

ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMMES IMPLEMENTED BY MUNICIPALITIES

FFH 17

Municipalities have an essential role to play in taking biodiversity into account outside protected areas. In particular, they have the possibility of setting up various environmental programmes in their territory with the financial and/or logistical support of Wallonia.

In addition to river contracts¹, there are 9 types of programmes

As of 01/05/2016, 61% of municipalities had implemented between 4 to 6 programmes, and 10% combined 7 or 8 programmes (only two municipalities² coordinated 8 programmes, none had yet coordinated all 9 programmes)³. The tree week, the late mowing of roadsides and the Maya Plan (*Plan Maya*) were at the top of the list with respectively nearly 99%, 86% and 80% participation.

Rapid success for the Maya Plan, launched in 2011

Through the charter that they sign for 6 years, the Maya municipalities commit themselves to carry out improvements which benefit pollinating insects (planting of melliferous plants, drafting of a plan to reduce pesticides and a plan for the differentiated management of green spaces, support for beekeepers) as well as awareness-raising actions. The late mowing of roadsides (16,000 km for about 3,600 ha), which had already been launched but was strengthened as part of the Maya operation, allows the flora of these areas to reach full maturity. As regards tree week, municipalities can apply for aid for the distribution of seedlings, the creation of a green space and the planting of trees and hedges.

Among the oldest programmes, the arrangement of church lofts and bell towers for bats and birds⁴ has almost reached its 50% participation target and has been suspended⁵. The most recent programme promotes the

gradual and continuous reintegration of biodiversity into municipal cemeteries: 53 cemeteries in 13 municipalities were awarded the Nature Cemetery label (*Label Cimetièrre Nature*) in 2015.

The AlterIAS⁶ programme aims to reduce the introduction of invasive alien plants and encourages municipalities to use indigenous species. Finally, 56 municipalities are associated with one of the 10 natural parks in Wallonia and as such are committed to protecting, managing and sustainably developing their territory through a management plan.

Organising long-term consideration for biodiversity

A municipality may draw up, in consultation with all local stakeholders, a Municipal Nature Development Plan (*Plan communal de développement de la nature - PCDN*) for which an annual subsidy may be requested. The coordination of all programmes can be facilitated by hiring or retaining an eco-counsellor for whom the municipalities can benefit from an annual subsidy. It should be noted that all these programmes are included in the catalogue of actions "Wallonia Nature Network" ("*Réseau Wallonie Nature*")⁷. In this context, practical fact sheets are also proposed to a wider public for the creation of biodiversity-friendly developments.

[1] → WATER 22 | [2] Bastogne and Braives | [3] → Map 57 | [4] Barn owls, jack-daws, common swifts | [5] Except for buildings housing large colonies or rare species | [6] Alternatives to invasive alien species, www.alterias.be | [7] <http://biodiversite.wallonie.be>

Fig. FFH 17-1 Environmental programmes implemented by Walloon municipalities (situation as of 01/05/2016)

