

RECOMMENDATIONS

of the deliberative commission tasked with making recommendations on biodiversity in cities taking into account the different functions of a city

In accordance with the guide for deliberative committees, “A distinction is made between the recommendations based on the degree of support of the participants on the deliberative committee. Consequently, each recommendation with a majority of 80% is specifically highlighted. In this way, an incentive is given to those recommendations with a broad consensus.” This is the case for the 21 recommendations, except for recommendations 14 and 19.

STRATEGY AND PROGRAMMING

Recommendation 1

Define a cross-cutting and multidisciplinary vision and strategy based on scientific research

Given the lack of cross-cutting activity and operationalisation in biodiversity action (deadlines, budget, stakeholders, programming);

The deliberative committee tasked with making recommendations on biodiversity in cities taking into account the different functions of a city (hereinafter referred to as the deliberative committee) recommends:

1. forming, under the aegis of Bruxelles Environnement, a panel consisting of experts, policy staff, representatives of the authority, citizens, civil society and companies, represented by Brussels Enterprises Commerce & Industry;
2. developing a vision of the importance of biodiversity in order to be able to live and work in the city and the Region;
3. defining all biodiversity plans and objectives within the Region and municipalities (in line with the Region’s programme);
4. targeting companies;
5. integrating the concept of biodiversity into the Brussels Land Use Code (CoBAT) upstream of other regulations;
6. implementing a multi-year programme, with a timetable and budget, of specific and cross-cutting actions in the area of biodiversity.

Recommendation 2

Integrate the conservation and restoration of biodiversity into Brussels' legislative framework

Given that the Brussels Land Use Code (CoBAT), the Regional Land Use Plan (PRAS), the Regional Town

Planning Regulations (RRU), etc. are all regulations that do not include the issue of conserving or restoring biodiversity at all, or not sufficiently, or not sufficiently early in the project development process;

Given that the policy in the area of biodiversity does not include a holistic dimension;

Given that the legislative land use framework is insufficient because it protects spaces that are already protected but not de facto green spaces such as wastelands that contribute to the green and blue networks;

The deliberative committee recommends:

1. in the context of revising the Regional Town Planning Regulations:
 - a) integrating obligations for conserving and restoring biodiversity (roofs, façades, floors, etc.) in the construction and renovation of buildings in Brussels;
 - b) seeking maximum infiltration into the ground;
 - c) ensuring flexibility for building innovations aimed at preserving and restoring biodiversity;
2. enhancing regulatory protection in order to maintain large unbuilt and connected spaces;
3. ensuring the continuity of green and blue networks and green corridors;
4. prohibiting building in flood-prone areas;
5. in the context of revising the Regional Land Use Plan, giving regulatory value to Bruxelles Environnement maps.

Recommendation 3

Make strong budgetary choices in favour of enhancing biodiversity

Given that the resource people interviewed explained that the Region had done what was easiest to do and that significant action depended on resources;

The deliberative committee recommends:

1. providing dedicated biodiversity budgets for the Region's various areas of responsibility;
2. complying with biodiversity criteria when drawing up budgets for the Region and municipalities;
3. providing financial incentives;
4. significantly increasing the budgets linked to cross-cutting biodiversity enhancement policies, for:
 - a) wider protection;
 - b) management capacities;
 - c) analysis and research capacities;
 - d) training and raising awareness.
5. considering a tax system that encourages biodiversity enhancement.

Recommendation 4

*Ensure the social equity
of the adaptations*

Given that the objectives of the Regional Plan for Nature 2016-2020 have not been met in respect of the central municipalities;

The deliberative committee recommends:

1. developing criteria to measure the social impact (positive and negative) of the policies implemented;
2. as part of the revision of the Regional Land Use Plan, ensuring access to biodiversity spaces in densely populated neighbourhoods by rebalancing development density at regional level;
3. paying particular attention to compliance with the Regional Plan for Nature 2016-2020;
4. giving priority to the objectives of this plan with regard to the network in the central municipalities;
5. reducing the density of the central municipalities and rebalancing the density of the other municipalities, in order to enhance the green and blue networks in the central municipalities.

Recommendation 5

*Specify a
policy assessment procedure*

Given the lack of cross-cutting activity and operationalisation in biodiversity action (deadlines, budget, stakeholders, programming);

The deliberative committee recommends:

1. implementing a biodiversity test, based on the (armoedetoets) poverty test model in Flanders;
2. setting up an audit committee to check that the objectives of the biodiversity plans and programmes are met and the reports of which are sent to Parliament.

Recommendation 6

Integrate and simplify the regulations

Given that biodiversity conservation is essential for living and working in the Brussels-Capital Region;

Given that the complexity of the city, the Region and the issue of biodiversity requires the development of a cross-cutting multidisciplinary and multi-community vision and strategy;

Given that such an approach puts an end to dispersed management and commits to taking on broad and shared responsibility (including in budgetary terms);

The deliberative committee recommends:

1. looking into how to simplify the regulations;
2. applying cross-cutting objectives to enhance biodiversity in policies relating to housing, public spaces, mobility, town planning, etc.

AWARENESS RAISING, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Recommendation 7

Train professionals involved in town planning projects

Given the insufficient knowledge about biodiversity among town planning professionals: architects, companies, civil servants responsible for granting town planning permits, etc.;

The deliberative committee recommends:

1. introducing mandatory training on biodiversity to gain access to town planning-related occupations;
2. introducing further training for professionals already in the profession;
3. tasking Bruxelles Environnement with organising biodiversity training and awareness-raising initiatives for all public and private stakeholders involved in town planning and construction, following the example of building insulation.

Recommendation 8

Introduce young people to biodiversity

The deliberative committee recommends:

1. developing green spaces in spaces for young people (playgrounds, school grounds, etc.);
2. expanding biodiversity-related activities in schools (e.g. vegetable patches);
3. initiating visits, particularly of existing pilot projects, between schools;
4. opening up jobs related to the biodiversity sector to students (e.g. in parks and public spaces) and informing students about these options.

Recommendation 9

Raise awareness about biodiversity among residents of Brussels

Given the lack of specific awareness raising about biodiversity;

The deliberative committee recommends:

1. funding biodiversity awareness-raising campaigns and enhancing existing campaigns;
2. producing advertisements on biodiversity (e.g. programmes with experts);
3. broadcasting these advertisements via social media (e.g. via influencers);
4. organising targeted awareness-raising campaigns with specific resources and actions (explanatory panels, information materials such as flyers and organising public debates) and giving visibility to existing actions;
5. paying specific attention to residents of densely populated municipalities.

Recommendation 10

Raise awareness about biodiversity among citizens without gardens or balconies by creating community gardens or vegetable patches

Given that some citizens have no access to biodiversity;

Given that the lack of social cohesion should be addressed;

The deliberative committee recommends:

1. conserving the areas occupied by urban farming projects, with particular emphasis on the development of biodiversity;
2. increasing these communal spaces and promoting access to them for those who do not have any outside space;
3. publicising the existence of these communal spaces through various promotional channels (municipality website, etc.).

INTENSIFYING BIODIVERSITY: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE OPEN SPACES

Recommendation 11

Enhance revegetation in city centres and surrounding municipalities and connect them to existing large spaces with a particular focus on biodiversity

Given the paramount nature of socialisation, peaceful neighbourhoods, well-being in the neighbourhood where you live and noise reduction;

The deliberative committee recommends:

1. enhancing the policy of creating green spaces in cities by promoting differentiated management;
2. replacing hard surfaces in public spaces with planting, permeable and semi-permeable surfaces and bodies of water;
3. protecting existing trees and the biodiversity they host;
4. protecting and enhancing plant, animal and aquatic life.

Recommendation 12

Create a dark network

Given that light pollution reduces biodiversity and causes disturbance;

The deliberative committee recommends:

- creating a dark network plan with the aim of:
 - a) reducing light pollution from billboards and advertising signs (traditional or digital) by looking into the possibility of turning them off at certain times of the night;
 - b) making companies mindful of performing audits with a view to reducing the impact of interior lighting and

looking into the possibility of prohibiting lighting on the upper floors and ground floor of buildings outside hours of use;

- c) establishing a dark network plan with the aim of assessing existing exterior lighting and reducing lighting power at certain times (e.g. by developing smart lighting);
- d) reviewing existing exterior lighting techniques from the point of view of their impact on animal and plant species; and adjusting them (notably by reducing them at certain times) or replacing them accordingly;
- e) reducing the hours of accent lighting on buildings.

Recommendation 13

Optimise the canal area in order to enhance biodiversity

Given that, as in many other cities, a waterway passes through Brussels, i.e. the canal;

Given that it is appropriate to improve the operation of this area to make it a representative example of the Region's commitment to biodiversity;

The deliberative committee recommends:

1. increasing the number of green rafts;
2. diversifying what is grown on these rafts;
3. greening the railings;
4. installing insect hotels and bird shelters;
5. encouraging canal users to navigate at certain periods (specific times and days);
6. revegetating the banks;
7. improving the quality of the water in the canal.

Recommendation 14

Protect wastelands

Given that Brussels' wastelands are areas of high biological value forming a classic example of rewilding (without human intervention);

Given that in 2020, for example, more than 985 different species were identified on the Josaphat wasteland (there are now more than 1,200);

Given that wastelands are cradles of biodiversity in Brussels and a base for the green network;

Given that they are threatened by building pressures;

Given that the Brussels-Capital Region is under very significant pressure due to the lack of affordable housing and that 50,000 households are on the waiting list for social housing;

The deliberative committee recommends:

1. maintaining sufficient areas on existing wastelands with special status (heritage status), to make them shining examples of biodiversity for Brussels, the capital of Belgium and of Europe;
2. developing green corridors around these wastelands, notably by revegetating the habitat of the areas concerned;
3. adapting the boundaries of wastelands with the aim of providing residents living in the surrounding areas and people passing through with information about the site and about the initiative (through signage).

Recommendation 15

Reconnect the green line

Given that it is appropriate to revegetate public roads as much as possible, keep green areas in Brussels and reconnect certain locations;

The deliberative committee recommends:

- reconnecting biodiversity spaces wherever possible:
 - a) by creating cycle and pedestrianised paths and by placing plants around these amenities;
 - b) by calling on town planning specialists to adapt these amenities to existing roads.

INTENSIFYING

BIODIVERSITY: BUILDINGS

Recommendation 16

Promote citizens' biodiversity initiatives

Given the importance of supporting citizens' initiatives and providing them with assistance, notably in terms of budget and knowledge;

The deliberative committee recommends:

1. promoting the creation of a network of citizens active in the area of biodiversity who can disseminate information to their colleagues, neighbours and friends;
2. creating a biodiversity ambassador role within neighbourhoods to centralise citizens' requests and direct them to Bruxelles Environnement or the competent stakeholders;
3. promoting citizens' initiatives through eco-cheques and bonuses;
4. promoting exchanges between citizens and biodiversity-related services.

Recommendation 17

Integrate biodiversity into the RENOLUTION strategy

The deliberative committee recommends:

- integrating biodiversity into the RENOLUTION strategy.

Recommendation 18

Revegetate buildings

Given that existing buildings do not include sufficient space for biodiversity;

Given that there are 1,800 hectares of flat roofs not being exploited in the Brussels-Capital Region;

Given that the surface area of the façades represents an opportunity to integrate biodiversity;

Given the unequal access to biodiversity spaces in the most densely populated neighbourhoods;

The deliberative committee recommends:

1. increasing the percentage of revegetation considered to promote biodiversity in town planning permits (plant species, etc.);
2. promoting and facilitating the emergence of efficient techniques centralised at the level of a reference institution (such as homegrade.brussels);
3. giving priority to the neighbourhoods with the most hard surfaces through more attractive incentives.

MOBILITY

Recommendation 19

Reduce vehicular traffic

Given that cars take up too much space in the city, which prevents improvements in biodiversity because air pollution and noise pollution are harmful to plant and animal species;

Given that 55% of Brussels households do not own a car;

Given that residents from outside the Brussels-Capital Region travel there by car;

The deliberative committee recommends:

1. creating more *Park & Ride* (P+R) car parks, facilitating access to them and reducing their cost compared with on-street and city car parks in order to encourage visitors from outside the Region to park there;
2. organising at least four car-free days (one per quarter) according to an advertised calendar that allows citizens to get properly organised;
3. freeing up car-free zones (squares, streets, etc.) in the centres of municipalities, commercial areas, the areas around schools, nursing homes, parks and green spaces, with a view to ensuring physical continuity for animal movements and guaranteeing biodiversity through soil permeability;
4. opposing the planned widening of the road component of the Brussels ring road: reducing car traffic is part of the effort to preserve green spaces, including Laerbeek Woods and all the plant and animal species living there;
5. encouraging carpooling, car sharing and alternatives such as shared bikes and scooters and electric public transport, as well as bike use by developing cycle paths that help to reduce vehicular traffic.

Recommendation 20

Rethink mobility in order to take better account of biodiversity

Given that mobility has long been perceived as contrary to biodiversity with, for example, the development of the road network being motivated by efficiency of use and maintenance to the detriment of nature;

Given that mobility policy can be used to drive biodiversity development;

Given that mobility infrastructures can become a medium for biodiversity;

The deliberative committee recommends:

1. improving existing public transport and encouraging its use by making it more affordable economically and more accessible to people with reduced mobility;
2. creating a single public company to manage and supervise shared means of transport such as scooters and bikes, from a sustainability perspective;
3. organising awareness-raising and information campaigns on soft mobility and alternatives to cars, aimed at residents of the three regions of Belgium as well as tourists;
4. facilitating children's travel using alternative means of transport by creating more cycle paths, making the areas around schools safe and promoting access to soft mobility, for example with bike sheds in front of schools;
5. creating a wider network of cycle paths, which support biodiversity;
6. installing more charging terminals in the public space.

Recommendation 21

Integrate biodiversity conservation and development into mobility

Given that mobility has long been perceived as contrary to biodiversity with, for example, the development of the road network being motivated by efficiency of use and maintenance to the detriment of nature;

Given that mobility policy can be used to drive biodiversity development;

Given that mobility infrastructures can become a medium for biodiversity;

The deliberative committee recommends:

1. incorporating planted traffic lanes as dividers to promote soft mobility;
2. making parking spaces permeable, by using materials that make the ground permeable (e.g. green pavers); raising awareness and encouraging companies regarding this point;
3. revegetating car parks and their surroundings by planting native trees and plants and creating planted carports;
4. using the roofs of carports, notably to install solar panels powering charging terminals.

The President,

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