

HUMAN SETTLEMENT COUNTRY PROFILE

BELGIUM

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Decision-Making: Genral: The Kingdom of Belgium is a constitutional monarchy. The 1993 reform of the Belgian Constitution was the latest in a series of constitutional changes (others occurred in 1970, 1980 and 1988) which have transformed the country into a federal state made up of three Communities and three Regions. The three Communities are the French Community, the Flemish Community and the German-speaking Community. The three Regions are the Walloon Region, the Flemish Region and the Brussels-Capital Region.

Decision-making power is shared by the Federal Government, the three Communities and the three Regions, which are equal in law and exercise their responsibilities independently in various fields. The Federal Government is responsible for justice, social security, monetary and fiscal affairs and national defence. The three Communities deal with cultural matters, education, use of languages and "person-related matters" such as some aspects of health.

The three Regions have authority in respect of socio-economic matters such as agriculture and zoning. The Federal Government and the Regions have shared competences in the field of economy, transport and the environment. Regarding foreign policy, each entity has external competence concerning their internal competences.

The Federal Government, communities and regions each have their own parliament and government, although the Flemish Community and the Flemish Region have merged their parliaments and government.

Each Region further expands the modalities and implementation priorities. The Regions are to a very large degree responsible for policies and implementation related to human settlements, housing matters, and urban development. Local authorities have a long-standing tradition to care for the day-to-day quality of human settlements and habitat.

The principles of sustainable development, particularly since the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), are increasingly influencing National decision-making in international responsibilities and in the coordination of Regional Government initiatives. In implementing the decisions of the United Nations, a Belgium National Committee for Human Settlements has been established under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The 1993 Constitution explicitly states the "right to decent housing" as a constitutional right in Belgium. Both the Flemish Region (in 1997) and the Walloon Region (in 1998) have adopted a Housing Code. The setting up of a Housing Code for the Region of Brussels-Capital is under way. A first ordinance was adopted in 2003 and a second one will complete it before mid-2004. These three Housing Codes are explicitly aimed at implementing the right to decent housing. It should be noted that the adoption of the Housing Codes constitutes one of the most important decisions that have been taken, as regards housing, since the Second World War.

Urban policy: Federal level: The city contract is one of the tools chosen by the federal authority to implement a policy in favour of large cities. The selection of a contract-based method for actions in cooperation with local authorities is in line with former fruitful experiences at the federal and regional levels.

The programme operates in cooperation with 15 cities on the Belgian territory, including 7 municipalities of the Region of Brussels-Capital. This limitation is justified by a threefold concern to avoid dispersion of available resources, to increase efficiency in restarting local activity and to maximize the visibility of the projects. Indeed, nearly 65% of the funds were used to improve the living environment and conditions of local populations.

Finally, in the implementation of these contracts, the Government has been eager to cooperate with the federated entities and to offer « coordination » in order to make urban policy actions more effective while respecting the prerogatives of each entity.

Flemish Region: The Flemish Government made the Flemish urban policy a top priority in the Government Policy Agreement of 1999. The Agreement states that priority will be given to the quality of the living environment in cities. The Government aims for a sustainable policy that offers structural solutions. The central challenge is ending the flight out of cities. An integrative and inclusive approach to urban policy is followed, with focus on housing, urban planning, mobility, family care, education, health, employment, etc. because the stagnation or decline has multiple causes (unemployment, social segregation, sub-urbanization, slowing of social housing investment, physical decline, etc.).

The main objectives for the habitat policy since 1999 are:

- Improvement of housing in cities and mainly in Antwerp, Ghent and Brussels;
- Reorientation of the 'Social Impulsion Fund';
- Making living in cities cheaper;
- The implementation of a 'City Renewal Fund';
- Making it possible to become 'Public-Private-Partnership' in function of the renovation of cities;
- Improvement of the quality of the existing housing stock and the housing environments;
- Construction of an extra 15.000 social houses;
- Construction of small housing projects so that we become a social mixture;
- Organizing of co-operation between communities, social housing organizations and the 'Public Agencies for Welfare (OCMW's);
- Renovation of the old social housing stock;
- Implementation of the right of prepurchase and the right to the social management of dwellings;
- Renovation of the old housing stock by recognized rental services; and
- Implementation of a new policy concerning the 'Flemish Periphery' (de Vlaamse Rand).

Walloon Region: In the Walloon Region, urban policy is one of the main policy priorities being pursued by the government. In the updated version, the future contract for Wallonia (which forms the legislative programme of the current government of Wallonia) defines the priority objective for the 2002-2004 period as "Creating a 15% increase in initiatives to improve the quality of the environment and densify urban centres". This is divided into two strands:

- Targeted projects (creation of social housing and renovation of the existing stock of social housing, refocusing support for individuals in urban centres, and the creation of 2,000 homes by means of urban renovation and revitalisation policies).
- Better information to create projects for urban renewal through a partnership between the public and private sectors.

Housing: Flemish Region: Housing has been a long-standing policy priority in the region. In the Flemish regional government agreement of July 1999 one of the great challenges for the coming years was the quality of life and living in the cities.

In the Flemish region a 'Flemish Housing Code' was approved in 1997. According to article 3 'everyone has the right to a human habitat. This includes promoting access to an appropriate and good quality dwelling place, in a decent living environment, affordable and with security of tenure'.

The 'Flemish Housing code' contains the following items:

1. The safety, health and quality norms for dwellings; information concerning the conformity certificate; indications whenever dwellings are to be considered as unsuitable or unfit for habitation or as overcrowded; and information concerning sanctions concerning such houses;
2. Information concerning the organization of the housing policy, including information concerning the Flemish Housing Council; the schedule of investments and the territorial planning;
3. Information concerning the social housing organizations, namely the Flemish Housing Company and the social housing companies, the Flemish Housing Foundation for Large Families and the recognized rental offices;
4. Information concerning the instruments of the housing policy, including the Housing Fund, subsidies for governmental initiatives for purchasing land and buildings, housing infrastructure, and to build, improve and adapt dwellings and buildings; social loans and guarantees, the right of repurchase; the right of pre-purchase and finally the right to the social management of dwellings;
5. Information concerning provisions relating to social dwellings for rent.

The main objective for the habitat policy in the period 1999-2004 was the further implementation of the 'right to housing'. As there is still a shortage of affordable and good quality dwellings in Flanders, special attention was given to increasing the number of social houses. The objective was to build 15.000 extra social houses over the period 1999-2004, this has been achieved. Another priority was to improve the quality of houses. Hereto different aspects of the 'Flemish Housing Code' have been further implemented, in particular the regulation concerning safety, health and quality norms for dwellings; the conformity certificate; the unsuitability of habitations; the occupation of houses; sanctions concerning overcrowded and unsuitable houses; the right of repurchase; the right of pre-purchase; the right to the social management of dwellings and the installation of a housing inspection team.

Walloon Region: Matters related to urban development are, since the last regional elections (1999)¹, the responsibility of the Minister for urban planning and environment and matters related to housing the responsibility of the Minister for budget, housing, equipment and public works.

In 1998, the Walloon Region adopted a Housing Code. This Code aims at implementing Article 23 of the Belgian Constitution which recognizes since 1994 the right to decent housing. The Code has various objectives:

- implement the right to a decent housing as a place for living, emancipation, and personal development for the individual and the family,
- lay down minimum health criteria. All houses located on the territory of the Walloon Region have to meet minimum health standards. Moreover, before renting out small houses and collective houses the lessor should obtain a letting licence.
- define, organise and coordinate the missions of the various actors of the regional housing policy, namely:
 - the Housing Administration, which is responsible for management of aid to individuals, supervision of health of houses, coordination of the local anchoring of the housing policy, information to the citizens, ...
 - the Walloon Social Credit Corporation (responsible for management of social mortgage credit) and the social credit corporations;
 - the Walloon Housing Corporation (which integrates the social housing companies) and the social housing corporations;
 - the Walloon Housing Fund for Large Families (responsible for social reintegration through housing and mortgage loans for large families);
 - the local authorities;
 - the agencies with a social purpose.

¹ The next regional elections will be held on 13 June 2004

- support social cohesion through incentives for the renovation of the housing stock and diversification and expansion of the housing supply in the dwelling centers;
- promote a local approach to housing policy;
- make housing units available in priority to households with a modest income and in a precarious situation.
- the organisation of the Higher Housing Council (advisory council responsible, a.o., for the financing of studies aimed at sustaining the Minister for Housing's reflection on the policies to be followed;
- the fight against unoccupied houses.

Since 1999, the Walloon Region has taken a whole series of measures aimed at implementing its Housing Code and ensuring the exercise of the right to decent housing.

- Regulations laying down the minimum health criteria in housing (Decree of 11 February 99). Appointed officials are entitled to draw up inspection reports on the compliance of houses with these standards.
- Adjustment of aid to individuals and legal persons (increased aid in some geographical areas or neighbourhoods)
- Regulation to combat the problem of unoccupied houses
- Creation of a loan for the benefit of young couples (35 years maximum) with a view to making home ownership easier for them
- Adoption by the Walloon Government of a multiannual Action Plan aimed at reducing permanent housing in touristic infrastructures (November 2002).
- Adoption by the Walloon Government (3 July 2003) of an exceptional programme of one billion euros aimed at guaranteeing the safety and health of the Walloon social housing stock. This process will cover a period of 5 years and benefit 35,784 houses, i.e. one third of the housing stock.

Brussels Region: Main achievements in housing policy since 1996: four main changes deserve a special mention:

1. The Region has developed legislative tools in order to meet the social demand on the private rental market. Through its Ordinances of 12/02/98 and 21/12/2001, it has set up a regime for social real estate agencies (Agences immobilières sociales) and security deposit allowances (aides à la garantie locative) aiming at facilitating access to rental for disadvantaged households. These two instruments mobilize the not-for-profit sector, whose role in the regional policy is thus consolidated.

The Region also expanded the system of allowances for relocation, installation and rental (allocations déménagement, installation et loyers) which help households to move to more adequate housing, including for older and disabled persons.

2. Through its Ordinance of 20/05/1999, the Brussels Region has consolidated its urban renovation policy by enhancing the role of the Brussels Regional Development Corporation (Société de Développement Régional bruxelloise) and reorienting gradually the social housing investment policy towards renovation of existing buildings rather than new construction. More than 6.5 Billion BEF were granted for investment in this sector from 1996 to 2000.

3. An important effort in this framework was geared towards light renovation of social housing in order to enhance the safety of electrical and heating installations of the oldest buildings. Since 15 January 1998, the Region has adopted a complementary approach, through neighbourhood initiatives ("quartiers d'initiative") aiming at enhancing public spaces in rundown neighbourhoods and creating jobs for

unskilled persons.

4. There has also been a change in the social property access policy of the Family Housing Fund of the Brussels Region (Fonds du logement des familles de la Région bruxelloise). Since 1997, the financial regulations of this fund have been modified in order to increase the quantitative impact of its action which aims essentially at providing concessional mortgage loans in accordance with the income level and number of children of the households. This modification should guarantee in the long run a year-on-year increase in the number of loans as well as a structural expansion of the action of the housing fund.

Apart from these changes, the Region has also further localised its housing policy response. The local concentration of the stigmatization of social problems has led to increasingly localized solutions, based on a clearly circumscribed local perimeter. The impact of this new approach remains to be assessed but there's currently a clear commitment to the positive impact of this approach.

New orientations of the current legislature and their implementation: The policy statement of the third regional legislature aims essentially at developing further the above-mentioned approaches.

After more than a decade of regional policy, it appears essential to re-link the rundown areas to the city – with its function as a centre for activities, social linkages and urban spaces, and even to society as a whole.

Most of the orientations of the regional policy statement go in that direction. They try to answer the following questions: how do we develop a new approach to urbanistic and social links between most of these areas and their urban environment? How do we reverse the urban stigmatization of social problems?

This more comprehensive approach of the regional policy statement indicates that the central objective is no longer the right to housing in its narrow sense, but rather the right to habitat, i. e. the opportunity to live in a quality, affordable housing in a satisfactory urban and services environment.

However, in Brussels, access to quality housing clearly involves the development of the de facto social housing stock. The latter can be defined as that part of housing stock in the Region (whether it be public or private property) whose rental cost is regulated in order to allow access for disadvantaged households. The most important regional deficit consists in the narrow-base and often low quality rental of social housing stock.

This double deficit should be tackled by developing two main strategies as adopted by the Region:

- Expand social housing stock, not only to address the current supply deficit, but also to act preventively: for this, a number of clarifications are needed in the regional policy ;
- Set up mechanisms allowing to associate the city partners to the policies that the Region intends to develop.

The following main orientations characterize progress achieved since the beginning of the new legislature in mid-1999:

- 1) Elaboration of a system of standards relating to health, safety and equipment of houses located in the Region (Ordinance of 17 July 2003); these standards will guarantee minimal quality in all dwellings located in the Region, both public and private;
- 2) further refocusing of the social housing sector investment policy on the renovation of existing building as there is a clear political will to tackle the quality deficit of a large part of the social housing stock: to this effect, the Region intends to rely on a registry of the physical state of housing units in order to draft its three-year investment plans. The social housing registry of the Brussels Region will provide an objective basis for the selection of projects.

- 1) the cooperation agreements with the Federal Government now recognize the usefulness of financing public spaces near social housing estates: this can only favour their integration in the urban fabric.
- 2) The Region of Brussels-Capital has completely repaid the debt of the Brussels social housing sector to the Depreciation Fund for Debts in Social Housing (French acronym FADELS) through a very important effort in 2003: this will free up funds for the social housing policy over the next 25 years;
- 3) In the social housing sector, the forthcoming setup of “multiple applications” system should allow to fine-tune knowledge about the demand-side and to manage responses in a more qualitative and operational way.
- 4) Finally, the will of the Region to develop social support for the interested users of the Brussels social housing sector has become a structural element of this sector policy.; this integration policy can be implemented on a collective or individual basis according to circumstances. In any case, it aims at refocussing the role of social housing in a more dynamic policy of urban and social integration of its users.
- 5) The development of complementary approaches to the private rental market by social real estate agencies whose stock increases year-on-year up to 850 housing units currently. This system is flexible and allows for an interesting spread of social housing supply in the city. In the future, the number of housing units will have to be sufficient to solve the problems encountered.
- 6) The policy of socially encouraged access to property will be modified in 2001 in order to allow for a higher number of households and situations to benefit from it. The Brussels Family Housing Fund, which provides concessional mortgage loans, will thus act as the main regional actor of the property access policy and will allow the Brussels Region to reverse a shortage of policy instruments that characterized it in comparison of the two other Regions.
- 7) Moreover, special attention shall now be given to the situation of young household wishing to settle as occupant owners in the Brussels Region.

As described above, the Region has further refocussed a number of policy instruments as a response to social demand on the rental and purchase markets.

The last significant evolution consists in the will to create concertation structures between the various actors in the housing policy sector. This commitment should materialize in the forthcoming creation of a regional advisory council on housing, which will bring together the various actors concerned by housing policy and will have consultative prerogatives on housing policy development at the regional level. Moreover, a draft Ordinance aiming at setting up an advisory tenants council in each social housing company was adopted by the Regional Parliament at the end of 2000 and will soon be implemented by the Regional Government. This decision will now provide the users of social housing with a role in the decision-making process on a large part of the matters that concern them.

It will also be noted that a regional housing observatory has been created, which should ultimately provide the regional authorities with better knowledge of the evolution of housing problems and guarantee adequate evaluation of the regional policies in this field.

Conclusions on the actions on housing of the Brussels Region: Five years after the Istanbul meeting, and more than a decade after its creation as the third full-fledged Region of the Belgian Federal State, the Brussels Region has a better grasp of its challenges and deficits in terms of habitat policy.

Its short existence has allowed it to set up a series of mechanisms for policy issues where it felt that it was urgent to intervene: in the future, the Region, according to the intentions of its Government, will be able to coordinate these various mechanisms and enrich them through a Housing Code that will encompass all the prerogatives of the housing policy and will allow for a quality-friendly housing policy for Brussels households.

This has become an essential challenge of the habitat policy of the Brussels Region.

Land-use planning: In Belgium, the Regional Governments of Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels Capital City are each responsible for the integrated planning and management of land resources, including territorial planning. The Regional Governments are carrying out a number of activities to manage land resources in a sustainable manner, including formulating appropriate policies, improving information systems, public awareness campaigns, and pilot projects.

Flemish Region: In order to give an answer to the spatial problems, the Flemish government has decided to carry out a spatial policy based on structure planning. In short, structure-planning stands for action oriented, dynamic and coherent spatial policy. The spatial policy is based on an integral and inclusive approach by trying to balance the needs of the different sectors and by involving different stakeholders in the process.

The 1996 Planning Decree (updated in the 1999 Planning Decree) introduces a three-tier system granting planning competences to the regional, provincial and municipal level, based on the principle of subsidiarity: the plans made up by a lower governmental level have to be in accordance with those of a higher governmental level. Each governmental level uses two kinds of plans: the spatial structure plan (ruimtelijk structuurplan”) and spatial implementation plans (ruimtelijk uitvoeringsplan). Although a spatial structure plan has a binding part, it is no destination plan. A spatial implementation plan is drawn up in order to implement the spatial structure plans. For that sake, the structure plan might contain a direct task to proceed with respect to a certain area or subject. More generally, however, a spatial implementation plan has to be at least in accordance with the spatial structure plan and its principles.

The expansion of human settlements is fairly restricted and under control in the actual spatial planning processes, in favor of the protection of the open space, landscape and wetlands. By means of the new decrees on land planning and on town and country planning, the best possible land use and sustainable management of land resources is better assured than ever before.

Walloon Region: In the Wallonia region the action in the field of land-use planning is multi-faceted, but it is mainly being carried out pursuant to the Wallonia Code of the Regional planning, Town planning and Inheritance (CWATUP). The Wallonia Government in 1999 adopted the Scheme of Development of Regional Space (SDER) and Communal Master Plans (SSC) and Communal Land use Plans (PCA, Plans Communaux d’Aménagement). In the Wallonia region there are regulatory and market-based measures and new financial tools.

Brussels region: The Brussels region is an essentially urbanized area, where urban policies are relevant and not so much land resources policies. The Regional Development Plan (French acronym PRD) has been updated during the third parliamentary term: the Region’s residential and economic attractiveness has been reinforced and it has been decided to work out follow-up and evaluation measures of the different development axes.

Programmes and Projects:

A. Providing Adequate Shelter for All: General:

Flemish Region: The general policy concerns and priority issues of the Flemish government have, in the second half of 1995, been translated into specific policies and programmes and action plans

- legislative measures to tax empty property and dilapidated buildings are being worked out;
- qualitative housing improvement with special focus on upgrading of existing stock is provided for;
- increase of the rental and owner occupied housing is being worked out;

- priority is given to the disadvantaged groups;
- a land and property policy is planned
- a regional housing plan is about to be available and a few municipal housing plans are also available

Walloon Region: Several instruments make it possible to ensure the right to suitable housing:

- Rehabilitation of the social housing stock
- Establishment of suitability criteria
- Relocation and rental allowances
- Rental permit
- Housing rehabilitation allowance

For several years, the Walloon Region has been prioritizing the rehabilitation and renovation of the existing social housing stock. This priority is explicitly set out in the management contract between the Region and the Walloon Housing Corporation. The Regional Government sets the amount for investments that the Region commits itself to finance in order to achieve the various objectives of its social housing policy as well as the budget allocation for new buildings and renovation.

The Walloon Government has established minimum suitability criteria that dwellings in the Walloon Region must meet. The housing administration visits dwellings in order to monitor compliance with these criteria. The number of requests for inspections varies between 1.200 and 1.500 per year.

The Walloon Region grants relocation and rental allowances to households in a precarious situation which leave an unsuitable dwelling for a suitable one and to disabled persons who leave an inadapted dwelling for a suitable one.

Collective housing estates and small individual dwellings (less than 28 sq. m. of dwelling surface) are submitted to dwelling permits. These dwellings must meet minimum criteria to be put up for rent : salubrity, dwelling surface, number of rooms, inviolability and respect for privacy. The owner must apply for the permit. About 1000 permits are issued every year.

Every person that undertakes works to improve his/her dwelling (eliminate an unsuitability factor) may benefit from a rehabilitation allowance. This allowance is granted to lessees and owners. About 12.000 such allowances are granted every year.

Brussels Region: Renewal of the social housing stock has been the priority in the current parliamentary term: a study carried out at the beginning of the term – the cadaster of social housing quality – has made it possible to assess the renewal needs (about 450 million euros); the rehabilitation of the whole social housing stock is certainly going to take a number of years.

As already mentioned, the ordinance of 17 July 2003 has enshrined various standards relating to health, security and equipment of all dwellings in the Region; this is an essential step towards improvement of the whole social housing stock of the Region;

The urban renewal policy implemented since the end of 1993 – the system of neighbourhood contracts – has made it possible to select 36 neighbourhoods – or urban areas – which benefit from integrated renewal of habitat as well as public spaces or social or cultural life of the area concerned. The areas concerned are mainly located in the centre of the Region, in what is called the area for reinforced development of housing and renewal (French acronym EDRLR);

Finally, the modernisation incentive has been revised and can now be obtained on the whole territory of the Region, with differentiated official subsidisation rates according to the applicant's income and the urban area where the house to be renovated is located.

Social housing:

Flemish Region: Since the approval in 1996 of four subsidy schemes for social housing, the partners in the social housing sector are: the Flemish Housing Company and her local Housing/Building Companies, the Municipalities, Associations of Municipalities, the Public Agencies for Welfare (OCMW's), the Flemish Housing Fund, and for some activities the 'rental offices'. Two financing systems for social housing projects are in place:

1. Investment credits (the Flemish Housing Company and her local Housing/Building Companies, the Flemish Housing Fund); and
2. Subsidies for property purchase, house construction, renovation, infrastructure and community services and special urban renewal projects (the Flemish Housing Company and her local Housing/Building Companies, the Municipalities, Associations of Municipalities, the Public Agencies for Welfare, the Flemish Housing Fund and the rental offices).

The budgeting allocations have varied substantially over the years. In the 80's, yearly budgets dropped from a high 18 billion in 1980 to 7 billion in 1989. It amounted to 32 billion in 1994 due to an additional finance for the Domus Flandria programme of 30 billion over a 3-year period, and to 7 billion in 1997. Over the period 2000 - 2004 the total budget increased to about 305 million euro for 2004.

The Flemish Housing Company and the local Housing Companies manages approximately 131.000 (2002) rental housing units, accounting for approx. 6% of the total housing market and 18% of the rental market. In addition, the Flemish Housing Company and the local Housing Companies build new purchase housing, renovates existing dwellings or implements social land development projects.

Walloon Region: The social housing stock managed by the Walloon Housing Corporation and its authorised corporations amounts to about 100 000 dwellings. This represents a quarter of the rental housing stock and about 8% of the total housing stock.

The majority of these dwellings are situated in the Provinces of Hainaut and Liège, which account for more than 55% of the Walloon social housing stock. About 2,700 social dwellings were delivered between 1999 and 2002.

The building of new rental dwellings remains the favourite instrument of the public housing corporations. However, the number of dwellings delivered through adaptation and purchase/renovation has been steadily increasing (about 40% of the dwellings delivered in 2002). About 3,000 social dwellings are to be produced in the period 2004-2006.

The Family Housing Fund of Wallonia delivers every year 60 rental dwellings for large families with modest incomes. These dwellings are mainly provided through purchase/renovation operations and are mainly situated in « target areas » (priority areas for intervention – French acronym ZIP). In 2002, 121 dwellings were started and about 600 dwellings were managed by the Housing Fund.

Brussels Region: The Brussels Region is the only Region in Belgium where the most frequent location status is that of tenant – 58,6 % - whereas 41,4% are owners of their house. The Brussels social housing stock – 38,320 units – accounts for slightly more than 8,3 % of the whole regional housing stock, i.e. 461,500 units.

All dwellings the renting of which is supervised by the public authorities – social dwellings, dwellings owned by the municipalities and the public social welfare centres (French acronym CPAS), dwellings

managed by the Housing Fund in the rental aid scheme and dwellings of the social real estate agencies (French acronym AIS) – account for slightly more than 46,000 units, i.e. about 10 % of the regional housing stock: moreover they are unevenly distributed among the 19 municipalities.

Since 1999 few new social dwellings have been produced – slightly more than 100 – efforts were concentrated on renewal. In December 2003 the current Government approved a “Plan for the future of housing in Brussels”, which will mean the production of 5,000 new dwellings – 3,500 social dwellings and 1,500 average-sized dwellings – in the coming years.

It will be noted that the activities of the Housing Fund have considerably increased since the number of loans granted in a year has risen from 200 at the beginning of the 1990s to over 700 in 2003.

B. Improving Human Settlement Management

Urban policy:

Flemish Region: To guarantee an inclusive approach to urban policy a consultation process was launched between the members of the Flemish Government, resulting in an inventory of all initiatives of the different ministers and administrations with an impact on urban policy. The inventory comprised more than 70 actions, out of which 30 priority actions were chosen. Each minister committed himself / herself to giving specific attention to the urban dimension in implementing these 30 actions. Workgroups, comprising cabinet members, administrations and external experts, were started for these priority actions. Follow-up of the action programme is guaranteed through a six-monthly progress report.

Walloon Region: The urban policy pursued by the Region of Wallonia is in line with the European philosophy, especially in terms of the fundamental principles proposed in the development scheme for Community space and the support for sustainable urban development in the European Union. More specifically, in relation to the latter document, the urban policy has incorporated two fundamental and indissociable elements:

- Making urban centres the driving force of economic development;
- Using urban centres as a tool for social cohesion.

Urban policy is governed by a transversal approach and therefore falls under the responsibility of domains as diverse as housing (increased aid for urban centres, social housing, etc.), territorial development (urban renovation and revitalisation), subsidised works (renovation of roads), mobility (community mobility plans and mobility advisors), local development (subsidies for the creation of local development agencies and Town centre managers), employment (local housing and employment) and social services (integrated social plans).

Below is a description of certain aspects of the housing policy in favour of urban centres.

The Walloon Region is characterised by very different situations in terms of access to housing. For example, the sales values are globally higher in the North-South axis going from Wavre to Arlon via Namur, Marche and Bastogne than in the horizontal axis following the Sambre and Meuse valleys, a region of old industrialisation. Some urban centres are deteriorating and have to cope with the departure of the wealthier inhabitants.

In 1994, with a view to providing appropriate response to these contrasted situations, the Walloon Government defined areas where housing policy funding had to be concentrated, the so-called priority areas for intervention. They can be divided into two categories : the areas subject to acute land pressure, which leads to the ousting of the lower-income strata of the population (these areas are mainly located in Walloon Brabant or in the southern part of the province of Luxembourg) and the neighbourhoods in need

characterised by habitat deterioration and social integration problems. In such areas, the housing allowances are increased according to the objectives to be achieved.

Finally, in order to cope with depopulation of urban centres, the concept of habitat core has been introduced by the Walloon Housing Code in 1998. Indeed, the city has been experiencing an significant exodus for several decades. This phenomenon of deurbanisation is characterised by the fact that a relatively important population leaves the cities for the close periphery, generally in housing estates, where the most frequent housing model is the detached house.

This argues in favour of priority assignment of public housing funds to urban centres. Indeed, it is unquestionable that the housing policy is one of the essential levers for stimulating the urban fabric, and hence, encouraging the citizen to opt for sustainable habitat. Besides, the Contract for the future of Wallonia clearly refers to this issue : in the introduction to its chapter devoted to the housing policy, it states that "in addition to guaranteeing the well-being of each citizen as well as her/his right to live in decent housing, the housing policy should also play a role in the positive reinforcement of the image of the Walloon Region and primarily in its great urban centres, without thereby neglecting the whole of the agglomerations and rural areas".

The Walloon Government has started to redefine the priority areas for intervention and the habitat cores in the wake of the reform of the Walloon Housing Code, with a view to adapting them to changes in society and to mould them into more effective tools at the service of the housing policy.

Brussels Region: In the Brussels Region, the new Regional Development Plan was started in 2002. This new plan has incorporated the two challenges appearing in the previous plan dating back to 1995, i.e.:

- stabilisation of a diversified population;
- economic growth guaranteeing social progress ; and
- respect for the quality of life in the city.

Preliminary studies have take into account the objectives laid down in the first plan.

The main innovations are:

- the emphasis on the international and intercultural character of Brussels (assets and threats, in particular in the housing market);
- the stronger relationship between economy and employment;
- the importance of scientific research as well as research and development.

The regional development plan will henceforth be the subject of annual evaluation reports; this work will be carried out by the town and country planning administration, experts from the different regional administrations or external experts.

Urban heritage:

Flemish Region: In order to offer more scope to local heritage policy, the Flemish Government has brought about a 'cultural heritage covenant'. It is an agreement between the Flemish Community and the cities, aiming to disclosure, to manage and to preserve the local heritage. Cities have always been the treasure chambers of the Flemish cultural heritage. The 'cultural heritage covenant' entails collaboration conceived as an agreement enabling local government to engage in heritage policy itself.

Walloon Region: Wallonia has a rich heritage that could benefit from various protection measures. The Walloon law on the development of the territory and the heritage (Code wallon de l'Aménagement du Territoire et du Patrimoine) contains a range of provisions aimed at protecting monuments, architectural ensembles, natural or semi-natural sites and archaeological sites located in the Region of Wallonia. These protection measures involve registration on a heritage protection list and classification. Note that the

aldermen's college can make proposals to the Walloon government for a monument, an architectural ensemble or a site to be placed on the protection list or classified.

Once protected, the monument, site, etc., benefits from a special status: the appointed official is required to provide an opinion on all acts and works that concern it; the Monuments and Sites Commission gives its opinion; the total demolition of a property is, in principle, prohibited, etc. The owner of such a property is also bound by various obligations: he must maintain it in good condition, he must send a form describing the state of health of his property to the Region of Wallonia every five years, and so on.

Local health policy:

Flemish Region: In the decree on the precautionary health policy (passed by the Flemish Parliament on 21/11/2003), the concept of 'ecological public health' has been introduced. This concept emphasizes the common ground, which exists between public health and the global environmental problems. Striving for sustainable development and health benefit at population level are of course mutually supportive. The network of medical environmental experts in Flanders has been further implemented. This network consists of three levels, with on the first level a local health platform, which develops a communication and a concertation framework, close to residents.

Walloon Region: The Walloon region supports the creation of awareness campaigns on the theme of "environment and health" that take the following forms:

- A permanent telephone service that any citizen may call to ask questions concerning the health risks of a given product or facility in the house;
- The publication of thematic data sheets for dissemination via networks of professionals;
- Setting up an internet site ([Http://www.sante-environnement.be](http://www.sante-environnement.be)) that deals with housing-related health and environmental issues.

C. Promoting Sustainable Land-Use Planning and Management

Flemish Region: In September 1997 the Flemish government gave its approval to the Spatial Structure Plan for Flanders (Ruimtelijk Structuurplan Vlaanderen). This document puts emphasis on sustainable spatial development in Flanders. The metaphor 'Flanders, open and urban' underlines the key priority of the structure plan to preserve open spaces and to concentrate growth in urban areas. This has to be achieved by selective extension of urban areas, maintenance of open areas, concentration of economic activities and optimising the existing traffic- and transportation infrastructure.

The Spatial Structure Plan for Flanders is implemented by spatial implementation plans. One of the instruments used in these implementation plans is the process of delineation for urban areas. In the delineation process a precise area is selected by involving all actors in which a consistent urban policy, including a variety of urban activities, is applicable. In such area urban growth, concentration and infill is to be realised. This will be done with a common vision and spatial concepts for the urban area supporting a sustainable spatial development for the urban area itself as well as for its surrounding open areas. The process results in a broad range of actions in the urban area (housing, industrial zones, mobility, city-forests, parks) that will be included in a Spatial Implementation Plan specifying the destination, organisation and management for the different action-areas and the way the implementation can take place. Environmental, social, economic and other considerations are thus taken into account and different measures are taken to ensure a good and sustainable balance between them.

Walloon Region: The Walloon Government approved in 1999 the regional development plan (schéma de développement régional, SDER), which is a guidance document for regional spatial development policies. This document is based on three essential underlying principles:

- The territory of Wallonia is a "common heritage of its inhabitants". This heritage must be preserved and developed with its natural, cultural and landscape particularities;
- Sustainable development. This calls for considering long-term effects of spatial allocations, rehabilitating derelict spaces and renovating deteriorated spaces rather than using new ones. The principle of conservative management of land and natural resources is an integral part of this approach.
- Social and economic cohesion. Spatial development must take into account unmet fundamental needs. The commitment to better social and economic cohesion implies that those who possess more resources – in any domain – accept to devolve part of these resources to those who have less.

The first goal of the SDER is to promote balanced spatial structures in Wallonia, i. e. structures in which various activities and land uses are in harmony and complete and strengthen each other.

D. Promoting the Integrated Provision of Environmental Infrastructure: water, sanitation, drainage, and solid-waste management: Under Freshwater and Sanitation profiles.

E. Promoting Sustainable Energy and transport Systems in Human Settlements

Energy: The following responsibilities were fully transferred to the regions in 1989: distribution and transport of electricity through networks with a maximum voltage of 70 kV; public distribution of gas; use of methane and blast furnace gas; district heating equipment and networks; valorization of waste products reclaimed from coal tips; new and renewable energy sources of energy, excluding nuclear energy; recovery of waste energy from industry or other uses; rational use of energy. With the co-operation agreement dated 18 November 1991, the federal government and the three regional governments created a formal body for discussion between the central government and the regions on all energy matters transferred to the regions, the Energy Concentration Group ENOVER/CONCERE. Relevant legislation includes a royal decree for minimum energy efficiency standards for hot water devices.

The main elements of the federal sustainable energy strategy/goals are (based on the "the new federal energy policy declaration" (September 1999): The commitment to phase out the nuclear energy, the acceleration of the liberalization of the energy market.

Various initiatives have been introduced and are under development by the three regions for the promotion of energy efficiency in the residential sector: information campaigns, energy kiosks which give information and advice on energy efficiency measures, thermal insulation standards, energy certification of buildings, etc.

Flemish Region: Depletion of the ozone layer, climate change and transboundary air pollution are major issues in the Flemish Environmental Policy Plan. In 2003 a new Flemish Environmental Policy Plan (2003-2007, MINA 3) has been approved by the Flemish government. This plan fixes inter alia the general strategy of air pollution policy. The plan contains numerous actions towards different stakeholders and polluters. Some examples of major actions are emission reduction programs for industrial sectors, more ambitious emission limit values, cooperation with the federal authorities on product standards for heating installations and solvent containing products, specific measures in polluted areas, introduction of environmentally sound vehicles, measures on energy efficiency, mobility and environmental plans, etc.

In the framework of the NEC directive a Flemish emission reduction program has been drawn up. This program includes information on the adopted and envisaged policies and measures for all relevant NOx emitting activities and quantifies the effect of these policies and measures on the NOx emissions in 2010.

On January 1, 2002 a system of tradable green certificates was established. Green certificates are being delivered to producers of electricity from renewable energy sources. The producers sell the certificates to electricity suppliers who each year have to deliver to the Flemish regulator of the electricity market a certain number of green certificates related to an annually increasing percentage of their total electricity sales. The green portfolio standard is gradually increasing so that in 2010 6% of all electricity sales will consist of green electricity.

Walloon Region: In 2003, the Walloon government adopted a plan for the sustainable control of energy up to the year 2010. The aim of this plan is to reduce gross domestic consumption and final consumption by 2% between 2000 and 2010. Four major action strands have been developed for this purpose:

1. Controlling energy demand and improving energy efficiency
2. A major shift towards using renewable energy
3. Converting production systems and the choice of fuels
4. Controlling the regional energy market

As part of a sustainable vision for Walloon society, the plan defines a range of recommended measures aimed at meeting the objectives of reducing energy dependence and limiting the effects of energy production and consumption on the environment. Naturally, this plan remains coherent with the different policies pursued by the Region of Wallonia and in particular the Walloon climate plan and the draft Walloon air quality plan.

Transport: Every year a “mobility week”, organized around a “car-free day”, brings together national, regional and local authorities in an effort to change people’s travel patterns. Several measures are being examined, as for instance reductions in the acquisition tax for low-emission vehicles, reinforcement of exhaust gas checks, and so on.

Federal level: In order to make the transport system more sustainable, the Federal Government is acting on three different levels: managing demand, improving infrastructure supply and improving the vehicles’ technological characteristics. In the transport sector, the following recent measures are also contributing to the achievement of the objectives: premiums for LPG equipment, support for the European process of reinforcing diesel vehicle standards, the management contract for the Belgian railways which set aims at increasing the number of passenger – kilometers and ton – kilometers by 50 per cent between 2000 and 2010.

Flemish Region: Flemish traffic policy is aimed at controlling the growth of mobility, improving safety, organizing an efficient transport of passengers and goods, reducing traffic congestion, guaranteeing the access to mobility for all people and the developing an environmentally sound transportation system. Railroads and inland waterways are to be developed as alternative transportation systems. There will be focused on public transport and bicycle use to support a modal shift in passenger transport.

The initiative for development of urban and regional transport in Flanders concerns the provision of basic mobility, which offers everyone in the residential areas delineated by the spatial structure plan the right to a minimum access to public transport. The development of public transport in cities should allow it to become an alternative to car traffic, and the use of public transport is stimulated by promotional prices, such as free use by 65+, buzzy pass for youngsters, free subscriptions for employees, etc. The initiative is already implemented in a number of municipalities in the region.

In 2003 the Flemish government adopted the transport policy plan which also contains measures to encourage the use of environmental friendly vehicles and energy efficient driving behaviour. An action programme on environmental friendly vehicles has been worked out. Several actions are already in place, like the installation of catalytic filters on busses for public transport, reduction on vehicle taxes for LPG,

websites with information (see next point), subsidies for local authorities, internal environmental conservation ...

In 2001 the Flemish Government formalised the use of mobility covenants as an instrument to initiate a sustainable mobility policy on local level. It is a voluntary agreement between local authorities, the Flemish Government, the Flemish public transport operator, the Province and 3rd parties involved (e.g. schools, companies, rail operator NMBS-SNCB,...). They agree to realise predefined objectives by co-operating closely in making a local transport plan and concrete actions and projects in the theme of sustainable mobility.

In 2002 transport was included in the environment contracts between the Flemish region and local governments (see chapter H). Local authorities can subscribe to one of the three stages. Stage 1 contains support for purchase of clean vehicles, campaigns on transport and environment and implementation of transport plans for the municipalities. To comply with stage 1, local authorities also have to report on cooperation between transport service and environment service. Stage 2 is linked with the mobility contracts. To comply with stage 2 local authorities have to evaluate their local transport plan on environmental issues. This evaluation will then be integrated in an overall evaluation of the local transport plan. Also measures are linked. A project submitted in the mobility contract with an environmental link will also be subsidised through the environment contract.

Walloon Region: In the Walloon Region, the mobility of persons and goods has been steadily increasing. Road is the main transport mode for persons (more than 75% of movements) and goods (70% of the traffic). The network saturation and the multiple environmental nuisances related to road transport are such that adoption measures promoting less polluting alternatives can not be postponed for long. The Walloon Government approved on 22 January 2004 the draft decree concerning local mobility and accessibility. The decree aims at organising the mobility plans, coordinating the implementation thereof and organising the evaluation of the measures that give concrete expression to these plans (organisational measures or adjustment of infrastructures). The mobility plan is meant to help the municipalities define a mobility strategy and plan measures to improve mobility on their territory. This planning tool is intended for organising and improving accessibility to the residential and working areas, both for persons and for goods, in the perspective of sustainable development.

F. Promoting Human Settlement Planning and Management in Disaster-Prone Areas:

Flemish Region: The objective of the Flemish high water management policy is to limit the damage caused by floods. The concrete policy has changed over the last couple of years. The past taught us that nature will not bow to man. Floods are and remain a natural phenomenon. Therefore, to limit flood damage, solutions that follow the natural water system, are chosen as far as possible.

Water managers try to avoid the end-of-pipe approach (technical measures fighting symptoms locally and draining the water at accelerated pace). The Water Division of the Ministry of Flanders tries to anticipate problems, following a 4 steps strategy:

1. At first the cause of potential problems, at the source, is dealt with by retaining as much spare water as possible in the ground and the surface water;
2. When such source measures are not sufficient, extra buffers are created by locating 'natural flood areas' alongside rivers. More 'space for water' is created.
3. Where the natural approach fails, additional infrastructural works (flood gates, pumping stations, wait basins) are constructed.
4. In situations of exceptionally extreme meteorological situations, the division Water invests in the establishment of a warning system to alert emergency services and inhabitants.

Since 24 November 2004 (local) authorities must execute a 'water test' before deciding on any plan, decision or licence. The water test should establish whether or not the action can cause any damage to the water system.

Walloon Region: For the Walloon Region, see the chapter on priority areas for intervention and habitat cores.

G. Promoting Sustainable Construction Industry Activities: Energy efficiency in the residential sector: various financial incentives and initiatives have been introduced and are under development by the three regions for the promotion of energy efficiency in the residential sector: information campaigns, energy kiosks which give information and advice on energy efficiency measures, thermal insulation standards, energy certification of buildings, etc.

Flemish Region: The Flemish Housing Company, responsible for the implementation of social housing policy in Flanders, recently launched the project 'Ecological and Sustainable Social Housing Construction'. A special coordinator for sustainable construction was appointed within the Company and a specific chapter on ecological and sustainable construction was included in the Companies guidelines for construction companies. Three pilot projects on sustainable construction were initiated.

Walloon Region: The Walloon Region is preparing to implement the European directive on the energy performance of buildings at two levels.

- Launching voluntary actions in 2004: firstly, the introduction of an energy advice procedure (EAP) for existing dwellings². There are also plans for the construction of energy efficient dwellings as part of a voluntary commitment by architects and construction companies. This partnership with construction actors will be based on a quality charter defining the criteria for new construction (structure, heating system, automatic control, transparency, etc.). This action will provide future building owners with the possibility of identifying actors (architect and/or contractor) recognised for their energy expertise during the construction of housing, and hence obtaining a guarantee of quality work.
- Awareness campaigns aimed at professionals and individuals to demonstrate the sound basis and economic interest of regulatory technical standards.

Moreover, note that the programmes for the creation and renovation of the social housing stock form part of an eco-efficiency drive: better insulation, respect for the general principles of passive solar architecture, installation of solar panels, etc.

H. Promoting Human Resource Development and Capacity-Building for Human Settlement Development
Federal level: The post-graduate Centre for Human Settlements (PGCHS) is an academic centre at the Department of Architecture, Urban Design and Regional Planning of the Faculty of Applied Sciences, K.U.Leuven. The Centre, with a long-standing international tradition in the human settlements field, focuses on issues of housing, building and planning in a context of development under conditions of scarce resources and pressing environmental constraints. The close interaction between housing and urban development is given particular attention. PGCHS emphasis architecture, urban design and strategic spatial planning without neglecting relevant environmental, social and economic issues. The main activities of the Centre include a Master's program in Human Settlements, co-ordination of doctoral research, both fundamental and applied research, and scientific advisory work on human settlement policies and projects.

² This involves enables the owner, tenant or acquirer to assess the energy performance of the dwelling (building, heating, hot water supply, etc.)

The Master's programme in Human Settlements leads, after successful completion of the required examinations, to the degree of "Master of Architecture in Human Settlements" or "Master in Human Settlements" (for candidates with a non-architectural background). This intensive programme is to be completed in one full year starting in September.

The programme has the following components:

- a core package of compulsory courses dealing with human settlements in development, developmental and managerial aspects of sustainable development, design projects, study tours and thesis;
- a choice to be made out of three majors:
- Architecture and urbanism (courses: Architecture of the city in development; Urban design: history, theory and practice; Theory of Architecture: modernity and urbanity)
- Rational design and construction (courses: Architectural design theory and methods, CAAD; Construction economics and cost control, Application to developing countries; Project management: theory and case studies)
- Spatial planning and policy (courses: Urban and regional planning for sustainable development; Structure Planning; Urban sociology)
- further optional courses which can either enable a more general training by selecting from other majors or from optional courses, or be chosen to further specialise in one of the majors. In addition to the regular faculty, an international visiting staff supports the programme.

Flemish Region: A cooperation agreement "Environment as Stepping Stone to Sustainable Development" took effect on 1 January 2002. This agreement (a kind of environmental covenant) between the Flemish Government and local authorities, stipulates that a town, municipality or province receives a subsidy from the Flemish Government in exchange for the implementation of sustainable policies in various dimensions and fields: water, solid waste, mobility, energy, pollution, nature areas. There are two horizontal clusters as well: target groups and area-oriented policies. The proposed actions have also been subdivided into three levels of ambition. A town, province or municipality receives a subsidy from the Flemish Government for each cluster that has been completed. The higher the level of ambition, the higher the subsidy will be. There is a strong focus on integration, participation, planning and a source-oriented and preventive approach to environmental problems. This agreement is entered into on a voluntary basis, in principle for a period of three years with an option to extend it by a further three years.

Walloon Region: The NGO "Espaces & Coopération" has been managing since 1987 training sessions for public servants of municipalities from Ivory Coast. For three months, these public servants are immersed in the functioning of a Belgian municipality. In 13 years, 80 public servants of Ivorian municipalities were trained in Belgium. More than 40 Belgian municipalities (Walloon Region and Brussels) were involved in this programme, as well as a similar number of Ivorian municipalities. This course was based on material provided by UNCHS: "Training for elected leadership".

These training sessions have also led to twinning arrangements between municipalities (Tiassale and Ottignies-Louvain-La-Neuve, Jacquerville and Sambreville), as well as small decentralised cooperation initiatives (Greze-Doiceau, Fontaine-l'Evêque), essentially for urban sanitation works, water reservoirs, sewage or provision of equipment.

Espaces & Cooperation is presently elaborating a programme based on accumulated experiences, and focussing on concepts of participation. This training programme on participatory urban management organizes occasional hands-on training sessions in Belgium, and in either Africa or Latin-America. The project operates in cooperation with the Urban Management Programme (UN-HABITAT) in Quito, Ecuador and a non-profit organization Periferia (Brussels). The programme addresses people working in

the field, either from community organizations or civil servants wishing to elaborate more participatory practices. It capitalizes on the experience of cities in Latin-America and selected cities in Europe.

Status: Belgium has about 10.239.085 inhabitants (2000), spread over an area of 30,518 km². It is a very densely populated country with about 335 inhabitants per km². Its population is quite unevenly distributed. The highest population densities are found in the north and centre of the country, more especially within the quadrangle formed by the cities of Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent and Leuven, in which more than 40 % of the national population lives. By contrast, the population density south of the Charleroi-Namur-Liège axis is less than 80 inhabitants per km². Nowadays some experts argue that Belgium has reached virtual 100% urbanization, even though the official figure is around 96-98%.”

The high density together with the very high degree of urbanization, and high level of industrialization has had its effect on the overall environmental quality. In the 1996 Habitat report it was already stated that environmental degradation of rivers, watercourses and coastal areas of soil and subsoil including aquifers, of air, of green and forest areas, and the problems of waste, were all serious problems in Belgium.

Since then both the public and private concerns of environmental degradation have come to the fore strongly and substantial efforts to remedy problems have been undertaken. Far from being solved such problems are, in some domains, either stabilized or partially remedied. It is expected that further public policies as well as efforts of individuals and civil society in general will, in the coming years continue to be of high priority.

Poverty: In Belgium 6% of the population is poor. This figure is low from a European perspective. It is mainly due to the system of Social Security that exists in Belgium. There is a system of social assistance for those who cannot work or cannot work long enough that guarantees a minimum income fixed by law and, in case of dispute, is settled in labour court.

Urban areas: Belgium has a strong and unique human settlements and habitat identity. This includes a high degree of urbanization; the urbanization of rural areas; the predominance of medium-size and small towns; a regionally differentiated approach to human settlements and habitat policies; a tradition of socially redistributive human settlements; and a housing policy with high infrastructure services. Household unit requirements are still growing at a substantial rate, despite slow population growth. Physical urban expansion, to the detriment of agricultural land and green areas, has been considerable in the past characterized by suburban development and indiscriminating commercial expansion.

Transportation: Despite of the amount of measures undertaken in the field of transportation, they have had an insufficient impact with regard to commitments in the area of atmospheric protection.

Air quality: Belgium faces various challenges in the areas of greenhouse gas emissions, ozone depletion and air pollution. When implementing current legislation and the Gothenburg protocol, the area of ecosystems with acid deposition above their critical loads for acidification will mount up to 110000 hectares in 2010. Population ozone exposure indices will mount to 29 million persons.ppm.hours.

Capacity-Building, Education, Training and Awareness-Raising : General:

Flemish Region: There are many links between the ‘human settlement’ theme and education and training. In the Flemish Community, the education system uses subject-related as well as cross-curricular final objectives (core curriculum) for primary and secondary education. Cross-curricular final objectives contain themes like social skills (this implies all forms of behaviour which one must master in our society in order to participate in an effective and constructive way in social life) and education for citizenship

(being open to the political, economic, social and cultural life). Another final objective that can be considered important in this matter is environmental study (this is intended to raise environmental awareness and thus makes a fundamental contribution to sustainable development).

The final objectives (core curriculum) that are used by all schools in the Flemish Community contain also environmental themes. An example of such final objectives are: 'the pupils show in their behaviour that they are prepared to adopt a careful approach to the use of paper, water, waste and energy and they are able to give concrete examples in their environment to illustrate how people's approach to the environment can be negative or positive and that environmental problems are often caused by conflicting interests (primary education, environmental education, final objective 1.18 and 1.19).

Walloon Region: A whole series of measures are being implemented in the Walloon Region to raise awareness concerning environmental protection issues in schools:

- Brochures aimed at various age groups;
- Educational dossiers;
- Setting up regional environmental initiation centres (Centres régionaux d'Initiation à l'Environnement - CRIE) that provide a public information service, as well as environmental awareness and training with a view to sustainable development. The different CRIEs are distributed over the entire territory of Wallonia in order to bring them close to citizens. This dispersion led to their organisation into a network, which allows them to diversify their activities, to develop complementary environmental themes and constantly improve their environmental education practices. The activities of the CRIEs are aimed at schools, adults, teachers, trainers, nature guides and forestry officials and guards. Guided walks, exhibitions, open days and conferences also provide opportunities for family-based activities.

Energy:

The three regional governments have made available information and awareness packages in relation to energy conservation measures to primary and secondary schools.

Flemish Region: Specific awareness campaign programmes to promote sustainable consumption patterns include news flashes on television on energy efficient light bulbs and refrigerators, distribution of energy distributors containing information on how to reduce energy consumption and on premiums to be obtained. A larger and more detailed campaign on the 'month of energy efficiency' is going on Flemish television. Since 1998, October is the "Month of energy efficiency" in Flanders during which daily meetings, conferences and workshops are organized.

In the Flemish region, VITO (Flemish institution for technological research) raises energy awareness in the industrial sector and among the public through the Information System on Energy and Environmental (EMIS). The Flemish Institute for RUE, VIREG (Flemish Institute for rational energy use) was created in 1997 with the goal of actively involving the different actors (energy production and distribution companies and the industrial and residential energy users).

Flanders has communication policies for renewables aimed at all social groups. The region gives financial support to the Organization for Renewable Energy in Flanders, which promotes sustainable energy schemes. This organization provides a discussion platform for several organizations and research centres activities in the development of renewables.

A specific web site has been developed to inform consumers how environmental friendly a new car is. A label has been developed based on all regulated pollutants. Information on all new cars available in Belgium is provided on the web (www.milieuvriendelijkvoertuig.be). This web site contains also information on the influence of driver behaviour. A campaign is started to influence driving behaviour. A brochure, sticker, radio broadcast and a website (www.ikbenrob.be) are part of this campaign. Promotion campaigns are held to promote public transport by information panels, information pamphlets for certain

bus routes... The information panels are also used to promote carpooling, biking, Monthly a newsletter “Uitweg” is published and distributed in public places. This newsletter contains information on all mobility aspects. A brochure with information on air pollution and tips for a better environment has been published. The brochure contains tips for a sustainable transport, for better energy use and for environmental products in and around the house.

Walloon Region: In the Walloon region, 12 kiosks provide practical information and audits on energy savings for heating, thermal insulation of buildings and lighting for individuals, and in small and medium-sized enterprises. The Walloon region organizes several training programmes; the targets of these activities are energy managers in public buildings, teachers in schools for carpenters and bricklayers to improve the quality of thermal insulation, and architects.

The Region of Wallonia regularly launches awareness campaigns on the themes of insulation, heating installations, solar water-heaters, using energy-saving lamps and reducing gas and electricity consumption.

An annual Energy Day is held in the Walloon region. On this occasion a number of sites throughout Wallonia are open to the general public, providing an opportunity to discover renewable energies and energy-saving equipment (wind farms, bio-climatic houses, solar water heaters, etc.).

Brussels Region: Brussels-capital: the energy-administration has taken several initiatives such as information campaigns that have included various workshops and distributing brochures to energy consumers in the public and private sectors. In the near future, the administration plans to launch a promotional campaign for solar collectors.

Brussels region: In 1996 ABEA, L'Agence bruxelloise de l'energie-Brussels Energie Agentschap, the Brussels energy agency was set up. This information kiosk is open to the general public and disseminates informative brochures, undertakes thermal assessments of dwellings and organizes thematic information workshops.

Urban policy:

Flemish Region: In 2000 a plan was launched to write a White Book, offering a coherent vision on urban development and formulating practical recommendations on several topics. At the end of 2000 a task force on urban policy was created, bringing together experts and civil servants. Their drafts were discussed during workshops in the autumn of 2001 and adjusted. The second phase of the exercise, drafting an integrated future vision on cities and urban policy was implemented by the task force in 2002. A redaction team translated this future vision in a readable book. The White Book ‘The Century of the City, about city republics and raster cities’ was presented on a congress in November 2003.

At the same time a communication plan for the period 1999-2004 was developed. The double objective of the plan was to get across a positive message about cities and to communicate regularly about the initiatives of the Flemish urban policy. The target groups were young working couples and over 50-year olds. A private communication bureau was responsible for the creation and follow-up of the plan.

At the end of April 2001 the communication campaign on urban policy ‘At home in the city’ was launched. It is a coherent package of media and PR campaigns supporting the Flemish urban policy. In spring 2001 the first wave of advertisements with prominent Flemish people appeared in the main newspapers and magazines. In autumn 2001 campaigns on mobility, space for playing and an appeal to join the workshops of the above-mentioned task force on urban policy, followed. The following wave of advertisements in 2002 dealt with prevention of asocial behaviour, poverty reduction, sanitation of polluted lands and economic initiatives, new destinations of empty company houses, integration policy

and the launch of the new website www.thuisindestad.be. The advertisement concept was used again in 2003, but differentiated regionally, depending on the demands of the 13 Flemish cities. Radio and television were also used in the campaign of the Flemish government, using the motto 'every day a result'. In this context urban renewal was put forward as a theme.

Walloon Region: In 2002, The Walloon Region in association with the federal program "large towns" has edited a brochure on the "urban policy in Wallonia" which describes all the public instruments of urban policy.

As an extension to the World Habitat Day 2002, the Region of Wallonia drew up an educational dossier to raise awareness in schools of the different types of habitat in urban centres, as opposed to another habitat that is preferred by most of our co-citizens: a detached house situated outside of the town. The educational dossier is available at:

<http://mrw.wallonie.be/dgatlpl/dgatlpl/Pages/Log/Dossier%20pedagogique/index.htm>.

Information: Urban policy:

Flemish Region: In 2001 the creation of city monographs was launched, intending to give a global picture of each of the major cities and to situate each city within the broader framework of Flanders, the group of 13 Flemish cities and a comparable city. The numbers and statistics from diverse sources were brought together in one readable document. The monographs are intended for policy makers, business, civil society and interested citizens. At the moment there are monographs available for the 13 cities; through 'SMOL' (urban monographs on line) updating the statistical material has started.

Apart from the monographs a 'city monitor' was created to make available comparable data on urban developments. The monitor indicates whether or not the city evolves in a sustainable direction. Ideally everyone involved in city development will use the city monitor to support policy choices. The city monitor is developed in consultation with 250 experts. The usability of the instrument for the cities themselves is an important criterion.

Walloon Region: In a partnership between the Region of Wallonia, the Walloon housing society (Société wallonne du Logement), the confederation of Walloon construction and the Union of cities and towns of Wallonia, three actions have been undertaken to inform and advise public and private partners about urban renewal:

- Creation of an internet site as a hub for urban renewal (<http://www.requalificationurbaine.be/>);
- Creation of a legal and administrative guide to public-private partnership forms applicable to operations for the creation and renovation of social housing, modest dwellings and similar, as well as for urban revitalisation plans.
- Information sessions on the possibilities of public/private partnerships.

Land-use planning: There is sufficient access to all the information necessary for making sound decisions. This information is disseminated at the local level by means of maps and texts on the different subjects. The different land inventories are performed with the most recent and appropriate techniques: satellite image processing and aerial photograph surveys. Existing maps are digitalized and put into a geographic information system.

The regional governments have all developed sufficient and adequate indicators on integrated land management and sustainable use of land resources.

Flemish Region: The Flemish administration of Planning and Statistics annually explores the demographic, macroeconomic, social and cultural framework in which the Flemish Government operates. The administration's annual publication, VRIND (Flemish Regional Indicators) is available online.

In June 1995 the cooperation structure GIS (Geographic Information Structures) Flanders was created. Its mission was to get rid of the problems in establishing, using, exchanging and managing geographical information between Flemish authorities.

The Basic Chart Flanders, a cooperation project between the Division Planning and Statistics of the Ministry of Flanders and the Support Centre GIS (Geographic Information Systems)-Flanders, gives a cartographical representation of the Flemish basic statistics, a comprehensive statistical analysis of the Flemish population (http://aps.vlaanderen.be/statistiek/cijfers/stat_basiskaart.htm).

Walloon Region: The report on the State of the Walloon Environment makes it possible to evaluate the evolution of land allocation. In the near future, indicators for our region will be applied, which will allow an even more effective follow-up. A lot of data are available, some of which are included in maps and atlases. Nevertheless, there is a need for continuing the inventories and research. The collaboration of the National Institute of Statistics (INS) is necessary. Meanwhile, The evolution of land allocation can be followed in the reports on the State of the Walloon Environment. The adoption of indicators for our area will allow an even more effective follow-up. The State of the Wallonia Environment is widely publicized (some reports are on the Internet). The future indicators, once worked out with the assistance of the Center of Studies for the Sustainable Development of the Institute of Environmental Management and Regional planning (IGEAT) of the Université Libre de Bruxelles, will make it possible for all the actors to have access to reliable and useful data. There are, inter alia, indicators on: pressure from urban centres, the number of applications for permits in the Wallonia Region, evolution of the physical occupation of the land, etc. It is currently possible to obtain some information on the web site of the Directorate General for Land use, Housing, and Cultural Heritage.

In the Walloon Region, the administration of the Land register makes it possible to follow the evolution of the property situation. A land occupation map was worked out in 1989. Communal Numerical Photographic Plans are being carried out. There are also "orthophotoplans", based on aerial pictures.

Federal level: The Federal office for scientific, technical and cultural affairs (OSTC) finances several research projects on indicators and installed several platforms for concentration (biodiversity, viable cities, indicators for sustainable development).

Research and Technologies: *General:* The Federal Office for Scientific, Technical and Cultural Affairs (OSTC) within the framework of its research programmes supports several projects dedicated to urban problematic such as: air quality, mobility, cartography, demography, indicators, residential patterns, insecurity, exclusion. In particular, the OSTC supports a scientific platform "Viable cities" in the framework of its Scientific Support Plan for a Sustainable Development Policy (<http://www.belspo.be/issd/urban/> - temporary address) preparation. Two interdependent research themes will be studied. The first relates to the determining factors in companies' and households' location choices and the second to tools that may facilitate the actions of political decision-makers and other urban managers. For more information, please look at <http://www.belspo.be/>

Walloon Region: On 7 May 1998, the Walloon Government decided to set up the Standing Conference on Territorial Development [Conférence permanente du Développement territorial – French acronym CPDT] (see <http://cpdt.wallonie.be>). The CPDT gathers the majority of the government departments of the Region and the three major French-speaking universities of the country (Université Catholique de Louvain, Université libre de Bruxelles and Université de Liège); the CPDT is both an interdisciplinary aid to decision-making on regional planning and a major applied research network. This general objective is accompanied by specific objectives: create a reflective space across the Walloon institutions and administrations, encourage the creation of multidisciplinary research teams within universities, contribute

to the gradual creation of a hotbed of young specialists that are familiar with the concepts of territorial development. The research topics of the 2003-2004 programme are as follows:

- 1 New spatial practices: spatial changes and territorial structures
- 2 Accession of the Walloon Region to the Kyoto Protocol: measures to be taken in the field of regional planning to facilitate the respect of Walloon commitments and to mitigate the effects of global warming
- 3 Communal and "supracommunal" areas: territorial development actions
- 4 Area-based environment management
- 5 Area-based information management systems (SYGIT)

Transport:

Federal level: The topics transport and mobility have been studied within the framework of several research programmes of the Federal Office for Scientific, Technical and Cultural Affairs (OSTC): the programme "Transport and mobility" (1991-1995) and the programme "Sustainable mobility" within the first Scientific support plan for a sustainable development policy (SPSD I, 1996-2001). In 2001 the Federal Office for Scientific, Technical and Cultural Affairs (OSTC) has launched within the second Scientific support plan for a sustainable development policy (SPSD II, 2000-2005), new research projects related to modes of consumption and production in which transport constitutes one of the priority themes. These research projects deal in particular with the issues of traffic safety, modal choice (freight and passenger transport) and technological aspects of transport within the context of a sustainable development. A budget of EUR 6,6 millions over four years is available for "Transport".

Flemish region: Several research projects have been carried out on environmental friendly vehicles and driving behaviour. In 2001 a concept was worked out to evaluate transport policy plans, in preparation of the introduction of the EU directive on strategic environmental assessment, including all relevant environmental issues and social aspects. All documents are available for anyone interested (in Dutch).

Telematics are used to build an overall transport management system. A multi-modal transport modeling system, integrating car traffic and public transport, has been realized. It focuses in the first place on the main roads and secondary roads in the urban areas. The system is managed by the Flemisch Traffic Centre. The multi-modal transport model will be used to improve traffic management.

Walloon Region: As part of its research programme, the standing conference on territorial development (CPDT) has several times reflected on transport-related themes. In 2000, the CPDT studied support for the optimisation of major infrastructure. This theme was covered by three studies. The first concerns Walloon airports (Bierset and Gosselies), their location, their operation, their development possibilities and the expected economic consequences. Researchers also discussed the environmental management of airports. A study was devoted to high-speed rail transport for passengers and freight. The third study concerned waterway transport and the location of new port facilities. Between 2000 and 2002, the CPDT worked on the theme of mobility management and multimodal transport.

Urban policy:

Flemish Region: A research project concerning everyday conflicts amongst city inhabitants in the public space ran from January until December 2002. The research project aimed for specific and direct results such as fine-tuning the problem definition of conflicts in the urban environment and formulating criteria for city personnel to diagnose conflicts. On the basis of the project in four social city practices a handbook with guidelines for creative and social city practices was developed.

Walloon Region: Urban renewal is covered by a specific study carried out by the standing conference on territorial development (CPDT) over the 2003-2006 period. This research effort entitled "Reconstructing the city on the city" aims to find solutions to halt urban decline. It is divided into two strands:

- Fundamental studies to measure the scale of phenomena in order to understand the underlying mechanisms of the urban decline process;

- Practical studies based on the findings of the fundamental studies in order to identify avenues for concrete and "implementable" actions.

Financing: Housing subsidies (private sector oriented)

Flemish Region: The Flemish regional government continues the tradition of the national policy to stimulate private individuals and households to improve their housing situation by purchase, new construction, renovation or improvement of their dwelling. Nowadays following subsidies and allowances are available:

1. Subsidies for improving or adapting a house;
2. Low interest-bearing or social loans for purchase, construction or renovation;
3. A relocation, installation and renting subsidy; and
4. Insurance against loss of income.

Municipalities are important partners as between 40 to 55% of all municipalities allocate incentive premiums, and about 15 to 30% undertake initiatives for special target groups (the elderly, handicapped, migrants, etc.).

Walloon Region: Encouraging ownership constitutes one of the main aspects of the housing policy in Wallonia. Several types of mortgages with soft rates for the purchase, building or renovation of houses are offered to households with modest to average income, large families. Every year, approximately 2,000 loans of this type are negotiated in the Walloon Region.

In addition, the Region is developing a series of instruments which meet with growing success:

- aid for the refunding of mortgage loans for young couples ("Prêt Jeunes");
- insurance against loss of income for couples who sign a mortgage loan;
- a rehabilitation incentive for owners who plan renovation work.

Other incentives are granted in the Walloon Region: building incentives, purchase incentives, moving grants, rent aid, etc.)

Urban renewal:

Walloon Region: In the Walloon Region, besides housing policies which aim at revitalising urban cores, one should also mention the urban revitalisation and modernisation policies that have been pursued for about twenty years. Their purpose - through improvement of the living environment – is described below.

The aim of urban renewal instrument is to restructure, rehabilitate or redevelop an urban area through an operation that has to be both comprehensive (covering 4 aspects: living environment, economic development, social cohesion and cultural action) and concerted (participation of all the local institutional partners and of the population of the neighbourhood). The operations aim primarily at maintaining and improving the habitat through one or more of the following actions:

- rehabilitation or building of houses;
- creation or improvement of utility services;
- creation or improvement of green areas;
- building or improvement of premises intended for trade or service activities.

The aim of urban revitalisation instrument is to enable the municipality to influence the image of a neighbourhood that has to be regenerated through an association with private partners, by means of an agreement. Such agreements have to comply with the rule that for every euro provided by the Region, the private partner(s) has (have) to invest a minimum of 2 euros, of which one is to be invested in one or several of the following operations:

- transformation and improvement of unhealthy houses that can still be improved;

- conversion of buildings with a view to developing housing space;
- demolition of unhealthy houses and building of houses at the same place;
- construction of housing space.

Flemish Region: The 1999 Policy Agreement stipulated that the financial envelope of the existing 'Social Impulse Fund' was to be reoriented and increased with a view to strengthening urban policy. From 1 January 2003 onwards the Social Impulse Fund was dissolved. The guarantee part of the financial envelope of the Social Impulse Fund was added to the Communal Fund; the rest of the financial envelope was used to create a new City Fund for the 13 Flemish cities and the Brussels Capital Region. The main objective of the City Fund is to stimulate cities to: 1) implement a sustainable city policy aimed at enhancing the 'liveability' for current and potential inhabitants, 2) implement an inclusive, integrated policy coordination between all government levels and sector policies.

An amount of 25 million Euros of the Financing Fund for Debt Repayment and one-off Investment Expenditure was reserved for city renewal initiatives. The aim of this instrument is to financially support cities for the realisation of well founded and conceived city renewal projects with a multifunctional character. In a first phase cities enter concept notes. In a second phase short-listed projects are described in more detail. 31 cities entered 43 projects. A shortlist of nine projects was selected and 8 projects were financed. Because of the success of the first appeal, a second appeal for proposals was launched in December 2003.

An 'At home in the city' - prize was established, linked to the above-mentioned media campaign with the same name. The prize rewards cities for innovative realisations in successful city renewal projects. Through the prize, best practices in urban policy are put in the spotlight, inspiring future urban policy. In 2002, upon evaluating the first edition of the prize, the prize was divided in 2 categories. The first category (125.000 euro) rewards an integrated project that affects several aspects of urban policy; the second category (25.000 euro) rewards a project that affects one specific aspect of urban policy.

Transport: Various fiscal measures have been taken in order to encourage the use of public transport, carpooling and bicycle between home and the working place. Excise duties on gasoil and gasoline have also been differentiated according to the sulphur content. Vehicle taxation (first use) contains a lower tariff for LPG vehicles. In 2002 and 2003 also a lower tariff was included for vehicles complying with the Euro 4 standard.

Cooperation: International cooperation in the human settlements field is organized on several institutional levels in Belgium. The Federal Government, the Regional Governments, local governments (municipalities, provinces), and a good number of non-government organizations all participate. These levels provide substantial contributions to human habitat through multilateral and bilateral cooperation channels.

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However, the bulk of International Cooperation with developing countries is the responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, External Trade and International Cooperation. Urban development appears since 2000 as one of the development objectives of the International Cooperation. The Habitat and Human Settlements aspects are tackled under at least three major policy headings:

- fighting poverty, including access to basic infrastructure and basic services (health, education);

- sustainable development, including Local Agenda 21 implementation and support to the decentralization process in several countries and with a special attention to the environmental problems;
- human rights, including rights to housing, security of tenure, especially for women.

Institution building at the level of local authorities - urban as well as rural - is an important component of the majority of the programmes and projects financed by the Belgian cooperation. Training and capacity-building is also stimulated through the financing of international courses and research programmes, initiated by universities and contributions to other training and educational activities, for example, local Agenda 21 programmes.

Multilateral cooperation: UNCHS has been listed as one of the 22 international partner organizations and the Belgian Cooperation (DGDC) contributed 0,87 mio EUR/year (period 2000-2003) to the following UNCHS -programmes:

- "Localizing Agenda 21": Action programme for Sustainable Urban development" in cooperation Belgium Consortium and partner towns in Kenya (Nakuru), Morocco (Essauira), Vietnam (Vinh) and Cuba (Bayamo). ;
- "Security of Tenure" Campaign

Belgium continues its financial support of the FAO programmes in urban and peri-urban regions in RDC, Ivory Coast and Bolivië (2 mio EUR for 2004). and its support to the Palestine government for the reconstruction of damaged houses and health infrastructure in Palestine in the old refugee camps (UNRWA).

Belgium is also one of the major contributors to the WB-programme "Clean Air Initiative", implemented in several cities in Africa (Dakar, Ouagadougou, Abidjan, Cotonou, Harare, Douala and Nairobi). and the Belgium contribution is earmarked for 2 cities, Ouagadougou and Cotonou (0,5 mio/3 years).

A particular case is the strategic partnership between the Belgian Survival Fund (BSF)-and UNCDF. supporting the decentralisation process in Africa. The improvement of the financing capabilities of the local governments and transparent management of the funds is a major component of the activities of this partnership.. Approximately 20 mio EUR has been earmarked over a period of 10 years (average expenditure 2 mio EUR/year). Within this framework 5 individual projects are already in implementation (Benin, Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Mali and Niger). The success of the programmes is highly related to the degree of decentralisation within the country.

*Bilateral cooperation:*In implementation:

- Vietnam: "Tan Hoa lo Gom Canal Improvement and Urban Development" in Ho Chi Minh City", in completion phase;
- Ecuador: "Gestion participative, decentralization y desarrollo del municipal Ibarra (3 mio EUR/4 years)
- Cameroun: Project d'aménagement et d'assainissement de la ville de Maroua "(9,5 mio EUR/2 years)
- Senegal: « Appui au nettoyage de la ville de Saint Louis » (2 mio EUR/4 years)
- Morocco: « Réhabilitation of the kasbah of Taourit » (0,4 mio EUR)
- Palestine: « Local infrastructure and capacity building – phase I».

In preparation:

- Cameroun : « Projet de réhabilitation et de l'adduction d'eau potable de la ville de Maroua » (2 mio /year)
- Uganda:: "The Kampala City Management for the Environment" (5 mio EUR/4 years)

- Algeria: “Gestion des déchets solides dans la ville de Mascara” (9 mio/5 years)
- Palestine : « Local infrastructure and capacity building – phase II» (6,4 mio EUR/3 years)
- Ecuador: “Support the decentralization of the health services in the town of Esmeraldas”

Indirect cooperation:

- support to cities active in direct cooperation with partner cities from developing countries (support to local democracy, know-how transfer, capacity building programmes);

Flemish region: City to city cooperation: The Flemish government is promoting active development cooperation policy at local level. This new policy framework is designed to help underpin four aims:

1. Encourage local authorities to play a key role in the area of development cooperation policy
2. Stimulate awareness-raising campaigns within the local community
3. Highlight the importance of capacity building for administrative management and the conceptual creation of a local development cooperation policy
4. The Flemish local authorities that wish to shoulder their international development cooperation responsibilities give tangible form to their commitment via a partnership with a municipality in the southern hemisphere, provided they meet a number of quality assessment criteria

A major concern is the need to firmly establish and ensure the sustainability of the local development cooperation policy involved. This cooperation between a municipality and its partner in the southern hemisphere has to be seen as a long-term cooperation focused on the mutual development of administrative resources and the strengthening local democratic processes. Such M2M cooperation is now active between more than 25 Flemish municipalities and their partners in Africa, Latin America and Asia. In some cases, this cooperation also contributes to an improved mutual learning process to implement a Local Agenda 21.

Cooperation with South Africa: a particularly important initiative has started in the Habitat field to establish cooperation between the Flemish regional government and South Africa to assist in South Africa's ambitious plan to make available over 300,000 new housing units a year, contributing towards training of small construction companies in management, and towards social housing policy exchanges. Information is given to set up a social housing policy in South Africa.

In 1995 the Flemish Government signed a cooperation agreement with the New Housing Company, a South-African non-profit organization in the framework of an international social housing program. According to this agreement the Flemish Government provides capital for starting social housing projects and the New Housing Company takes care of development and execution of these projects. Projects that have been implemented in the first and second phases are the Jeppe Oval project in Johannesburg (243 housing units) and the Carr Street Two and Troyville Precinct projects, again in Johannesburg. In 1999 an amount of 1.239.468 Euros was granted for the third phase, a social housing project in East London (550 housing units). In 2002 the Flemish Government granted a subsidy of 487.400 Euros to the New Housing Company for a social housing project in the eThekweni metropolitan council.

In 2000 the Flemish Government granted a subsidy of 223.104 Euro to a project of NGO Tsogang. It concerned the reconstruction and rehabilitation of 250 houses in a number of villages in the North Province of South-Africa, heavily damaged because of serious floods.

Cooperation with Eastern and Central Europe: at present several co-operation projects by Flemish and private organizations with partners in Central and Eastern Europe have been financed by the Government of Flanders. Because the available means do not allow for intense co-operation with all the countries and regions of Central and Eastern Europe, priority was first given to the ten Central and Eastern European candidates for EU-accession. From 2004 onwards this support was extended to the Wider Europe countries Croatia, Ukraine and Russia (St Petersburg).

Cooperation with Benelux and Western Europe: Spatial planning consultation takes place within the framework of the Benelux, inter alia through the Second Benelux Structure Sketch, which shows a spatial vision and a number of spatial concepts (such as urban networks, euro-corridors, etc.) for the region. In this framework, the cooperation with the Netherlands focuses on vision creation and elaboration of concrete projects. Information exchange on structure plans takes place between the Netherlands and Flanders.

The joint Dutch – Flemish project ‘Vital City’ aims at reinforcing urban policy through knowledge and information exchange and joint agenda-setting at the European level. A learning network was created for this purpose; a number of workshops were organised. On 22 June 2001 a workshop on policy impact assessment in Flanders and the Netherlands took place; on 6 February 2003 the theme of the workshop was civic and inhabitant participation.

Flanders joined the preparation of an ‘off-stage’ conference for experts and other actors from the main cities of the 15 member states of the European Union on 8-9 October 2001 in Brussels. Theme of this conference was inhabitant participation to urban policy.

Walloon region: European cooperation: The Walloon Region participates actively in various programmes co-funded by the European Union: INTERREG II (transborder and transnational cooperation), RECITE II (know-how exchange programme), ECOS-OUVERTURE and PHARE (aimed at countries outside the EU). Moreover, the International Relations Department of the Walloon Region runs an important youth exchange programme initiated by the Assembly of the Regions of Europe, i. e. EURODYSSÉ.

The Walloon Region is a member of various international associations such as Eurorégion (3 Belgian Regions, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Kent), Saar-Lor-Lux (länder of Saarland, Rheinland-Pfalz, Lorraine, Luxembourg, Wallonia and Franch and German-speaking Communities of Belgium), Euroregio Meuse-Rhin (Belgian Provinces of Luxembourg and Liège, Dutch Province of Limburg and German Kreis Aachen) and the Assembly of the Regions of Europe (300 member Region).

Cooperation with Eastern Europe: The Walloon Region, in cooperation with the French Community (Belgium) has signed a number of agreements with countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Czech Republic).

For instance, cooperation agreements with the Slovak and Czech Republics focus on the following priority areas : trade, scientific and technical cooperation, vocational training, environment, housing and agricultural diversification.

Development cooperation: The Walloon Region participates in activities or programmes of some international organizations which it considers to be focal points in its international strategy (Francophonie, WTO, UNDP, FAO and UNESCO)

The Walloon Region participates in a development partnership process through a co-funding system for NGO projects in South countries whose main funding source is the federal Government or the European Union.

In 2002, the Walloon Government initiated the Vallonia project. This initiative – which comes within the framework of a partnership between the Walloon Region and Cuba – took practical form in the purchase of a large building, located in the centre of Havana, inscribed on the World Heritage List of UNESCO. This old palace, which is now very dilapidated and occupied by a deprived population, will be restored with the cooperation of its occupants. Some will be rehoused there later. Others will move to a new building, located in the vicinity, the construction of which will be financed by the United Nations. A

genuine partnership, the Vallonia project will also include processes for exchange of knowledge regarding working site techniques.

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