather than the provisioning ecosystem services of waterbirds themselves, integration of cultural and non-consumptive provisioning ecosystem services of their habitats, the wetland, are considered.

Pressures and Responses

7. Research and Monitoring

72. Does your country have in place waterbird monitoring schemes for the AEWA species? (AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Actions 1.4(a) and 1.4(b))

Yes

Covering the breeding period

Guidance: Including pre- and post-breeding sites of concentration, such as moulting sites close to breeding areas

Fully [Guidance: Coverage is full when all waterbird species are covered by monitoring schemes that yield statistically robust estimates of breeding population size and trend at least once in every triennium.]

Please provide details.

>>> FLANDERS: rare breeding birds and colony-breeders are followed up on a yearly basis through the project Bijzondere Broedvogels. More numerous and frequent breeders are monitored in the project Algemene Broedvogels through statistically based plots scattered over the region which are followed up every 3 years.

Is information on drivers of population trends also being collected? (Resolution 8.5; ref. document AEWA/MOP 8.27)

Yes

Please provide details

>>> Partially: monitoring of different trophic levels for the European Water Directive. Land use, crops, water levels, meteorological parameters ...

Are demographic data (age and sex classes) also being collected? (Resolution 8.5; ref. document AEWA/MOP 8.27)

Yes

Please provide details

>>> Partly: for some species information is gathered about breeding succes, often part of a broader framework (e.g. EGMP), local species protection project (e.g. black-tailed godwitt). The methods can vary as there is no method that fits all species. E.g. ratio young vs adults in summer counts of breeding goos species, bruto-territorial-succes for wet grassland breeding birds, ...

Covering the passage period

Fully [Guidance: Coverage is full when all internationally and nationally important sites for passage birds are comprehensively covered at least monthly in the passage period.]

Please provide details.

>>> FLANDERS: all sites with important concentrations of waterbirds are monitored through mid-monthly waterbird counts (15 october - 15 march).

Passing birds outside this period are not fully covered, but counts are then performed at the most important stop-over sites. Platforms exist where citizen-science data are gathered in a structural way (trektellen.nl, observation.org, ...).

BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: monitoring of seabirds is included in the monitoring program established under the EU-Marine Strategy (MSFD)

Is information on drivers of population trends also being collected? (Resolution 8.5; ref. document AEWA/MOP 8.27)

Yes

Please provide details

>>> Partially - Land use, crops, water levels, meteorological parameters ...

Are demographic data (age and sex classes) also being collected? (Resolution 8.5; ref. document AEWA/MOP 8.27)

No

Please explain the reasons

>>> In the passage season, it is not easy to gather such data. Or becaus the birds fly over, or sex/age is at this period of the year is less obvious to determine.

Covering the non-breeding/wintering period

Fully [Guidance: Coverage is full when all internationally and nationally important non-breeding/wintering sites are covered at least by one comprehensive annual count.]

Please provide details.

>>> FLANDERS: all sites with important concentrations of waterbirds are monitored through mid-monthly waterbird counts (15 october - 15 march).

BELGIAN PART OF THE NORTH SEA: monitoring of seabirds is included in the monitoring program established under the EU-Marine Strategy (MSFD)

Is information on drivers of population trends also being collected? (Resolution 8.5; ref. document AEWA/MOP 8.27)

Yes

Please provide details

>>> Land use, crops, water levels, meteorological parameters ...

Are demographic data (age and sex classes) also being collected? (Resolution 8.5; ref. document AEWA/MOP 8.27)

Yes

Please provide details

>>> Limited: in the wintering period, age and sex classes are not easy to recognize, if even possible. For some species where it is possible, e.g. Bewick's swans, it is done.

73. Have you undertaken after MOP8 a brief assessment of existing monitoring activities in your country against the priorities set out in document AEWA/MOP 8.27 in order to help identify ways in which they can best implement those recommendations? (Resolution 8.5)

Yes

Please provide details

>>> The current monitoring is in line with the recommendations.

74. Are data collected through the International Waterbird Census or other relevant monitoring schemes being actively used in your country to inform national-level implementation of AEWA? (AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Action 1.5(a))

Yes

Please provide details

>>> In particular for the European Goose Management Platform activities the monitoring schemes are directly used. IWC-data are also used for art. 12 reporting in the frame of the EU Birds Directive, supporting national conservation policy focus.

75. Has your country supported, technically or financially, through bilateral or multilateral initiatives, other Parties or Range States requiring assistance and support in designing appropriate monitoring schemes, developing their capacity and overall strengthening of waterbird monitoring and population data collection? (Resolutions 5.2 and 8.5)

Yes

Which country(ies) were supported?

>>> African Ramsar contracting parties.

Please provide details

>>> A subsidy of 247.500 EURO was provided by the Flemish Ministry to the Ramsar headquarters in Gland, Switzerland to support Contracting Parties in Africa to initiate or complete their national wetland inventories in line with Target 8 of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016 to 2024, as a key tool for effective management of wetlands on their territories.

76. Has your country used the AEWA Conservation Guidelines on waterbird monitoring?

Notice: Before clicking on the above hyperlink, please keep pressing the **Ctrl button** on your keyboard to open the link in a new tab.

No

Please explain the reasons. What guidance has been used instead?

>>> Monitoring programs were existing at the time the guidelines were established. It is possible to use the Guidelines in future monitoring protocols. FLANDERS: Waterbird monitoring has been organised since 1967 in the framework of the 'International Waterbird Census', coordinated by Wetlands International, to which monitoring schemes are optimised. BELGIUM (federal): Since 1992 regular counts of seabirds are done from ships following standardized methods on an ad hoc basis, for research projects and in the framework of WinMon, a monitoring program to assess the impact of windmills that started in 2005. Since 1997 monitoring of nesting gulls and terns is organized in the framework of ecological quality objectives of OSPAR. The monitoring of seabirds is included in the monitoring program established under the EU-Marine Strategy (MSFD) since 2014. WALLONIA: Trends in common birds numbers in Wallonia: through the environment dashboard in Wallonia, 75 species of birds are monitored. Though only representing 43% of the breeding species found in Wallonia, they account for 96% of the total bird population.

77. Has your government provided over the past triennium funds and/or logistical support for the International Waterbird Census and/or other waterbird monitoring scheme at international or national level? (Resolution 6.3)

Yes

Nationally

Yes

Please provide details

>>> FLANDERS: the Institute of Nature and Forest research is coordinating a network of professionals and skilled volunteers in order to have a good coverage of breeding rare waterbirds and wintering waterbirds.

Internationally

No

Please explain the reasons

>>> A voluntary contribution is considered as a non-regulated subsidy that would have to be granted by the minister by ministerial decree. This takes a lot of administrative efforts. As such no budget is reserved for such grants.

78. Has your country donated funds to the African-Eurasian Waterbird Fund in the past triennium (Resolution 6.3, 7.7 and 8.5)?

Notice: Before clicking on the above hyperlink, please keep pressing the Ctrl button on your keyboard to open the link in a new tab.

No

Please explain the reason

>>> A voluntary contribution is considered as a non-regulated subsidy that would have to be granted by the minister by ministerial decree. This takes a lot of administrative efforts. As such no budget is reserved for such donations.

80. Has the impact of lead fishing weights on waterbirds been investigated in your country? (AEWA Action Plan, paragraph 4.3.12). When answering this question please also consider question 59 in chapter 6. Management of human activities.

No

Are there plans to investigate the impact of lead fishing weights on waterbirds in your country?

No

Please provide reason(s)

>>> Impact of lead fishing weights has not been assessed (yet) as an issue with important impact. So there is no priority to investigate this at national level.

Field for additional information (optional)

>>> Initiatives on the restriction of lead fishing weights are being taken at the EU level.

81. Has your country established partnerships and initiated joint research programmes at any level, with clear timeframes for delivery, to fill priority knowledge gaps as identified in document AEWA/MOP 8.30? (AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Action 5.1(a)).

No

82. In this reporting period, have results of conservation and management interventions, whether successful or unsuccessful, been published in your country so as to inform future conservation and management actions? (Article III.2(k), Resolution 8.7)

Yes

Please provide details and reference to each publication or attach a copy

>>> Results of monitoring data are published as scientific reports e.g. monitoring-data for compensation areas around the ports of Antwerp or around the Bruges-Seaport.

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

[Monitoring results of the compensation areas around the port of Antwerp](#)

Field for additional information (optional)

>>> Summaries or smaller scale interventions, are often shared through digital newsletters as 'natuurbericht' or 'vogelnieuws' focusing on the interested/involved site managers and broader public.

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

[Vogelnieuws](#) - Accessible feedback of scientific research on birds from the Flemish Institute of Nature and Forest Research

[Natuurbericht.be](#) - Accessible feedback of scientific results and management actions is shared through the digital newsletter natuurbericht.be, coordinated by NGO Natuurpunt

Pressures and Responses

8. Education and Information

8.1. Communication, Education and Public Awareness

83. Has your country developed and implemented programmes for raising awareness and understanding on waterbird conservation and about AEWA specifically? (Strategic Plan 2009-2017, Objective 4, Target 4.3 and AEWA Action Plan, paragraphs 6.1-6.4, Resolution 3.10, Resolution 5.5; Resolution 6.10)

Guidance: Such programmes should consist of a series of established, long-term communication activities, which are guided by clearly defined goals, target audiences and communication channels. A programme does not constitute a single, one-off communication activity, product or event. In other words, an established national programme to raise awareness and understanding on waterbird conservation and about AEWA would ideally be a number of targeted communication activities which are guided by a communication plan and are backed by sufficient human and financial resources.

Yes, being implemented

Please describe the awareness programmes which have been developed. Please upload any relevant sample materials which have been developed and add contact details of a contact person for each programme.

>>> FLANDERS: The Agency for Nature and Forests participates in several nature visitor centers nearby important wetlands as the Zwin and the Yzer floodplains. Nature conservation NGO's also pay attention to raising public awareness about nature conservation in general, including waterbirds and wetland ecosystems. Naturalists' associations can receive supplementary financial support on top of subsidies for proper management of nature reserves for organizing public awareness, education and the running of visitor's centres linked to nature reserves. WALLONIA: The Nature and Forest Department organises CEPA activities (Philippe.vanasbroek@spw.wallonie.be);- Naturalists' associations are financed in view to organize public awareness and education activities. Nature protection organizations such as the WWF, the 'Ligue Royale pour la Protection des Oiseaux' (LRBPO, protection.oiseaux@birdprotection.be), Natagora (info@natagora.be), "Ardenne et Gaume" (secretariat@ardenne-et-gaume.be), 'Les Cercles des Naturalistes de Belgique', 'Jeunes et Nature' and 'Forêt Wallonne' all have educational activities oriented towards nature conservation.- Public education and awareness is one of the missions of Natural parks (info@fnpw.be) BRUSSELS REGION: Naturalists' associations are financed in view to organize public awareness and education activities. Nature protection organizations such as the 'Ligue Royale pour la Protection des Oiseaux' (LRBPO, director Corentin Rousseau, corentin.rousseau@birdprotection.be), Natagora/Aves (director Philippe Funcken, philippe.funcken@natagora.be), Natuurpunt (director Chris Steenwegen, chris.steenwegen@natuurpunt.be), and many others all have educational activities oriented towards nature conservation. Public education and awareness is one of the missions of Brussels Environment, the regional administration for energy and environment. • Federal level: Belgian marine territory:- Raising public awareness concerning the different 'values' of the sea and the marine conservation needs is one of the tasks of the Federal Government.- In 2012 a brochure has been published on the natural values of the sea to raise public awareness. Contact: Federal Public Service (FPS) Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment, marien.milieu.marin@environment.belgium.be.

Does the programme specifically focus on AEWA and the provisions of its Action Plan?

No

Field for additional information (optional)

>>> The AEWA-specific elements are integrated into the wider story of nature conservation, with focus on wetland and waterbird conservation at the relevant sites.

84. Has a National AEWA Focal Point for Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) been designated by your country? (Resolution 5.5; Resolution 6.10)

No

Please explain the reasons

>>> CEPA is followed up by the National Focal Point, who informs the Regional Focal Points. Most of the general AEWA-CEPA themes are already covered by / integrated in the existing nature conservation CEPA initiatives that are organized widely; site-specific as well as more general.

85. Have measures been taken by your country to implement the provisions related to "Education and Information" in the AEWA Action Plan over the last triennium? (AEWA Action Plan, Paragraphs 6.1-6.4)

Yes

Please indicate which measures have been taken:

a. National training programmes have been arranged for personnel responsible for implementing AEWA

Yes

How can the effectiveness of the measures be rated?

High

Please provide details

>>> People involved in the implementation of AEWA are either trained professionals or volunteers that can follow various training programmes organised by NGOs or through knowledge sharing institutions such as Natuurinvest (affiliate of the Flemish Agency for Nature and Forests). Those training programmes are usually situated in a broader biodiversity framework (e.g. the broader EU Natura2000 policy) that embrace the AEWA goals (in particular the EU Birds Directive).

b. Training programmes and materials have been developed in cooperation with other Parties and/or the Agreement Secretariat

No

Please explain the reasons

>>> Training programmes and materials related to waterbirds usually are part of a broader nature training, developed by nature NGOs or government institutions.

Field for additional information (optional)

>>> For programs and materials in Dutch, the language is an extra barrier for co-developing such materials.

c. AEWA related information and training resources have been exchanged with other Parties and/or shared with the Agreement Secretariat

No

Please explain the reasons

>>> No dedicated AEWA-specific related information and training resources were produced. Information and training resources related to waterbirds usually are part of broader nature information and training resources, developed by nature NGOs or government institutions. For information and resources in Dutch, the language is an extra barrier for exchanging these.

d. Specific public awareness campaigns for the conservation of populations listed in Table 1 have been conducted

Yes

How can the effectiveness of the measures be rated?

Other

>>> Not evaluated

Please provide details

>>> Specific campaigns focus mainly on specific breeding birds, often in the field of site restoration or management (Eurasian spoonbill, Eurasian bittern, ...) or as part of a species protection plan (Black-tailed godwit, Eurasian Curlew). Other campaigns focus on wintering waterbirds in general, especially in the important waterbird areas.

86. Have World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) activities been carried out in your country during this reporting cycle? (Resolution 5.5)

Yes

Please describe the activity/activities briefly and upload any sample materials, links or photos available related to the activity/event.

>>> Activities are organised and communicated as part of BirdLife International's EuroBirdwatch-event. Simultaneous counts are organised at different counting stations, coordinated by the national BirdLife-partners (Natuurpunt & Natagora). In 2022 the event took place at 73 counting stations throughout Belgium, at 81 stations in 2023 and 90 in 2024.

87. Has your country provided funding and/or other support, as appropriate (e.g. expertise, network, skills and resources) towards the implementation of the AEWA Communication Strategy and/or towards priority CEPA activities in the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027? Please consider both national and international funding and different types of support provided.

(Resolution 6.10)

No

Please explain the reasons

>>> FLANDERS: Priority of CEPA activities lie in the national implementation of the EU Birds- and Habitats Directives. However, to a large extent the goals of the Birds Directive and AEWA are similar.

Pressures and Responses

9. Implementation

88. Have you undertaken a national assessment of the resources needed for the delivery of the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027? (AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Action 5.6.(b))

No

Please explain the reasons

>>> FLANDERS: for the national implementation focus lies on the implementation of the EU Birds (and Habitats) Directive, where in parallel a number of the AEWA species and their habitats are taken into account. The assessment of resources for these goals is implemented in the Flemish Natura2000 Programme (5 year programme - 2021-2025).

89. Has your country provided resources to address the resource needs as identified in document AEWA/MOP 8.43, for enabling and strengthening the international-level coordination and delivery of the Strategic Plan? (Resolution 8.3)

No

Please explain the reasons

>>> Administratively, it is difficult to provide resources on an ad-hoc basis. We prefer that the needed resources for delivering the key actions are covered by the core-budget.

90. Has your country approached non-contracting party range states to encourage them to accede to the Agreement? (Resolution 3.10; AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Target 5.2)

Report only on activities over the past triennium

No

Please explain the reasons

>>> No opportunity arose to approach non-contracting parties on this issue.

91. Does your country have in place a national coordination mechanism for implementation of AEWA, possibly linking to national coordination mechanisms for other biodiversity Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)? (Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Action 5.3(b))

Guidance: Such mechanism can be a dedicated cross-institutional working group, involving representatives of the civil society and other relevant stakeholders, aimed at planning, coordinating and reporting the implementation of the Agreement in the country. Alternatively, the implementation of AEWA at national level can be coordinated as an extension of larger national coordination mechanisms for other MEAs, such as National Ramsar Committees or CBD NBSAPs coordination.

Yes, it is operational on a regular basis

Please provide details

>>> The Coordination Committee for International Environmental Policy (CCIEP) Working group on Nature 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. Representatives from all regions and the federal government for all international or european nature related agreements (CMS (and its daughter agreements), CITES, Ramsar, CBD, ...) and other stakeholders are represented. <https://www.health.belgium.be/en/cciep-coordination-committee-international-environmental-policy>

Are priority capacity gaps addressed by the coordination mechanism?

Yes

Please rank the effectiveness of the national coordination mechanism for AEWA implementation:

High

Please provide details and the reasons for the high effectiveness

>>> As the main biodiversity (c.q. waterbird) conservation framework are the EU Birds and Habitats Directives, who cover to a large extent the goals of AEWA, this framework is more directive in the national coordination. However, AEWA implementation is to a large extent covered with this framework.

92. Have you undertaken a national assessment of the capacity needs for AEWA implementation? (AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Action 5.3.(e))

No

Please explain the reasons

>>> The focus on implementation of EU Birds Directive also cover the most important AEWA goals on the national level. The capacity needs for implementation of the Birds Directive are assessed as it is considered as a keystone of the work of the competent administrations.

93.1. Cooperate in launching regional initiatives, particularly in Africa, to address the implementation of capacity priorities, linking to the African Initiative, including scientific collaboration as well as a “younger generations” component, and including provision for actions to be further informed through country-specific needs assessments.

Yes

Please provide details

>>> A subsidy of 247.500 EURO was provided to the Ramsar headquarters to support Contracting Parties in Africa to initiate or complete their national wetland inventories in line with Target 8 of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016 to 2024, as a key tool for effective management of wetlands on their territories.

93.2. Establish procedures for ensuring continuity of succession and transfer of knowledge and skills, when there are changes in personnel responsible for AEWA national implementation.

No

Please explain the reasons

>>> The focus on implementation of EU Birds Directive also covers the most important AEWA goals on the national level. Knowledge and skills with regards to EU birds directive are shared within different teams, who have contact with the AEWA NFP.

93.3. Hold regional or sub-regional preparatory meetings before each ordinary session of the MOP, in particular for African Range States, and for such meetings to include an enhanced capacity-building component targeting priority needs identified by the Parties concerned.

No

Please explain the reasons

>>> Preparatory meetings before each MOP are coordinated on the EU-level by the EU-presidency.

93.4. (For AEWA National Focal Points in the European Union (EU) only)

To cooperate with African National Focal Points, partner organisations and other stakeholders to explore opportunities for incorporating aspects of AEWA implementation capacity support in relevant existing projects and programmes in Africa, including the EU-funded NaturAfrica initiative and the Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial/EU-funded RESSOURCE sub-Saharan Africa project, as well as projects under the auspices of the wider CMS Family, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and UNEP.

Yes

Please provide details

>>> A subsidy of 247500 EURO was provided to the Ramsar headquarters to support Contracting Parties in Africa to initiate or complete their national wetland inventories in line with Target 8 of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016 to 2024, as a key tool for effective management of wetlands on their territories.

94. Has your country concluded, or considered concluding, twinning schemes between sites with other countries, the sites of which share common migratory waterbirds or conservation issues? (Resolution 5.20)

Yes

Please provide details on each twinning arrangement

>>> FLANDERS: Twinning results from transboundary sites with the Netherlands at 1) the Zwin Tidal Area: nature restoration, wetland expansion and recreation/ecotourism. 2) The Hedwige-Prosper project across the Dutch/Belgian border in the Scheldt Estuary: restoring and expanding waterbird intertidal habitat - now under the umbrella of the Grenspark Groot-Saeftinghe. 3) The Grensmaas where the river 'Maas' forms the border between BE and NL: river floodplain restoration. Collaboration with the Netherlands and Germany in the tri-country Park: broad collaboration including landscape management 4) Kempebroek: conservation and restoration of the transboundary nature and landscape with marshes, fens and creeks. Development of sustainable ecotourism. This initiative lead to the recognition of the area as the first UNESCO Biosphere Reserve for Belgium (and the 2nd for the Netherlands).

95. Are those officers in your country's government responsible for AEWA implementation co-

ordinated and engaged with national processes contributing towards the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework? (AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Action 5.4(a))

Yes

Please provide details

>>> The Coordination Committee for International Environmental Issues / Nature takes this into account.

96. Are those officers in your country's government responsible for AEWA implementation coordinated and engaged with national processes contributing towards the relevant Sustainable Development Goals and the assessment of achieving these goals? (AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Action 5.4(a))

Yes

Please provide details

>>> The Coordination Committee for International Environmental Issues / Nature takes this into account.

97. Are those officers in your country's government responsible for AEWA implementation coordinated and engaged with national processes to implementation and assess the delivery of the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2024-2032? (AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Action 5.4(a))

Yes

Please provide details

>>> The Coordination Committee for International Environmental Issues / Nature takes this into account.

98. Are those officers in your country's government responsible for AEWA implementation coordinated and engaged with national processes contributing towards the Ramsar Convention Strategic Plan 2016-2024? (AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027, Action 5.4(a))

Yes

Please provide details

>>> The Coordination Committee for International Environmental Issues / Nature takes this into account. There is also regular contact between the NFP of AEWA and the NFP of Ramsar.

99. Are the AEWA priorities integrated into your county's National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan (NBSAP) and/or other similar national implementation mechanisms/processes for other international strategic plans and policies (Resolution 6.3; AEWA Strategic Plan, Targets 5.4 and 5.5)?

99.1 The new generation of NBSAPs related to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (as adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in December 2022)

Yes

Please provide details on which specific AEWA priorities, as per document AEWA/MOP 8.36, were integrated

>>> 1. Spatial planning for land- and sea-use and eliminating loss of areas of high ecological integrity;

2. Promotion of marine and terrestrial ecosystem restoration and connectivity;

3. At least 30% of global land and sea as integrated, conserved and managed protected areas; (whereas it is defined as 17% terrestrial/fresh water, and 10% marine)

4. Species recovery and conservation, and minimising human-wildlife conflict;

5. Wild species harvesting, trade and use that is sustainable, legal and safe for human health;

6. Invasive alien species;

7. Pollution control;

8. Climate change adaptation and mitigation;

10. Agricultural, aquaculture, fisheries and forestry sustainability and use;

11. Maintaining nature's contributions to people including ecosystem-based approaches;

12. Human health and well-being from nature;

13. Genetic resource benefit sharing including traditional knowledge;

14. Biodiversity fully integrated into policy;

15. Promotion of sustainable production and supply chains by businesses;

16. Addressing unsustainable consumption patterns and reduction of waste;

17. Biotechnology impacts;

18. Elimination of harmful incentives;

19. Increase financial incentives;

20. Information for decision-makers including traditional knowledge;

Please rank the progress of implementation of the integrated AEWA priorities

High (Please provide details to support your ranking)

Field for additional information (optional)

>>> Taken into account in the National Biodiversity Strategy, "Biodiversity 2020, update of Belgian NBS". Objective 10: ensure a coherent implementation of / and between biodiversity-related commitments and agreements.

The updated plan can be found here: https://www.biodiv.be/sites/be/files/2020-03/NL-Strat_2020.pdf

99.2 The relevant Sustainable Development Goals

Yes

Please provide details on which specific AEWA priorities, as per document AEWA/MOP 8.36, were integrated

>>> 1. Spatial planning for land- and sea-use and eliminating loss of areas of high ecological integrity;

2. Promotion of marine and terrestrial ecosystem restoration and connectivity;

7. Pollution control;

8. Climate change adaptation and mitigation;

10. Agricultural, aquaculture, fisheries and forestry sustainability and use;

11. Maintaining nature's contributions to people including ecosystem-based approaches;

12. Human health and well-being from nature;

15. Promotion of sustainable production and supply chains by businesses;

16. Addressing unsustainable consumption patterns and reduction of waste;

19. Increase financial incentives;

20. Strengthen capacity-building and development;

21. Equitable and effective participation in decision making

Please rank the progress of implementation of the integrated AEWA priorities

High (Please provide details to support your ranking)

99.3 The Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2024-2032

No

Please explain the reasons

>>> National plans have not yet been revised in the view of the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2024-2032.

99.4 The Ramsar Convention Strategic Plan 2016-2024

Yes

Please provide details on which specific AEWA priorities, as per document AEWA/MOP 8.36, were integrated

>>> 1. Spatial planning for land- and sea-use and eliminating loss of areas of high ecological integrity;

2. Promotion of marine and terrestrial ecosystem restoration and connectivity;

7. Pollution control;

8. Climate change adaptation and mitigation;

10. Agricultural, aquaculture, fisheries and forestry sustainability and use;

11. Maintaining nature's contributions to people including ecosystem-based approaches;

12. Human health and well-being from nature;

15. Promotion of sustainable production and supply chains by businesses;

16. Addressing unsustainable consumption patterns and reduction of waste;

19. Increase financial incentives;

20. Strengthen capacity-building and development;

21. Equitable and effective participation in decision making

Please rank the progress of implementation of the integrated AEWA priorities

High (Please provide details to support your ranking)

Field for additional information (optional)

>>> Taken into account in the National Biodiversity Strategy, "Biodiversity 2020, update of Belgian NBS". Objective 10: ensure a coherent implementation of / and between biodiversity-related commitments and agreements.

The updated plan can be found here: https://www.biodiv.be/sites/be/files/2020-03/NL-Strat_2020.pdf

99.5 Other international strategic plans and policies

Yes

Please name the other strategic planning processes

>>> Taken into account in the National Biodiversity Strategy, "Biodiversity 2020, update of Belgian NBS".

Objective 10: ensure a coherent implementation of / and between biodiversity-related commitments and agreements.

The updated plan can be found here: https://www.biodiv.be/sites/be/files/2020-03/NL-Strat_2020.pdf

Please provide details on which specific AEWA priorities, as per document AEWA/MOP 8.36, were incorporated

>>> see earlier questions.

Please rank the progress of implementation of the integrated AEWA priorities

High (Please provide details to support your ranking)

Sustainable Development Goals

No

Please explain the reasons

>>> SDG are developed at a higher strategic level. The national plan remains at a broad and general level, when mentioning aspects with regards to environment and biodiversity. The national biodiversity strategy is a more relevant framework to integrate specific actions.

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

Yes

Please provide details

>>> The Coordination Committee for International Environmental Policy (CCIEP) Working group on Nature ensures coordination in Belgium for all international or european nature related agreements (CMS (and its daughter agreements), CITES, Ramsar, CBD, ...). <https://www.health.belgium.be/en/cciep-coordination-committee-international-environmental-policy>
Integration is taken into account in the National Biodiversity Strategy, "Biodiversity 2020, update of Belgian NBS". Objective 10: ensure a coherent implementation of / and between biodiversity-related commitments and agreements.

Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2024-2032

No

Please explain the reasons

>>> Integration of this Strategic Plan in national initiatives has not yet been initiated.

Ramsar Convention Strategic Plan 2016-2024

Yes

Please provide details

>>> The Coordination Committee for International Environmental Policy (CCIEP) Working group on Nature ensures coordination in Belgium for all international or european nature related agreements (CMS (and its daughter agreements), CITES, Ramsar, CBD, ...). <https://www.health.belgium.be/en/cciep-coordination-committee-international-environmental-policy>
Integration is taken into account in the National Biodiversity Strategy, "Biodiversity 2020, update of Belgian NBS". Objective 10: ensure a coherent implementation of / and between biodiversity-related commitments and agreements.

101. How would your country suggest promoting further links between the biodiversity MEAs to which your country is a Contracting Party, so as to make your work more efficient and effective?

>>> By the harmonization of the reporting formats, harmonized cooperation between these conventions and agreements, use of harmonized indicators, ... Indicators could show how well which goals of the Agreement are being reached in a rather easy way, would allow a high degree of standardization in the reporting process. Sets of indicators have been developed at EU-level (in the framework of the EU Biodiversity Strategy) and in the framework of the new Strategy for Migratory Species under CMS. Those sets could form a basis for specific indicators for the AEWA Action Plan.

102. Has your country donated funds to the AEWA Small Grants Fund over the past triennium? (Resolutions 7.1 and 8.3)

No

Please explain the reasons

>>> A voluntary contribution is considered as a non-regulated subsidy that would have to be granted by the

minister by ministerial decree. This would require a disproportional amount of administrative burden.

Field for additional information (optional)

>>> Further details and motivation were shared to the Chair of the Standing Committee in response to his information request dd 7th March 2024.

103. Has your country donated other funding or provided in-kind support to activities coordinated by the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat?

Yes

Please provide details, including amount of funds donated

>>> Contribution to the implementation of the European Goose Management Platform (35.000€ per year).

104. Has your country prioritised and allocated a Junior Professional Officer (JPO) to the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat for Technical Committee support or for any other area of work? (Resolutions 7.11, 7.12, 8.11 and 8.12)

No and has not been prioritised

Please explain the reasons

>>> There is an internal arrangement that JPO's are allocated to different UN-bodies with a rotation. UNEP wasn't at the turn so it was not considered.

105. Please report on the implementation of Resolution 6.21 on Resource mobilization for the implementation of AEWA.

105.1 Did your country's government provide in the last triennium financial and/or in-kind resources to support national activities which are intended to achieve the objectives of this Agreement, particularly those in line with the AEWA Strategic Plan including the AEWA Plan of Action for Africa, and in accordance with your national plans, priorities and programmes?

Yes

Please describe the resources provided

>>> Support for monitoring, education and management of wetlands. As part of the more general nature conservation policy.

105.2 Does your country's government have unpaid dues to the AEWA Trust Fund (annual assessed contributions to the Agreement's budget as approved by each session of the Meeting of the Parties)?

No

105.3 Has your country's government provided funding to support developing countries, in particular least developed countries and small island developing States, as well as countries with economies in transition, to meet their obligations under AEWA, and the implementation of the AEWA Plan of Action for Africa 2019-2027? Under this question please report for support provided outside of formal and established intergovernmental cooperation. For the latter, please refer to the next question 105.4.

Yes

Please describe the resources provided

>>> A subsidy of 247500 EURO was provided to the Ramsar headquarters to support Contracting Parties in Africa to initiate or complete their national wetland inventories in line with Target 8 of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016 to 2024, as a key tool for effective management of wetlands on their territories.

105.4 Does your country's government participate in any South-South, North-South or triangular cooperation to enhance financial and technical support for the successful implementation of AEWA activities?

No

105.5 Does your country's government use innovative financing mechanisms for implementing the AEWA Strategic Plan such as a (national) Migratory Waterbirds Fund?

Yes

Please describe each mechanism used

>>> FLANDERS: in 2020 an important programme has been launched, called the 'Blue Deal'. The aim is to address problems related to climate change (drought as well as flooding), with an important focus, among others, on restoring wetlands.

Migratory waterbirds are not the main focus of this programme but benefit from habitat restoration supported by this programme. Moreover, the aim is to shift the public opinion that these habitats are not worthless unproductive swampy sites but that they are valuably contributing through ecosystem services to address problems related to climate change.

105.6 Does the implementation of AEWA in your country benefit from synergies between biodiversity-related conventions at national level, amongst others, through information sharing on potential funding opportunities and sharing of financial resources such as the Desertification Fund, Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation Fund, and the Global Environmental Facility?

Yes

Please describe each synergetic arrangement and benefits acquired

>>> FLANDERS: in 2020 an important programme has been launched, called the 'Blue Deal'. The aim is to address problems related to climate change (drought as well as flooding), with an important focus, amongs others, on restoring wetlands.

Migratory waterbirds are not the main focus of this programme but benefit from habitat restoration supported by this programme. Moreover, the aim is to shift the public opinion that these habitats are not worthless unproductive swampy sites but that they are valuably contributing through ecosystem services to address problems related to climate change.

Pressures and Responses

10. Climate Change

106. Please outline relevant climate change research, assessments and/or adaptation measures that are relevant to migratory waterbirds and which have been undertaken or planned in your country. (Resolution 5.13)

a. Research and studies of climate change impacts on waterbirds

Undertaken

Please provide references or weblinks to any such work so as to facilitate their use as potential case-studies to assist other Contracting Parties

>>> FLANDERS: Main focus in climate research lies on climate change effects on nature management and fire prevention. Projects focus on vegetation or ecosystems as a whole, not specific on direct effects on waterbirds or wetlands but they are part of the broader scope.

b. Assessment of the potential vulnerability to climate change of key habitats used by waterbird species (including those outside protected area networks) (Please note that the question asks about habitats, rather than sites. Question 43 in Section 5, sub-section 5.2 investigates vulnerability of sites to climate change)

Undertaken

Please provide references or weblinks to any such work so as to facilitate their use as potential case-studies to assist other Contracting Parties

>>> Flanders joined in 2024 the request for a EU TSI Flagship technical support project to establish an internationally coordinated monitoring system along the eastern Atlantic Flyway to assess the relative impact that specific factors and sites play for the declines in migratory species and as such to prioritize restoration measures.

c. Assessment of the potential vulnerability of waterbird species to climate change.

No relevant activities

Please explain the reasons

>>> Assessment of the potential vulnerability of waterbirds to climate change is not a priority in climate change impact assessment. The focus has been given in the first place to an ecosystem approach in general. Through impacts on vegetation, water quantity and quality, the relevance to waterbirds is tackled.

d. Review of relevant national conservation policies relevant to waterbirds and climate change.

Undertaken

Please provide references or weblinks to any such work so as to facilitate their use as potential case-studies to assist other Contracting Parties

>>> The National Biodiversity Strategy has been reviewed. This is relevant to waterbirds and to climate change, although its scope is much broader.

e. National Action Plan for helping waterbirds adapt to climate change (as a separate implementation process or as part of a larger national framework for biodiversity adaptation to climate change. Please note that Question 44 in Section 5, sub-section 5.2 investigates national measures for increasing resilience of the ecological network for waterbirds to climate change).

No relevant activities

Please explain the reasons

>>> Climate Policy planning considers the impact on nature/environment in general, without specific focus on waterbirds but taking their habitats into the scope.

f. Other undertaken or planned relevant activities.

No

107. Has your country used the AEWA Conservation Guidelines on measures needed to help waterbirds to adapt to climate change?

Notice: Before clicking on the above hyperlink, please keep pressing the Ctrl button on your keyboard to open the link in a new tab.

No

Please explain the reasons. What other guidance has been used instead?

>>> FLANDERS, WALLONIA, BRUSSELS: The Climate Action plan is a conceptual plan. At this stage it is not relevant to use specific guidelines for waterbirds. With the implementation at specific sites the local biodiversity (including waterbirds) will be taken into account.

108. Has your country used the complementary Guidelines on climate change adaptation measures for waterbirds?

No

Please explain the reasons. What other guidance has been used instead?

>>> Climate Policy planning considers the impact on nature/environment in general, without specific focus on waterbirds but taking their habitats into the scope. Specific climate change adaption measures are taken at site level where needs are detected.

Pressures and Responses

11. Avian Influenza

109. What issues have proved challenging in responding nationally to the spread of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in the last triennium and what further guidance or information would be useful in this respect?

List challenges

>>> Surveillance in Belgium is mainly focusing on detection of local presence/absence of HPAI to assess the risk to poultry farming. This qualitative approach makes it not possible to assess in a quantitative way the risk or impact of HPAI at the population level of the wild birds. There have been just a few reported cases of significant mortality of wild birds, mostly at breeding colonies, not enough to trigger the establishment of a structured quantitative monitoring system or a general approach of HPAI as a conservation problem.

List required further guidance or information

>>> No further guidance needed. It still remains useful to collect and share experiences with high mortality-events in other countries, in order to keep awareness of the risk and to have good practices available when eventual future cases might arise that urge for rapid response measures.

Field for additional information (optional)

>>> Monitoring of HPAI with regards to poultry and other birds in captivity is a federal responsibility. Monitoring of HPAI with regards to wild animals is a regional responsibility (Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels capital region). There is a coordination between the different responsible authorities in the Risk Assessment Group - Veterinary - Emerging Zoonoses (RAG-V-EZ). Detailed numbers on confirmed cases can be found at <https://www.sciensano.be/nl/gezondheidsonderwerpen/aviaire-influenza/cijfers>.

110. Does your country have in place surveillance and rapid testing programmes for HPAI of dead birds so as to inform: any enhancements to monitoring of the species populations (Resolutions 8.2 and 8.7) and site-related management and biosecurity measures as needed (Resolution 8.15)?

Yes

Please provide more information

>>> There is a passive surveillance scheme to test suspicious cases of dead birds. The scheme is well communicated to the general public as it relies to a significant extent on all 'eyes in the field' (professional wildlife workers, ornithologists, as well as the general public, ...). There is a nationwide telephone number, free of charge, via which cases of mortality in wild birds can be reported. Suspicious cases are then further investigated. Moreover, the surveillance is expanded to birds that die in wild birds refuge centers.

Has this information been submitted to international databases, e.g. the WOAAH WAHIS system <https://wahis.woah.org/#/home>, which strive to improve understanding of the epidemiology of the disease and its impacts across borders (as called for by the CMS/FAO Co-convened Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds: see paragraph 2.3.1.6 of the 2023 statement of the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds on H5N1 high pathogenicity avian influenza in wild birds - unprecedented conservation impacts and urgent needs (available here)?

Yes (please clarify)

111. Has your country adapted/changed in the last triennium monitoring and assessment of those species affected by avian influenza, particularly HPAI H5N1 outbreaks, as well as other diseases, as the basis for potentially implementing emergency measures envisaged by paragraph 2.3 of the AEWA Action Plan? (Resolutions 8.2 and 8.7)

No

Please explain the reasons

>>> There was already a good general surveillance system on HPAI established and well communicated. Sensible areas as important waterbird concentration sites or breeding colonies were already monitored standardly, ensuring rapid detection of any outbreak.

Field for additional information (optional)

>>> Different administrations and scientific institutes collaborate to collect and analyse the dead birds found. The general public is informed as to have more 'eyes in the field' for suspicious cases.

112. Have you established HPAI contingency plans nationally and at sites of significant

importance to waterbirds, including coastal seabirds? (Resolution 8.15)

No

Please explain the reasons

>>> There has been no need to establish such plans as no major outbreaks have occurred that required more measures than the standard measures that were already in place (e.g. removal of cadavers).

12. Confirmation

Confirmation of information verification and approval for submission

Please confirm:

In addition a scanned copy of an official letter from the relevant state institution, approving the report for submission, can be attached.

I declare that the information provided in the Report on the implementation of AEWA for the period 2021-2024 has been verified and the report has been approved for submission by the appropriate state institution in the country.

Date of submission

>>> 05/05/2025