

Belgium's Roadmap for the Net-Zero Government Initiative

Belgium is a federal state composed of three language-based communities and three regions, each with its own executive and legislative bodies. Climate policy as a competence is split among the federal and regional levels, implying that each entity has its own climate targets. This has been reflected in the roadmap below.

1. Overarching targets

Belgium is a member state of the European Union, which has a -55% reduction target in place for 2030 compared to 1990 levels and aims to become climate-neutral by 2050. Belgian governments are looking at ways of how to achieve climate neutrality, such as through carbon neutral buildings and vehicle acquisitions.

The federal government aspires for Belgium to be climate-neutral by 2050, as set out in its 2020 government agreement. The Brussels-Capital Region has set out to reduce direct GHG emission by at least 90% by 2050 compared to 2005 levels (40% by 2030 and 67% by 2040). The Flemish Region committed to reducing its CO2 emissions with 55% by 2030 compared to 2015. The Walloon region has set out to reduce GHG emission by at least 95% by 2050 compared to 1990 levels (55% by 2030).

2. Carbon neutral buildings

The federal government has set out in its government agreement to decarbonize public buildings by 2040, with an interim target of a 50% reduction by 2030. As part of the inter-federal investment plan, we are exploring how to achieve the ambition of a climate-neutral government earlier than 2040. Here, priority will be given to a multi-year investment plan to improve the energy efficiency of buildings, reduce emissions of greenhouse gas emissions and switch to renewable energy. The first step is the realisation by 2025 of an energy register for federal government buildings.

The Flemish Region aims to achieve carbon neutral buildings by 2045. Also, a primary energy savings target has been set at 35% by 2030. To this end, all government entities are required to adopt a long term real estate strategy by 2023, including an energy masterplan.

The Brussels-Capital Region has a target for public buildings to tend towards carbon neutrality in 2040, with social housing achieving a performance of 100 kWh/m²/year by 2040. More specifically, the regional policy aims at reducing GHG emissions in the building sector based on two priorities: 1) Exit from the use of fossil fuels; and 2) Drastically increase the renovation rate thanks to the RENOLUTION regional renovation strategy and a renovation obligation system.

The Walloon Region aims to achieve carbon neutral buildings by 2050. For the tertiary sector: move in 2050 towards an energy-neutral (zero energy) tertiary building stock for heating, domestic hot water, cooling and lighting. This represents a 70% reduction in energy consumption in 2050 compared to 2005. By 2050, the Walloon Region wants to achieve carbon neutrality for all SPW-buildings (Service public de Wallonie) and make their surroundings rich in biodiversity. One measure is locating 25% of agents in environmentally efficient administrative buildings.

3. Vehicle acquisitions

The decarbonisation of the federal government's vehicle fleet aims to achieve a zero-emission target by 2040, this by setting up a mechanism based on regulatory provisions and procurement instruments needed to facilitate the implementation as written in the Federal Energy and Climate Plan. The first measure will be to reduce the vehicle fleet as much as possible, in particular by not replacing certain vehicles or by offering other, softer mobility alternatives if suitable (e.g. electric bicycles or scooters). Better distribution of vehicles between nearby public services ("shared vehicles") may also be considered to reduce their numbers. The government agreement of 30 September 2020 stipulates that all new company vehicles must be carbon neutral by 2026. In addition, after 1 July 2024, it will only be possible to purchase clean company vehicles with zero greenhouse gas emissions (with the exception of certain categories).

In order to comply with the government agreement for vehicles used by government departments, circular *septies* was published in the Belgian Official Journal on 12 April 2023. This circular sets out the conditions to be met for the purchase and leasing of vehicles by public services. This circular came into force on 12 April 2023 (date of publication of the circular).

With its Mobility Action Plan, the Flemish Region strives to entirely electrify its vehicle fleet. The Flemish Government decided at the end of 2018 not to purchase new vehicles with classic combustion engines running on petrol or diesel as of 2021. This implies that as of 2021 passenger cars added to the fleet of the Flemish Region will either be fully electric, plug-in hybrid (with CO₂ emissions of no more than 50 g/km), fully hybrid or CNG-driven. From 2024 onwards, the Flemish government will buy or lease a maximum of zero-emission passenger cars. For the purchase and leasing of other vehicle categories, maximum efforts will also be made towards greening. Efforts are being made to install the necessary charging infrastructure, actions to change user behaviour, provide limited financial incentives, relieve the burden on individual government entities, instal bicycle (charging) infrastructure, provide mobility studies, offer framework contracts for eco-driving and environmentally friendly vehicles, etc. The most polluting vehicles are being phased out. Actions outside the scope of the Mobility Action Plan (e.g. making staff commuting more sustainable) will also continue to be taken. Government entities with vessels under their own management will take stock of their CO₂ emissions and set a feasible but ambitious target by 2024 at the latest.

The Walloon Region adopted the FAST Strategy (FAST is fluidity, accessibility, safety/health and modal transfer). It makes it possible to achieve a 40% reduction in GHGs linked to transport in Wallonia. For people, the objective is to reduce the modal share of the individual car from 83% to 60% in favour of shared cars or carpooling (increase in the occupancy rate from 1.3 to 1.8), collective transport (4 to 10%), cycling (1 to 5%), walking (3 to 5%)

Overall objective: by 2050, achieve carbon neutrality in terms of mobility of SPW agents. For their mobility, public sector agents can count on IT applications which provide them with a complete vision of the most sustainable modes of travel available and best suited to their needs, and the infrastructures respond to these developments in terms of mobility.

Let us cite in particular:

- A fleet of bicycles is present in different buildings for service missions, and infrastructure facilitating the use of bicycles (parking, showers, etc.) is found in most buildings. Bicycle parking is also available to visitors: by 2024, increase by 5% the use of active and alternative modes of travel for service missions and reach 24% of green vehicles.

- The SPW vehicles fleet no longer includes diesel vehicles, except for vehicles for which there would be no other alternative. The fleet is constantly evolving to integrate the most efficient vehicles from an environmental point of view, considering a vehicle life cycle analysis.
- By 2024, increase by 5% the use of active and alternative modes of travel for home-work journeys

For the Brussels-Capital Region, according with its Air Climate and Energy Plan adopted in April 2023 with regard to the exemplary approach adopted by public authorities for their vehicle fleets, Brussels public authorities, whether regional or local, may only purchase or lease vehicles (cars and multi-purpose vehicles - MPVs) with no direct emissions from 1 January 2025. This rule also applies to the acquisition of public buses.

4. Other areas

Approaches to sustainable procurement

Sustainability is also a guiding principle in public procurement. The government is showing a good example by being increasingly strict about sustainability, respect for human rights and circularity in major framework contracts.

Over the period 2022-2023, the SPF BOSA's central purchasing office awarded several framework agreements in which particular attention was paid to sustainability, notably in relation to office furniture and snacks/food/drinks.

In 2024, in cooperation with the Chancellery Prime Minister and the inter-federal institute for sustainable development, FPS BOSA will anchor these principles in a new circular on socially responsible procurement. To this circular we will also add a so-called urgency list in cooperation with the academic world. On a scientific basis, we will map the risks and impacts per product category to indicate where we need to pay extra attention to the sustainability aspect (IT, medical items, vehicles, food, etc.). For those categories with high risk and/or impact, 100% sustainability will be sought at purchase.

For the implementation of the target (cf. previous notably), the government and his public administration have concluded a contract, in which the obligation of a sustainable development plan ("plan de développement durable" or PDD) much be built and implemented.

Extract of the PDD (*in italic – free translation*):

In 2030, meeting the needs of present and future generations is a strong value of the SPW. The SPW thus continues its commitment to sustainable development. It is fully in line with international agreements on climate change, the protection of biological diversity and the preservation of natural resources, and generally with respect for the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. To achieve this, the SPW adopted 4 guiding principles which are inherent to the organization today:

- *Assessment of needs to consume only what is necessary for the proper functioning of the SPW.*
- *Use of the most sustainable solutions from an environmental, social and economic point of view for the identified needs.*
- *Encouragement and support for sustainable initiatives within buildings to enable each agent to propose and implement them in an integrated and coherent manner.*
- *Commitment and accountability at each level of the hierarchical line.*

The 2 guiding principles relate to consumption needs and choices:

- *Guideline n°1: ensure that you only consume what is necessary for the proper functioning of the SPW. This is about avoiding waste and limiting as much as possible the consumption of renewable and non-renewable resources, and to limit the quantity of waste produced.*
- *Guideline n°2: use the most sustainable solutions from an environmental, social and economic point of view. This involves choosing by example of the most ecological office supplies, to encourage the use of public or active modes of transport, to use sources renewable energy, etc.*

It's about consuming LESS and BETTER.

The targets are:

- Buildings: by 2050, achieve carbon neutrality for all SPW buildings and make their surroundings rich in biodiversity.
- Mobility: by 2050, achieve carbon neutrality in terms of mobility of SPW agents.
- Consumption and public procurement of supplies and services: by 2050, achieve 100% responsible consumption at SPW.

For the implementation of this target, accountability will be positively encouraged at each level of the hierarchical line. This involves integrating the values of sustainable development, including environmental protection and preservation of well-being, at all levels of the hierarchy, so that they are embodied in the orientations and choices that are made. posed but also that they stimulate involvement in coherent and integrated actions in the PDD.

*Agents are at the heart of the SPW's sustainable development policy. They constitute one of the key links in the success of its deployment. Also, the first challenge will be to inform agents of the sustainable development policy of the SPW, upon their entry into office and throughout their career within the administration. The deployment of the PDD will be accompanied by information and awareness actions, the objective of which is to empower agents while making them responsible for actions. Active participation in this dynamic appears essential. The agents' one-stop shop for information will provide them with concrete elements relating to the sustainable development policy and the practical mobility solutions available to them. They will have the opportunity to follow training in sustainable development and participate in information sessions on themes related to sustainable development, organized in the form of a "Sustainable Development Luncheon" (**Midi du DD**). In addition, they will be informed of the PDD actions implemented, of the way in which they can apply them on their scale and take an active part in the sustainable development policy supported in the Plan.*

The second challenge will lie in anchoring accountability for sustainable development in the evaluation and planning documents of each agent and each structure. This accountability will require the definition of roles and responsibilities for certain key players in the structure (...) in terms of sustainable development.