

# Belgium – SD Priorities

*Source document: Federal Plan for Sustainable Development 2004-2008 (2004)*

1. Combating poverty and social exclusion (*p. 13*)
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5. Limiting climate change and increasing the use of clean energy (*p. 21*)
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7. {Actions for Sustainable Development} (*p. 25*)

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  - 7.1. Integrating the objectives of social inclusion as a part of sustainable development (*p. 28*)
    - 7.1.1. As far as participation is concerned, the public Service for combating poverty, precariousness and social exclusion will be reinforced. Ten years following the General Report on Poverty (1994) a comprehensive debate will be held on poverty and social exclusion. The annual European meetings of people living in poverty will be supported. (*p. 28*)
    - 7.1.2. As far as social services are concerned, the status of homeless persons will be improved through a more liberal granting of installation bonuses. Care services will be improved in conjunction with the Communities and the Regions. (*p. 28*)
    - 7.1.3. In accordance with the Coalition Agreement, the Minister of Social Integration has issued guidelines to improve the quality of the reception of asylum seekers, especially in the open centres. A legal framework for the reception of refugees outlining the right to social services and the governments' obligations is being developed (*p. 28*)
    - 7.1.4. As far as family policy is concerned, the Government has organised a General Conference, which will be followed up; the results will be translated into concrete actions. At the federal level, both tax and social measures foster the care for elderly dependent family members within the family environment (see action 9). (*p. 29*)
    - 7.1.5. Regarding justice and other than the initiatives concerning legal aid that the Government has already taken, associations will be encouraged to provide primary legal aid. A solidarity system for legal risks can also be established. Also, the legal costs for persons subject to legal proceedings should continue to decrease. (*p. 29*)
    - 7.1.6. The Youth Protection Law of 1964 will be brought up to date in order to improve youth protection and give young people every opportunity and the necessary support to integrate in our demanding society. (*p. 29*)

- 7.1.7. The treatment of victims in legal proceedings will be subject to improvement. To this end, the framework decision of the European Union of 15 March 2001 on the standing of victims in criminal proceedings will be transposed into Belgian law. In addition, the Government intends to take a number of initiatives, including improving information to victims, simplifying legal proceedings and improving understanding among persons subject to legal proceedings of legal proceedings, legal instruments and the used terminology. Furthermore, the coordination between the police and the judiciary should be improved in order to ensure that victims receive more efficient information. Attention will also be devoted to better outlining the tasks assigned to victim support services, to improving victim reception in justice houses and to mediation and legal aid. (p. 29)
- 7.1.8. As far as culture is concerned, the subsidies to the public social welfare centres (OCMW/CPAS) to promote social and cultural participation as well as physical activity and to bridge the digital gap remain in place through 2004. (p. 29)
- 7.1.9. As far as decent income is concerned, the real income of low-income employees will be further upgraded. The Government will develop a specific long-range programme, by which some existing caps and income thresholds, as well as some social allowances and minimum wages - both in the system of the self-employed and in that of employed and salaried persons (pensions, disability, industrial accidents and occupational diseases in particular) - will be linked with the evolution of prosperity. Efforts will be made to raise pensions and reinforce the 'Fund for the elderly'. The Kafka Plan, offering more accessible and customer-friendly social protection, will be further implemented. The Government will gradually increase minimum income support (minimex) and the lowest social allowances within the proposed amount. (p. 29)
- 7.1.10. In 2004 a service for maintenance claims was established within the framework of the Federal Public Service Finance. The service is in charge of collecting outstanding maintenance claims. The public social welfare centres (OCMW/CPAS) remain in charge of awarding advances on maintenance claims. (p. 29)
- 7.1.11. As far as education is concerned, the Federal Government will fight against functional illiteracy by taking initiatives aimed at bridging the digital gap. (p. 29)
- 7.1.12. Employment, housing and health are policy areas important to the fight against poverty. They are dealt with in actions 2, 3, 10 and 11. (p. 29)

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## 7.2. Consumer protection (p. 29)

- 7.2.1. As far as prevention is concerned, information and awareness campaigns on the issue of overindebtedness will be conducted in the course of 2005. They will be financed by the Fund for the fight against excessive indebtedness. A committee is to launch and supervise these campaigns. (p. 30)
- 7.2.2. Since 1 January 2004 the Federal Public Service Economy targets controls on the new regulations governing the advertising of credit to consumers as certain forms of advertising are illegal since that date, including advertising that encourages consumers to draw credit by pointing out how easily credit can be obtained for instance. In addition, efforts were made in the field of transparency and bank rates. Also, the Government will further assess the possibilities of selling on credit and the giving of credit by department stores, and it will develop relevant proposals. (p. 30)
- 7.2.3. In the curative field, the Law of 5 July 1998 concerning collective debt settlement will be adjusted in order to offer people in a hopeless financial situation a way out, including the possibility of total debt remission. (p. 30)
- 7.2.4. The Federal Government will forbid the use of segmentation criteria that are not based on neutral, objective and verifiable conditions when taking out an insurance policy. (p. 30)
- 7.2.5. The Law of 24 March 2003 concerning basic bank services will be enforced in its entirety and assessed regularly. (p. 30)
- 7.2.6. The Federal Government will take measures to ensure that the protection provided by the Judicial Code (art. 1409, 1409bis and 1410) also applies to the protected amounts on a bank account. (p. 30)
- 7.2.7. As far as the readability of package inserts, instructions for use and labels are concerned, in 2005 the Directorate General Regulation and Organisation of Markets of the FPS Economy, SMEs, Selfemployed and Energy will conduct a study on the need for readable information for products and services, which will devote special attention to senior citizens. On the basis of its conclusions, existing legislation will be assessed and adjusted if necessary. (p. 31)

- 7.2.8. The aforementioned study will also look into the access of senior citizens to products and services. On the basis of its conclusions, existing legislation will be assessed and adjusted if necessary; measures to combat abuse of consumers' weakness might be included. (p. 31)
  - 7.2.9. The Federal Public Service Justice and the Federal Public Planning Service Consumer Protection will propose measures aimed at facilitating consumer access to justice. They will encourage alternative settlement of disputes and complaints. A joint and independent arbitration board for financial services will be established in 2004. The Federal Public Service Justice and the Federal Public Planning Service Consumer Protection will also examine whether the existing systems for alternative dispute settlement can be incorporated into a comprehensive structure. (p. 31)
  - 7.2.10. In conjunction with the Communities and all parties involved, the Federal Public Planning Service Consumer Protection will launch initiatives, including 'les écoles de la consommation', in 2005. These are facilities that provide training to consumers, especially the most vulnerable ones. Among other things, they allow consumers to acquire autonomy and control their consumer choices. (p. 31)
  - 7.2.11. Special initiatives aimed at young people will also be provided. From 2005 onwards the Federal Public Planning Service Consumer Protection will organise an annual advertising week in conjunction with all parties concerned (media, advertising world, governments, consumer organisations and young people). One of the goals is to make young consumers aware of the impact of advertising. (p. 31)
  - 7.2.12. In 2005, the Federal Public Planning Service Consumer Protection will look into the possibility and opportunity of creating an Advertising Observatory. (p. 31)
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### **7.3. Decent and affordable housing (p. 32)**

- 7.3.1. imposing health standards; (p. 33)
- 7.3.2. balancing the legal relations between tenants and landlords, for instance by providing better information about the content of the Law on Leases of 21 February 1991 and of an amendment to this law to clarify the rules concerning the responsibility for certain improvements, and through the compulsory and free registration of lease agreements; (p. 33)
- 7.3.3. improving claim proceedings initiated by landlords and/or tenants by offering the possibility of guidance given by recognised associations; (p. 33)
- 7.3.4. opposing rack-renting: it is planned to broaden the scope of the Law of 2 January 2001 to include all vulnerable tenants and enhance their protection, but also to impose stricter sanctions on landlords who have little regard for human dignity; (p. 33)
- 7.3.5. allowing capped tax compensations to landlords who claim to have suffered damage caused by dishonest tenants. (p. 33)
- 7.3.6. the creation of joint housing committees, which would be charged with boosting pretrial reconciliation on the one hand, and would concentrate on creating an objective rent grid for guidance on the other; (p. 33)
- 7.3.7. the assessment of real estate taxation. The aim is to make it simpler and fairer, while at the same time not punishing landlords/tenants who conscientiously maintain and renovate their leased real estate (for instance by levying taxes on the amount of rent actually collected taking into account the quality of rental houses; this quality would be assessed on the basis of submitted certificates of the costs of improvements to the leased property in question). (p. 33)
- 7.3.8. Considering the conversion of certain suitable disused public properties into residences in the larger towns. (p. 33)
- 7.3.9. Using tax measures to encourage renovation of existing buildings and residential property acquisition in the larger towns. (p. 33)
- 7.3.10. The budget allotted to urban policy was revised upwards. Subsidies will be distributed differently based on 3 'urbanity' criteria, 5 housing criteria and the number of city dwellers, weighed on the basis of the evolution of the rental market (90%) and the evolution of real estate prices (10%) at the regional level. (p. 33)
- 7.3.11. The 'Interministerial Conference on Social Integration' will develop a harmonious strategy in order to improve the quality and quantity of homelessness relief. (p. 33)
- 7.3.12. Encouraging property acquisition. The Housing Task Force is in charge of: (p. 34)
- 7.3.13. looking for measures to lower part of the costs of the acquisition of a first modest residence; (p. 34)

- 7.3.14. reforming the personal income tax system with respect to real estate and private residences, among other things by transforming existing (additional) interest deduction and tax reduction for loans into a "housing bonus" or a ten-yearly bonus; *(p. 34)*
  - 7.3.15. examining to what extent collective acquisitions can be facilitated (former factories). *(p. 34)*
  - 7.3.16. Within the European Union, the Federal Government will continue to advocate the reduction from 12% to 6% of the VAT rate for social housing (federal Coalition Agreement 2003). Social housing societies will be able to use the resulting funds to build additional public lodgings. *(p. 34)*
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#### **7.4. Quality of employment *(p. 34)***

- 7.4.1. In 2006 the Federal Policy Office Social Integration, Poverty and Social Economy will evaluate all current professional insertion paths in conjunction with the Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue. A scientific study will analyse their efficiency and verify to what extent they reach their targets. Also, special attention will be devoted to the evolution of the inserted employees' careers in conjunction with the Regions. *(p. 35)*
  - 7.4.2. The conclusions of the national employment conference give priority to encouraging diversity and fighting against discrimination at work. The issues concerned are wage conditions, flexibility, the participation of various groups and the quality of jobs. On the basis of the conclusions of the aforementioned study, the Government will formulate recommendations to do away with possible inequalities. These recommendations can be incorporated into the regulation as of the end of 2006. *(p. 35)*
  - 7.4.3. Professional insertion paths should continue to make sure that employees flow into the regular labour market, even though it is clear that this is not feasible for all employees. Special attention will have to be devoted to really guiding these 'job-seeking employees'; this was also included in the conclusions of the National Employment Conference of October 2003. Therefore, employers, public social welfare centres (OCMW/CPAS) and various mediation agencies should optimise 'job coaching'. *(p. 35)*
  - 7.4.4. At the end of 2004 the Interministerial Conference on Foreign Policy will organise a consultation forum, where the possibilities and modalities of earmarking more financial means for the development of environment-friendly technologies by 2006 will be examined. The social partners, the Belgian Investments Oversea (BIO) and the civil society (more specifically, the research centres) will be invited to participate in this forum. *(p. 35)*
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#### **7.5. Entrepreneurs and the agricultural world *(p. 35)***

- 7.5.1. The Government will continue to encourage research and development (especially in the field of taxation), focusing especially on sectors offering growth prospects (for instance environmentfriendly production methods and organic agriculture) and on sustainable development (healthy food, natural resources, waste management, mobility, etc.). *(p. 36)*
  - 7.5.2. The Belgian Crossroads Bank for Enterprises and the so-called Enterprise Offices should become efficient tools making life easier for the self-employed, the liberal professions and for businesses. In this respect, special attention will be devoted to young business starters in order to eventually limit the administrative steps to set up a business to 3 days. Finally, the Government will see to it that information and communication is improved for the different target groups involved. *(p. 37)*
  - 7.5.3. The FPO Social Integration will support initiatives in the context of the social economy and neighbourhood and community services. *(p. 37)*
  - 7.5.4. The FPS Economy, SMEs, Self-employed and Energy will examine contractual relations within the food processing industry, especially exclusivity clauses. Also, a legal framework will be adopted to ensure fairer contracts and provide safeguard mechanisms in case of force majeure. *(p. 37)*
  - 7.5.5. Within the EU and the international institutions, Belgium will argue in favour of adjusting the policy on the fight against animal disease. In this way, the slaughter and destruction of animals can be avoided as much as possible. In the context of the fight against animal disease, optimal use of vaccination will be strived for, as is for instance the case in the proposal of the European Commission regarding foot-and-mouth disease. The FPS Foreign Affairs will consult with the Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain and the FPS Public Health. The development of efficient vaccines and diagnosis methods is given priority. *(p. 37)*
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#### **7.6. Working beyond the age of 55 *(p. 37)***

- 7.6.1. The Coalition Agreement of July 2003 announces a few measures to lengthen average careers. A number of steps have already been taken, including the review of authorised work and the law regarding supplementary pensions. The Employment Conference of October 2003 aimed at opening a general debate. In this context, the Council of Ministers held in Gembloux in January 2004 agreed on strategy and timing to fuel the debate on the end-of-career issue after the studies of the Study Committee on Ageing, the High Council of Finance, the High Council of Employment and the FPS Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue have been completed. On the basis of these studies, the social partners and the civil society can be consulted with in the autumn of 2004. *(p. 38)*
- 7.6.2. Employment of the elderly should be encouraged. At the National Employment Conference of October 2003 it was decided to set up an experimental system aimed at encouraging employees who have lost their jobs due to company restructuring, as well as their former and future employers, to actively look for new job opportunities. The social partners undertook to put significantly more efforts into training and give special consideration to the elderly when fixing target groups on the sectoral level. Accordingly, professional skills acquired through work experience should be fully recognised and certified. As a matter of fact, the Communities and the Regions are in the process of developing skills validation systems. *(p. 38)*
- 7.6.3. The Federal Government in its turn will reinforce these proposals and initiatives when modernising the personnel policy of the federal administration. However, in order to achieve these employment targets many other actors also need to contribute. Therefore, it is essential that clear agreements on schooling and training, working conditions and labour regulations should be established with and among the social partners and the governments of the Communities and the Regions. *(p. 38)*
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#### **7.7. Developing community services *(p. 38)***

- 7.7.1. The FPO Social Integration, Poverty and Social Economy will formulate a proposal on the further development of community and neighbourhood services that meet the needs of the elderly. All government services concerned and the representatives of the sector will be involved. Subsequently, the proposal will be presented to the different governments involved in the cooperation agreement. *(p. 39)*
- 7.7.2. At the same time, the possibility will be examined of establishing a clear framework for pensioners who wish to be actively involved in community and neighbourhood services. The FPO Social Integration, Poverty and Social Economy will again take the initiative to bring all parties together. In consultation with all actors involved a specific statute will be developed for pensioners who wish to volunteer as active service providers within the social economy. *(p. 39)*
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#### **7.8. Ethically sound investments *(p. 40)***

- 7.8.1. In January 2005 the ICSD will establish a study group that will examine to what extent the conclusions and proposals emerging from the study 'Research report on possible proposals aimed at encouraging ethical and solidary investing or saving in Belgium' (conducted by Ethibel, 2002) are suitable implementations. *(p. 40)*
- 7.8.2. The study group will invite companies, trade unions, the academic world and other non-governmental organisations to participate in its activities. *(p. 40)*
- 7.8.3. Within the framework of its activities regarding 'ethical investments', the study group will monitor the legally provided transparency obligation of pension funds. On the basis of this follow-up, it will draw up an inventory of 'good practices'. *(p. 41)*
- 7.8.4. Special attention will also be paid to monitoring social, ethical and environmental information provided by companies. Similarly to traditional financial reporting, this information should be checked by an independent body, without entailing additional costs for companies involved. *(p. 41)*
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#### **7.9. Making family care possible *(p. 41)***

- 7.9.1. The special Council of Ministers held in Oostende established the budgets of and set out signposts for the extension of parental leave (increasing premium, duration, age and flexibility). They are being discussed by the social partners. It was also decided to extend adoption leave, speed up the coming into force of care leave and extend maternal leave in case of hospitalisation of the newborn child or multiple birth. The law provides that the social partners should assess the system of time credits. During this term, introducing the system of time-saving (i.e. saving holidays) will also be considered in consultation with the social partners. *(p. 41)*

- 7.9.2. Within the framework of teleworking from home, the legal vacuum resulting from the combination of working and private life will have to be filled by clearly defining the responsibilities and competences of both employers and employees. In this context, there is a clear need for a study on the possibilities of refining existing legislation on teleworking and working from home so that it becomes applicable to teleworking from home. Mid-February 2004 the Minister of Labour and Pensions, the Minister of Social Security and the State Secretary for Work Organisation and Well-being at Work asked the Belgian National Labour Council (NARICNT) to assess the application of labour law and social security law on homework and examine which legal, regulatory or administrative changes are required to bring the status of home teleworkers (persons working in their own homes) up to date. The General Regulations on Labour Protection (ARAB/RGTP and the Codex on Well-Being at Work) will be adjusted and the insurance scheme for accidents at work will be improved by the end of 2004. The aim is to present a global package of proposals by the beginning of 2005. At the General Conference on Family, other adjustments to labour organisation aimed at balancing work and family life were discussed. In this context, explicit attention was devoted to older families. (p. 41)
- 7.9.3. On 15 April 2004 the so-called Experience Fund was launched in order to encourage companies to develop projects that raise the quality of working conditions for people aged 55 and over. Within this framework, companies can submit project applications. The selection procedure for the team (6 individuals) at the FPS Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue that is to manage the Experience Fund has already started. Meanwhile sectors and various intermediary organisations are being informed of the possibilities of the Experience Fund, whether or not combined with the European EQUAL programme. A debate has started with the different sectors with a view to constructive cooperation. The development of godfather formulas will also be encouraged. In this way, companies do not lose know-how and the specific needs of working people aged 55 and over are taken into account. (p. 42)
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#### **7.10. Improving overall relief (p. 43)**

- 7.10.1. In conjunction with the other bodies involved in the development of the NEHAP and with the High Council of Health, the FPS Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment will add environmental determinants in the broad sense to the variables of the electronic medical file (EMF). In 2004 a study group will be established in charge of identifying useful and relevant variables; these variables can be gathered routinely in the context of primary health care and can then be incorporated into the EMF in accordance with the regulations relating to the protection of privacy. (p. 44)
- 7.10.2. Within the framework of patient protection, the Federal Public Planning Service Consumer Protection will have to develop the tools that give patients easier access to their medical files. (p. 44)
- 7.10.3. The Minister of Public Health will ask the accreditation steering committee of general practitioners to introduce community health training that includes all health determinants by 2005. (p. 44)
- 7.10.4. The FPS Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment will improve coordination of existing loco-regional primary health care structures in accordance with the protocol of 25 July 2001 between the Federal Government, the Communities and the Regions on primary health care. This cooperation aims at boosting data exchange in order to improve scientific knowledge and ensure better-founded decisions. (p. 44)
- 7.10.5. The FPS Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment will develop the necessary tools (information campaigns, leaflets, etc.) in order to improve risk prevention. The information is intended for the population and will be given to patients by primary health care providers (general practitioners, pharmacists, national health services, etc.) among others. (p. 44)
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#### **7.11. Providing better information and making health care more accessible (p. 45)**

- 7.11.1. By 2004 the FPS Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment will identify all health workers, including citizens (representatives, associations, etc.) in order to improve their mutual cooperation. (p. 45)
- 7.11.2. By 2005 all Federal Public Services and Federal Policy Offices will draw up a list of the data banks containing health determinants at their disposal. The FPS Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment will bring the data together, gaining an accurate and concrete idea of the situation and of the real priorities. (p. 45)
- 7.11.3. The FPS Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment will draw up an inventory of existing cooperation agreements. It will check which agreements could benefit from a wider range of application and assess which areas need new agreements in order to achieve new public health targets. (p. 46)

- 7.11.4. The use of the so-called 'Maximum Invoice' (Maximumfactuur/Maximum à Facturer or MAF) should be extended, both for individuals and reimbursed health care, while factoring in evolutions in the health sector and the most advanced medical techniques. (p. 46)
  - 7.11.5. Rates should be better secured, especially in hospitals, mainly by better managing fee supplements and clarifying the legal relations between doctors and hospital managers. (p. 46)
  - 7.11.6. Care services for target groups should be extended, for instance with regard to dentistry and contraceptives for young people; care provision for chronically sick patients (such as comatose patients and patients who suffer from serious neurological disorders) and care-dependent patients (domestic care services, flexible care and institutions) should be improved. (p. 46)
  - 7.11.7. The organisation of health care in highly urbanised areas requires special attention (cooperation between primary health care providers and hospital care). (p. 46)
  - 7.11.8. The recognition of unconventional practices is an important measure for citizens' health. Several surveys have shown that patients often appeal to these kinds of practices. The FPS Social Security will soon establish qualification conditions for homoeopathy, osteopathy, acupuncture and manual therapies. (p. 46)
  - 7.11.9. The FPS Social Security will inform the population on existing structures that boost integrated and multidisciplinary health activities. It will also provide information about the different payment methods and the contributions of such an integrated and polyvalent approach to public health, without harming the interests of independent physicians. (p. 46)
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## 7.12. Quality of food (p. 47)

- 7.12.1. The Federal Government will actively support the EU proposal for registration, evaluation and authorisation of chemicals (REACH). Within the framework of the NEHAP and the products policy, measures will be proposed to reduce the risks related to harmful substances. (p. 48)
- 7.12.2. In order to limit chemical pollution of foodstuffs as much as possible, by 2005 the Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain (FASFC) will set up cooperation with the administrations of the Regions and the Communities in charge of environment and health, aiming at developing complementary environmental and nutrition policies that focus on rapid tracing and prevention. (p. 48)
- 7.12.3. A first programme aimed at reducing the use and risks of pesticides and biocides by 2010 will be set up at the federal level by the end of 2004. By 2006 a second national programme will be developed in conjunction with the Regions and the Communities. A national survey on eating habits, the results of which will be available in 2005, will, among other things, shed light on the levels of pesticides and other pollutants in consumed foodstuffs. (p. 48)
- 7.12.4. In 2004 no GMOs were cultivated in Belgium, neither for commercial ends, nor for research purposes. If Belgium allowed GMO cultivation, it would have to be governed by European measures aimed at protecting the environment and other crops. Within its sphere of competence, the Federal Government will contribute to the introduction of coexistence measures, which require the Regions' approval. The Federal State will continue to promote the introduction of an ecological regime at the European level. Belgium will continue to encourage and apply the precautionary principle for GMO crops and their use in animal and human foodstuffs. (p. 48)
- 7.12.5. The FPS Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment will ensure that, in addition to the information already available to professionals, better information on pesticides and biocides is also provided to the public at large. With regard to GMOs, the FPS will better inform the general public of the rules and of the GMO subject to an authorisation procedure. (p. 48)
- 7.12.6. As far as product standards are concerned, the Government will take the initiative to put forward the WHO recommendations on the reduction of sugar and salt in processed food at the European and international level. (p. 48)
- 7.12.7. The National Nutrition and Health Plan will contain broad considerations and concrete measures in order to prevent and reduce the occurrence of non-transmittable diseases caused by inappropriate nutrition and lack of physical exercise, i.e. obesity, cardiovascular diseases and type 2 diabetes. This is in line with the 'Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health', launched by the WHO in 2004. The Plan's measures will cover different areas: food labels, health care, advertising and marketing, health prevention and promotion, etc. The considerations will lead to recommendations aimed at making simple and practical information on better nutrition and healthy eating habits available to everyone. In conjunction with the FPSs and FPOs

concerned, and the Regions and the Communities, the FPS Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment will inform the population on the composition of healthy and balanced nutrition as of 2005. (p. 48)

- 7.12.8. A round table conference will be held aimed at making everyone aware of the impact of marketing and advertising on life style and eating habits in particular. The participants will include producers, processors, distributors, marketing and communication companies, consumer organisations, trade unions, ministerial representatives, officials and other parties involved. On the basis of this conference, a report listing the necessary measures will be drawn up by September 2005. (p. 48)
- 7.12.9. By 2005 the FPS Economy will conduct a study on the impact of different kinds of packaging, as a marketing tool, on consumers' purchasing behaviour (e.g. the playful look of cans and bottles containing alcohol beverages, etc.). It will take measures in order to protect consumers and bring about a positive change in consumption. (p. 48)

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### **7.13. Preventing violence (p. 49)**

- 7.13.1. As of 2005 the FPS Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment will conduct information and awareness campaigns on the theme of violence in conjunction with other departments. (p. 50)
- 7.13.2. In application of the May 2003 resolution (WHO-Europe), the Government will establish a platform in 2005 that brings together the different FPSs, FPOs and federal entities in order to thoroughly study the fundamental social causes of violence. (p. 50)
- 7.13.3. This platform will bring together all institutional actors and all actors working in the field so as to draw up a list of concrete recommendations by 2006. (p. 50)
- 7.13.4. On the basis of this study, the platform will develop a national plan with concrete actions aimed at preventing primary violence. (p. 50)
- 7.13.5. In 2007 the Government will approve a national plan on the basis of this draft. (p. 50)

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### **7.14. Striving for better health worldwide (p. 51)**

- 7.14.1. Belgium will fit its health interventions into the framework of the national policy on sustainable development of its partner countries, or of the national strategy for combating poverty. (p. 52)
- 7.14.2. The Federal Government will take the initiative to organise consultation with the many Belgian actors (i.e. federal, regional and community governments, provinces, municipalities, civil society, trade unions, etc.) with a view to better harmonising their actions, while taking into account the actions of foreign actors and international organisations. Boosting coherence and coordination of the health policy, including vis-à-vis the environmental policy, can be an important point of interest when developing the national strategy for sustainable development. (p. 52)
- 7.14.3. At the international level, coherence and coordination are essential. This is definitely true of the fight against AIDS, which involves a large number of donor, international and civil organisations, as well as considerable budgets. In this context, the platform 'AIDS and development cooperation' together with the AIDS-ambassador will develop a joint policy on the fight against AIDS and coordinate its implementation. (p. 52)
- 7.14.4. Belgian companies that are active abroad will be encouraged to incorporate the major (social and ecological) health aspects into their policies. (p. 52)
- 7.14.5. Research and development of new medical technologies and products requires a lot of capital and time since the development of a new medicine can take up to 10 years. Wherever market mechanisms fail and the demand for products is insufficient, Belgium will boost partnerships between the private and the public sectors at the European and international level. (p. 52)
- 7.14.6. Special attention will be devoted to eliminating legal insecurity in slums by participating in existing international programmes. (p. 52)

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### **7.15. Restricting use of natural resources (p. 53)**

- 7.15.1. As of 2004 the Interministerial Committee for the Economy will be enlarged with environmental representatives, who will take part in all activities. This committee will develop the dematerialisation strategy, which will include the definition of indicators, the intended figures and the propositions for concrete measures. It is also responsible for the immediate implementation of these concrete measures. The committee will involve the actors concerned in its activities at the appropriate time. (p. 54)

- 7.15.2. The Federal Government will also pull its weight. In 2004 the three Regions entered into a voluntary agreement with the distribution sector in view of boosting alternatives to disposable plastic bags. A number of store chains in Belgium have already set a good example and no longer offer disposable bags. If the results of the voluntary agreement with the distribution sector are deemed too poor after 2006, the Federal Government and the Regions will consider introducing measures aimed at boosting alternatives to disposable plastic bags. (p. 54)
- 7.15.3. As of 2005 the Federal Government intends to ensure that homework and local teleworking centres account for 10% of the overall working hours achieved by the end of 2007. The necessary measures will be provided for in consultation with the different parties involved and in view of their specific characteristics. Measures will also be taken to reduce occupied office space and used office equipment by a similar percentage. If new smaller office space is to be built, it will be done in accordance with the most environment-friendly construction standards. But first the Federal Government, in consultation with the other policy levels and within the appropriate consultation structures, will examine how to encourage working from home and teleworking (see also action 9). (p. 54)
- 7.15.4. In order to develop the dematerialisation strategy, the main federal public services involved (environment, economy, social security, foreign affairs) should entrust the representatives of the cells for sustainable development with tasks as of 2004. (p. 54)
- 7.15.5. In 2005 a project coordinator will be appointed in charge of steering the preparation and implementation of homework in the right direction. The existing support services can take on the further implementation within the FPSs and FPOs. (p. 54)

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#### **7.16. A strategy for sustainable products (p. 54)**

- 7.16.1. A strategy that encourages the production and consumption of sustainable products will be developed in conjunction with the Regions and the actors involved (sectors, NGOs, consumer organisations, etc.). The different study groups will start their activities as of the beginning of 2005. The implementation of each measure of this strategy will start by 2007 at the latest. (p. 55)
- 7.16.2. At the European level, aiming for the integration of existing labels and the development of one single label with regard to the entire life cycle (social, ecological and economic). (p. 55)
- 7.16.3. Promoting existing legal labels in anticipation: ecological labels, the label for socially sound production, fair trade labels, the FSC label (Forest Stewardship Council; see also action 19), etc. (p. 56)
- 7.16.4. Taking measures aimed at defining a clear, understandable and transparent framework for the use of labels, logos and pictograms in advertising or on products and services. (p. 56)
- 7.16.5. Products that take into account a number of sustainable development criteria throughout their entire cycles are usually more expensive than other products since they observe stricter ecological, economic and/or social criteria. The Federal Government will make every effort to improve their competitiveness, for instance by arguing in favour of lower VAT rates for these products at the European level (see also action 22, § 32213). (p. 56)

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#### **7.17. The Government's exemplary role (p. 57)**

- 7.17.1. In 2004 a study group, presided over by the FPO Sustainable Development, will propose a method for implementing and assessing the environmental care system on the basis of the federal environmental charter. This environmental charter was introduced within the framework of the first Federal Plan for Sustainable Development and constituted the basis for the commitments made by the participant federal administrations to reduce the impact of their activities on the environment. The system should meet a number of obligations with regard to management and results. In 2005 an independent federal audit cell will be established to assess these obligations. (p. 58)
- 7.17.2. In accordance with the first Federal Plan for Sustainable Development, in 2004 the FPO Sustainable Development and the ICSD will issue a guideline to help the administrations formulate their results. To that end, all administrations should give their consumption data of 2003 to the Belgian Building Authority, which will bring together, publish and distribute the results. (p. 58)
- 7.17.3. If the study provided for by action 23 shows that the third party financing system really contributes to making buildings more energy efficient, the federal public services will do pioneering work to promote the system. (p. 58)

- 7.17.4. In 2004 the ICSD will establish a study group Sustainable Public Commissions in charge of speeding up the incorporation of ecological, social and ethical criteria as well as social clauses into public commissions while obviously observing European and Belgian legislation (see also action 30). This study group will monitor the coordination between the federal actions encouraging sustainable public acquisition and the initiatives of the Regions, Communities and municipalities. Information will be transferred through websites and training initiatives. This study group will develop special projects linking recycling and the valorisation of the waste of administrations to the social economy. (p. 58)

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## 7.18. Protecting biodiversity (p. 59)

- 7.18.1. The four action plans are drawn up in cooperation with the FPSs Economy, SMEs, Selfemployed and Energy, Mobility and Transport, Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, the Federal Science Policy Office, the Ministry of Defence, the ICSD, and the Regions wherever necessary. The implementation of the Treaty on Biological Diversity requires that an overview be made for each sector of what is already provided for and what still needs adjusting. Different tools are used to this end, including national coordination with regard to non-indigenous species, establishing an intersectoral task force for illegal logging (see action 19) and consultation with target groups. In 2004 a coordinator will be appointed within the ICSD who will be in charge of coordinating both the preparation and the implementation of the action plans, for instance, through coordination groups with the actors involved. As of 2005 the action plans will be drawn up and implemented. (p. 60)
- 7.18.2. Integrating the care for biodiversity into all works developing the infrastructure in existing or new installations; (transport sector) (p. 60)
- 7.18.3. Entirely managing all railway verges in all ecologically valuable areas or in their vicinity serving as a connection between fragmented nature reserves, by 2007; (transport sector) (p. 60)
- 7.18.4. Establishing a national coordination and warning system in 2005 to monitor the transport of non-indigenous species into the country. (transport sector) (p. 60)
- 7.18.5. Prohibiting the use and importation of illegally logged timber by 2007 (action 19 deals with this issue in further detail); (economic sector) (p. 60)
- 7.18.6. Integrating the concern for biodiversity into trade agreements and export credits; (economic sector) (p. 60)
- 7.18.7. As of 2004 the so-called National Junction ABS ('Access and Benefit Sharing') ensures a coherent national position on accessibility and fair distribution of benefits resulting from the exploitation of genetic resources. (economic sector) (p. 60)
- 7.18.8. The Cartagena Protocol recognises the right of all countries to information, freedom of choice and the application of the precautionary principle. Within the framework of development cooperation, due attention should be paid when drawing up national strategies for the protection of biodiversity to capacity-building for biodiversity, notably with regard to the precautionary principle as applied to the use of GMOs. (development cooperation area) (p. 60)
- 7.18.9. Improving information exchange and strengthening partnerships through the Clearing House Mechanism; (development cooperation area) (p. 60)
- 7.18.10. Boosting capacity-building for biodiversity when drawing up and implementing national strategies for biodiversity, sustainable management of land, water and living resources; (development cooperation area) (p. 60)
- 7.18.11. By 2007, integrating biodiversity into all new and other relevant (agricultural and aquacultural for instance) DGDC projects on natural resources, in conjunction with the partner; (development cooperation area) (p. 60)
- 7.18.12. Granting more resources to development cooperation aimed at sustainable management of tropical and primeval forests, in accordance with the government policy statement of 2003 (federal Coalition Agreement, 2003, p 37). In this context, the active role of the indigenous population and the knowledge of small local farmers should be recognised. (development cooperation area) (p. 60)
- 7.18.13. By 2007, developing and using tools for the preservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity in the different sectors (for instance, a structural exchange mechanism for scientific knowledge on biodiversity, at the national and international levels); (science policy area) (p. 61)
- 7.18.14. By 2007, developing and using tools for the objective evaluation of measures that have already been taken. (science policy area) (p. 61)

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### 7.19. Sustainable forest management: the fight against illegal logging (p. 61)

- 7.19.1. In order to reduce the increasing pressure on forests caused by local populations, the Belgian cooperation will devote special attention to other sectors that can increase the population's income and decrease the demand for charcoal. (p. 62)
- 7.19.2. Belgium will enter into partnerships for sustainable timber management with developing countries and the other main exporting countries of timber to Belgium. Within the framework of these partnerships, agreements will be signed on capacity-building, certification and tracing of timber, monitoring the compliance with forestry legislation and barring illegally logged timber. Support can also be provided to other projects that aim at fostering sustainable forestry and exporting certified timber. (p. 62)
- 7.19.3. An intersectoral task force will be established to follow the activities within the framework of the European Action Plan for FLEGT and implement several national and regional actions. It will examine how the relevant legislation can be optimised (including sanctions). (p. 62)
- 7.19.4. The Government takes the necessary measures to promote the importation of timber from responsibly managed forests. Public procurements will stipulate the use of sustainably certified timber from responsibly managed forests as a condition. (p. 62)
- 7.19.5. As of 2005 the Federal Government in cooperation with the timber and distribution sector and the NGOs will take the initiative to boost the use of certified timber in Belgium by distributing consumer information and drawing up a guide on sustainably certified timber. (p. 62)
- 7.19.6. Within the framework of its multilateral policy, Belgium will take initiatives aimed at sustainable forest management, especially within the context of the Treaty on Biodiversity, the United Nations Forum on Forests, the FAO and other institutions. In this context, priority is given to protecting areas that have a high biological diversity, developing a policy against illegal logging, funding and building capacity for sustainable forest management and uniformising the certification and monitoring of sustainably harvested wood. At the institutional level, efforts will be focused on boosting cooperation, coordination and coherence between several international processes and institutions dealing with forestry (p. 62)
- 7.19.7. In the developing countries, the actions aimed at peace, stability, good governance and poverty eradication are absolutely essential and contribute to efficiently combating illegal logging. These actions figure among the priorities of the Belgian foreign and development cooperation policies. (p. 63)

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### 7.20. Integrated management of the North Sea (p. 63)

- 7.20.1. The present action requires that all possible tools be brought into action: in addition to consultation and communication (inventory and analysis of activities, criteria for the zones' purposes, conflict resolution, etc.) and regulations (legal basis, cooperation agreement between the Federal Government and the Flemish Region on integrated coastal zone management, bilateral agreements with the province and the municipalities, impact of European regulation on fishing restrictions in protected coastal areas, etc.), the budget also requires due attention (compensation for the repercussions of modification, restriction or even total prohibition of certain activities as well as closer supervision). (p. 64)
- 7.20.2. The many parties involved in the exploitation and protection of the marine environment should supply these tools, both at the international and federal (competent for wind turbines, sand and gravel extraction, pipelines and telecommunication, maritime transport, military operations, protected marine areas and scientific support) and the regional levels (competent for sea fishing, coast protection, dredging operations, integrated coastal zone management and tourism). (p. 64)
- 7.20.3. As far as rationalisation is concerned, it is also necessary that criteria be set independently for one or more activities at a given location. These criteria should be based on the three pillars of sustainable development. Obviously, the 'stakeholders' (the parties involved) should have a say in the formulation of these criteria. The confrontation between criteria and activities should give a rough idea of the sectoral plan. This outline should be accompanied by a mechanism for conflict resolution if two activities are incompatible, and by alternatives should an activity be deemed unacceptable. In this context, the strategic environmental impact statement is a possible tool. Its initial memorandum will be subject to public research. (p. 64)
- 7.20.4. Finally, it is also necessary to better protect sea areas against human pressure since these areas can contribute to restoring and increasing marine biodiversity. These areas require appropriate management plans that indicate what can and cannot be done. Plans that do not include fishing activities would not be credible in this respect. Therefore, consideration should be given to fishing restrictions that are in agreement with European rules and to possible economic compensations for the parties involved. In order to protect sea areas in general and to make sure that the plans aimed at managing protected seas areas in

particular are observed, strict rules will be formulated and supplemented by frequent monitoring and a rigorous follow-up policy. (p. 64)

- 7.20.5. For the purpose of the coordination of this action, the Government has set up a North Sea Task Force at the ministerial level under chairmanship of the Minister for the North Sea. The Government will see to it that the policymaking body of the Coast Guard supports the activities of this Task Force. (p. 64)

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### 7.21. A sustainable energy policy (p. 65)

- 7.21.1. In conjunction with the Regions, research and development of renewable energy sources, cogeneration, fuel cell technology and energy efficient technologies will receive maximum support. Special attention should be devoted to the possibility of application in developing countries (see also action 25). (p. 66)
- 7.21.2. Moreover, in conjunction with the Regions, there will be an examination of the tools that could be efficiently used to boost and speed up investments in energy efficient technologies, of how the different tools can be better coordinated and of how publicity for the different initiatives can be raised. In this context, the energy policy agreements that the Regions concluded with the different sectors should be taken into account. (p. 66)
- 7.21.3. Before the end of 2005, this consultation should result in an action plan comprising the measures of the different policy levels involved. The CONCERE/ENOVER group for State-Region energy consultation and the National Climate Committee will discuss these measures. Specific actions for renewable energy and rational energy use will be included in the national climate plan. (p. 66)
- 7.21.4. In order to create a favourable investment climate for renewable energy, it is essential that medium and long-term goals be set with regard to the share of renewable energy sources in overall Belgian energy production. When determining the long-term goals, a guaranteed energy supply and the diversity of energy sources and ways of meeting energy needs should be taken into account. The proposal of the Johannesburg Renewable Energy Coalition, which includes Belgium, to achieve a European target of 20% by 2020, should serve as a guideline. (p. 66)
- 7.21.5. In order to encourage and promote the use and production of biofuels, the EU Directive on the promotion of renewable fuels for road transportation (2003/30/EC) will be transposed into Belgian legislation as soon as possible. This directive states that biofuels should account for 2% of the overall energy content by 2005, rising to 5,75% by 2010. Exempting biofuels from taxes is one way of guaranteeing the success of the directive on biofuels for transportation (see also action 28). (p. 66)

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### 7.22. The right price (p. 67)

- 7.22.1. In the spring of 2005, the Government will establish a study group that will be put in charge of developing the strategy and a scientifically accepted measuring method for the internalisation of external environmental and social costs (cf the advice of the FCSO of 19 October 1999 concerning taxability within the framework of the environmental policy). This study group will consist of the different responsible bodies and will be presided over by a representative of the Minister of Finance. This study group has an urgent task and will issue its final report to the prime minister on 1 December 2005. (p. 67)
- 7.22.2. When developing this strategy, special attention will be devoted to keeping the balance between the three pillars of sustainable development. (p. 68)
- 7.22.3. The FPS Finance will crystallise this new strategy in the course of 2006 (p. 68)
- 7.22.4. At the international level, Belgium will continue to argue in favour of fairer trade. It will, among other things, urge the WTO to link ecological and social criteria to trade rules. (p. 68)
- 7.22.5. Furthermore, on an international level, Belgium will advocate a reform of VAT rates in favour of sustainable goods and services (see also action 17, § 31614). (p. 68)

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### 7.23. Energy-conserving buildings (p. 68)

- 7.23.1. In Belgium, several projects have already been funded on the basis of the third party financing principle, usually aimed at hospitals and schools, involving chiefly the Government and the industry. It should be examined how these initiatives can be reinforced and extended to private individuals (see also action 3). (p. 69)
- 7.23.2. Given the significant financial means required for investing in energy efficient buildings, the Council of Ministers of 13 February 2004 decided that the Belgian Federal Investment Company will establish a public limited company so as to further develop and encourage the third party financing system. This plc will aim at boosting and achieving eco-efficiency within the Belgian economy, among other things, by offering an

integrated package of services for the implementation of efficient and rational energy and raw material use in the public and private sectors. (p. 69)

- 7.23.3. This future plc will take the buildings of the Federal Government in hand as of 2005 (see action 17). On the basis of the experience thus gained, the action can be extended to other buildings, including houses, as of 2007. (p. 69)
- 7.23.4. In addition, it was decided to set up an interministerial task force. This task force will have to formulate proposals aimed at eliminating existing legal and economic obstacles, with regard to the relationship between landlord and tenant for instance. (p. 69)
- 7.23.5. In conjunction with the Regions, the Government will examine how the problem explained in §32305 can be solved. (p. 69)

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#### **7.24. More solidarity: the use of flexibility mechanisms (p. 68)**

- 7.24.1. Without delay, Belgium will establish a regulatory framework for the implementation of the flexibility mechanisms coherent with the international and European frameworks (EU Directive 2003/87/EC). (p. 71)
- 7.24.2. The advisory opinion of the Federal Council on Sustainable Development concerning the flexibility mechanisms will be taken into consideration when implementing the present action. (p. 71)
- 7.24.3. Existing policy tools aimed at boosting foreign trade, international cooperation as well as scientific and technological research will be reoriented in order to better take into consideration the targets of the international climate policy; they will focus on promoting the transfer of climate-friendly and ecological technologies and the capacity-building necessary thereto. The application of the project-specific flexible mechanisms, i.e. the Clean Development Mechanism and the Joint Implementation Mechanism, should also contribute to effectively achieving this technology transfer (see also §32504). (p. 71)
- 7.24.4. The Law of 25 May 1999 concerning Belgian international cooperation includes 6 criteria to measure the development relevance of the proposed programmes and projects. When applying the criterion 'respect for environment protection or safeguarding', the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation of the FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation will attach more importance to proposals that are relevant to this theme. Belgian investment support, within the framework of the activities of FINEXPO for instance, and other tools aimed at promoting energy projects in the Third World can also be reoriented toward renewable energy projects. (p. 71)
- 7.24.5. The National Climate Committee will continue a broad dialogue on the use of flexibility mechanisms, cutting across the boundaries of competences. (p. 71)

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#### **7.25. A global approach to the energy issue (p. 71)**

- 7.25.1. Supporting the partner countries, especially those in Africa, in their efforts to draw up an energy policy directed at sustainable local production. (p. 72)
- 7.25.2. Supporting initiatives of local organisations in developing countries that provide the daily energy supply to the local population, i.e. for lighting, cooking, water pumps, etc. Energy conversion loss should be avoided as much as possible. Heat, electricity and biomass should be used as directly as possible in order to minimise energy loss. This support can, for instance, be translated into granting microcredits to local communities or families. NGOs play an important role in this context. (p. 72)
- 7.25.3. In the international standardisation institutions, Belgium will argue in favour of energy efficiency standards aimed at keeping energy use as low as possible. (p. 72)
- 7.25.4. After consultation between the different ministers involved, a proposal will be presented to the federal Council of Ministers in 2005 on the participation of Belgium in the initiatives following the Energy Conference held in Bonn on 1 June 2004. (p. 72)
- 7.25.5. Support of investments in energy infrastructure offered by national public financial institutions should meet strict social and ecological criteria and will include incentives for renewable energy. (p. 72)
- 7.25.6. Belgium will use its mandates in international credit and investment institutions to advocate investments in renewable energy sources. (p. 72)
- 7.25.7. The federal members of the National Climate Committee will take the initiative to establish coordination between the members of the competent governments on the aforementioned actions. (p. 72)

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#### **7.26. Steering the demand for mobility (p. 73)**

- 7.26.1. In each case, an interdepartmental study group presided over by the FPS Finance will examine the measures involved. The Regions, the professional organisations concerned and organisations representing consumers and families will be consulted with. The study group will develop proposals, as far as possible, in line with the ongoing initiatives in the Regions. It will present these to the Government by the end of 2005. (p. 74)
- 7.26.2. It should be observed that adjusting the road fund tax implies that better data are available on the environmental performance of vehicles (see action 29). (p. 74)
- 7.26.3. Belgium will argue in favour of Europe-wide harmonisation of these measures. (p. 74)

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#### **7.27. Alternative ways of travelling (p. 74)**

- 7.27.1. In 2005 the Royal Decree regarding reference to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in car advertising will be modified to include mention of the energy label. The sectors involved will be consulted with in advance. The Government will extend the tasks of the Belgian Consumer Council in order to boost advertising aimed at more responsible behaviour with regard to mobility. (p. 75)
- 7.27.2. Companies will be requested to examine their vehicle fleet and encourage the acquisition of the least polluting vehicles as well as the use of soft modes of transport and public transport. The Government will support coordination initiatives in each economic activity zone through consultative committees consisting of the actors involved. As far as the gathering of data on commuter traffic is concerned, the Programme Law of 4 April 2003 (Belgian State Gazette, 17 April 2003) provides that efforts will be made with regard to communication with companies. The efficiency of these measures will be evaluated and adjustments will be proposed if necessary. The federal administrations will set a good example (see action 17) for others. (p. 75)
- 7.27.3. Encouraging teleworking and homework (see action 15). (p. 75)
- 7.27.4. Encouraging carpooling: companies ensuring employee transportation, encouraging carsharing (see action 28). (p. 75)
- 7.27.5. Encouraging an intelligent speed adaptation and limitation device accessible to all (p. 75)

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#### **7.28. Improving the supply of public transport (p. 76)**

- 7.28.1. Comprehensive and accessible information on (preferential) rates, schedules and routes combining all public transport means will be made available. In addition, awareness campaigns should be organised on car alternatives (especially for the Regional Express Network); these should be based on a broad collective debate on the values of our society, which sees cars as an important status symbol. (p. 77)
- 7.28.2. In the medium term, it is important that public transport fares be further reduced in view of the poorest users and persons with reduced mobility. Furthermore, transport will be made cheaper for those who use soft or collective modes of transport (car-sharing, carpooling, public transport, company and school transport). (p. 77)
- 7.28.3. Goods transport: making road transportation more energy efficient, enhancing the appeal of rail transport supply, encouraging intermodal transport through terminals and boosting inland navigation, short-distance maritime transport and pipelines. (p. 77)
- 7.28.4. Developing incentives for employers so that they encourage employees to travel to and from work by public transport; on the one hand, through corporate commuter schemes (see action 27), on the other, through agreements enabling employers who reimburse 80% of transport costs to offer their employees free season tickets for train/tram/bus. (p. 77)
- 7.28.5. The Consultative Committee of 4 April 2003 adopted the convention between the Federal State and the Regions in view of developing the Regional Express Network (GENIRER) from, to, in and around Brussels. This convention regulates the organisation of public transport supply and the accompanying measures. It is planned that 600.9 million Euros will be invested in the Regional Express Network between 2004 and 2007 (for studies and infrastructure investments). The Federal State will make every effort to reserve available funds in the Budgetary Fund in view of the activities' progress. Prefinancing will be used for 'locatable' projects. In order to effectively realise the Regional Express Network, it should be determined whether there is sufficient quantitative and qualitative rolling stock to ensure that the operational needs of the Network are met; it should also be decided how the operating deficit will be made up. The provision of road signs indicating the GENIRER stations and encouraging drivers to leave their cars in designated car parks should contribute to a change in commuter behaviour. (p. 77)

- 7.28.6. Overall, the accessibility of public transport should be improved. In this context, the NMBS/SNCB should ensure that platforms are accessible to the eldest citizens and to other persons with reduced mobility. In 1999 the NMBS/SNCB developed a plan aimed at thoroughly improving the accessibility of 90 stations by 2014. The Government proposes to reduce this timing. In concrete terms, the platforms of the 50 main Belgian stations should be accessible by elevators by 2008. In addition, platforms will be made accessible by elevators or ramps in all Belgian stations that are rebuilt as of 1 January 2005. When negotiating the new management agreement with the NMBS/SNCB, the Federal Government will see to it that these objectives are included. The regional public transport companies are also invited to ensure that their infrastructure is accessible to the eldest citizens. *(p. 77)*
- 7.28.7. The management agreement with the NMBS/SNCB will have to be very clear on increasing frequency and improving the quality of services and the accessibility of infrastructure to low-income earners, persons with reduced mobility as well as cyclists (federal Coalition Agreement, 2003, p 35). It must be easy to consult. For railway traffic to act as a lever toward more sustainable transport, the entire network should be preserved; hence, short local connections and local trains should not be disinvested in. Other aspects of sustainable development should also be taken into account, including noise pollution. *(p. 78)*
- 7.28.8. In 2005 the FPS Mobility and Transport will start a dialogue on public transport supply, car parks at the edge of stations and related rates (free for users) with the Regions, the municipalities, public transport companies (including NMBS/SNCB), the social partners and organisations representative of the car and bicycle industries. The possibility of parking and renting bicycles in stations will be optimised. *(p. 78)*

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### 7.29. Improving expertise and information regarding mobility *(p. 78)*

- 7.29.1. The Mobility Directorate will start implementing these new tasks in the course of the first six months of 2005. For tasks that exceed the strict framework of the competence of the FPS Mobility and Transport, the interdepartmental working group will not only consist of the FPSs involved in the mobility issue, but will also include observers from the three Regions and representatives of local authorities. The Regions and the Federal Government should collaborate in a structural manner. A committee consisting of representatives of the federal and regional governments, the academic world, the different transport sectors as well as the civil society will monitor and direct the working group's activities. This monitoring committee will hold at least three annual meetings. *(p. 79)*
- 7.29.2. The Mobility Directorate should ensure that all available data of the FPSs are brought together, gathered, processed, expanded and made accessible. *(p. 79)*
- 7.29.3. The Mobility Directorate will draw up an annual activity report. This report should mainly deal with the results achieved with regard to the development of indicators and relevant criteria (measuring tools). It will be part of the activity report of the FPS. *(p. 79)*

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### 7.30. Less polluting vehicles *(p. 80)*

- 7.30.1. An interdepartmental working group consisting of representatives of the competent federal (environment, finance, energy, mobility, science policy and public acquisition) and regional governments was established in June 2004. This working group is charged with looking into the most promising developments with regard to the use and promotion of less polluting vehicles (electric or hybrid engines running on green energy, hydrogen, fuel batteries, LPG, natural gas, etc.). Each usage will be thoroughly examined. In this context, the example set by the Government is of overriding importance. *(p. 81)*
- 7.30.2. As far as the subsidy for the installation of particle filters is concerned, by 2005 the FPS Environment will formulate a subsidy decision that will prescribe the subsidy for heavy vehicles (lorries, buses) and passenger cars. *(p. 81)*
- 7.30.3. In order to inspect vehicles destined for exportation, a law will have to be adopted in 2005. Motor vehicle inspection bodies should be put in charge of carrying out these inspections. The system should be operational in 2007. *(p. 81)*
- 7.30.4. In order to support bicycle use on an international level, cooperation will be encouraged between Belgian bicycle producers and companies from some developing countries. *(p. 81)*
- 7.30.5. Finally, the Plan for Sustainable Mobility, developed by the FPS Mobility and Transport, will look into the issue of company cars since the existing regulation does not take into account resulting adverse effects on mobility and the environment. *(p. 81)*

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### 7.31. The need for corporate social responsibility *(p. 81)*

- 7.31.1. The ICSD will establish a CSR study group, which will draft a frame of reference by October 2005. This study group will also implement a number of other decisions of the Council of Ministers of Oostende (p. 82)
- 7.31.2. Developing a voluntary sustainable reporting framework for companies. (p. 83)
- 7.31.3. Examining how the federal initiative with regard to the development of a specific "menu" for well-being at work in the different sectors can constructively link up with the actions taken by the Regions. The menu for well-being at work will challenge the different sectors to tackle the most pressing issues inherent to their core activities and to the labour market segments they are active in; it will also push sectors to go beyond mere observance of the law. (p. 83)
- 7.31.4. Looking into the feasibility and advisability of extending the transparency obligation to collective investment institutions. (p. 83)
- 7.31.5. Looking into the feasibility and advisability of linking up a number of internationally accepted CSR standards with the Belgian instruments for foreign trade (Delcredere, export credits, etc.). (p. 83)
- 7.31.6. The aforementioned initiatives can constitute the basis for an action plan aimed at supporting, facilitating and improving corporate social responsibility. (p. 83)
- 7.31.7. At the beginning of 2006, the Government will organise a broad social debate with the various stakeholders involved on the basis of the frame of reference and the action plan. (p. 83)

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