



F A C T S H E E T

# Local Authorities and FSC in Belgium



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## General information

Belgium, although a small country, is split into three regions: Flanders (north), Wallonia (south) and the Brussels-Capital region. As forestry is a regional matter, every region has a separate forest policy and legislation.

The Belgian FSC National Working Group has 4 chambers (economic, environmental, social and government) each of which is entitled to the same number of votes. The main task of the National Working Group is to adapt the FSC Principles and Criteria for certification of good forest management to the specific conditions of Belgium. The Belgian FSC standard was endorsed by FSC International in October 1999, but there are still some conditions and preconditions to be fulfilled.

In the Flemish region, three publicly owned forests have been certified: Zoniënwood, Meerdalwood and Heverlee bos with a total area of 4.342 ha.

WWF-Belgium promotes FSC to Local Authorities, forest owners and the industry. The Belgian Forest and Trade Network, Club 97, currently has 55 members, mostly importers and retailers. The main goal of Club '97 is to promote FSC labelled wood and to increase the availability of FSC labelled wood on the Belgian market.

## Activities of Local Authorities regarding FSC

### LA's as consumers

Since 1997, the use of FSC certified timber has been included in the Flemish Environmental Agreement for municipalities and



Ecological house  
in the Province of Limburg  
(© Luc Daelemans)

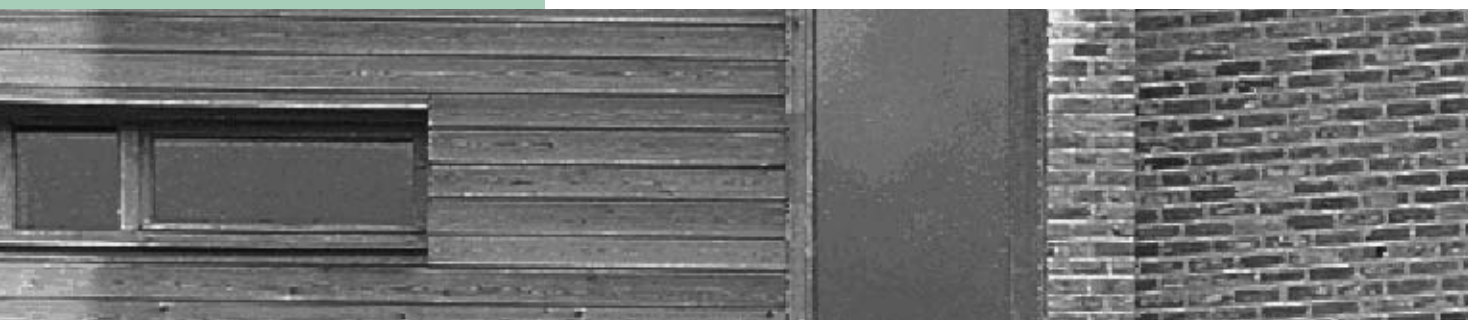
provinces. In the year 2000 one third of all Flemish towns and cities and all Flemish provinces signed the specific chapter of this agreement regarding the use of FSC certified wood for public works. This means that they have to use FSC labelled wood or an equivalent label that proves that the timber comes from forests that have been independently certified following internationally recognised criteria, unless the contractor can prove that the technical requirements in the tender specifications make this impossible.

The use of FSC labelled wood in public works is a long-term process. Not all timber species are available with an FSC label yet. Also it calls for a change in the mentality of, especially, local technical services. They are used to working with certain timber species for years and are often hesitant to use the lesser known tropical timber species that become available on the market with an FSC label. Not all municipalities have evolved at the same speed concerning the realisation of

concrete projects with certified forest products. But a change is underway. Every month new FSC labelled timber species are arriving on the market and more traders and producers become interested. The list with concrete realisations by the municipalities, cities and provinces is growing.

Many Local Authorities have completed projects with FSC labelled wood, amongst others: Antwerpen, Baarle-Hertog, Beveren, Brugge, Dendermonde, Duffel, Edegem, Gent, Hasselt, Hove, Kontich, Leuven, Lier, Malle, Menen, Mortsel, Oud-Turnhout, Province of Antwerpen, Province of Limburg, Province of Oost-Vlaanderen, Rumst, Sint-Truiden, Tienen, Turnhout, Veurne.

Sometimes, they are more ambitious projects, like the ecological house in Limburg Province, but most of the time they are small projects, that however can set a good example and create a dynamic of increased demand for FSC labelled wood.



**Case-study :**

**Ecological house in Limburg Province**

“There is a growing consciousness that sustainable development is the only way for a viable future. However, we have to research how to put the theory of sustainable development into practice. How can we make building and living sustainable? What kind of role can the provincial government play to achieve this? Projects like the ecological house demonstrate what is possible in terms of energy and water conservation measures and in terms of the use of healthy and ecologically sound materials. The use of FSC labelled timber fits perfectly in this framework. We hope that our ecological house will inspire many citizens who wish to build or renovate their homes.”

*Frank Smeets, Counsel of environment of the Province of Limburg*

In the city of Diepenbeek, the Province of Limburg constructed the first so-called “ecological house”, built with regard to the principles of sustainable construction methods. The aim was to put the principles of sustainable development into practice and to set an example for the public concerning sustainable living and construction. For the cladding boards and all construction timber FSC labelled larch was used.

**Case-study :**

**The use of FSC certified wood by the municipality of Edegem**

Edegem is one of the Local Authorities that signed the specific chapter concerning the use of FSC labelled wood for public works. Since then, several small projects have been completed, amongst others several terraces and bridges in public parks. The timber species used for these projects are FSC labelled lesser known species, such as Massaranduba, Cumaru, Guariuba, Sucupi-



A bridge made of FSC labelled wood in the municipality of Edegem

*(© Marc Konings)*



ra Vermelho and Angelim Vermelho, from certified forests in Brazil.

#### LA's as forest owners

Until now, no Local Authorities have certified their forests, but a number of them have shown interest in the matter.

#### LA's as awareness raising actors

Awareness raising concerning responsible forest management is an important task for Local Authorities. A lot of LA's publish articles about forest certification and FSC in their newsletters. They also include information about FSC labelled wood in brochures on sustainable construction practices.

To inform specific target groups, Local Authorities also organise seminars on forest certification and labelled timber. An example are the seminars organised by the Flemish Provinces in the spring of 2001. The invitations were especially aimed at small joinery companies and timber traders. In total, 239 people participated in the seminars.

Cities and municipalities can also encourage the use of FSC labelled timber by giving subsidies to citizens using FSC labelled timber for building or renovating their house. Currently several cities and municipalities are drafting a subsidy rule for certified timber.



#### More Information

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#### Interesting publications

Un label pour le bois, des forêts pour la vie. *WWF-Belgium* (1997, 24p).

Gelabeld hout: bossen voor het leven. *WWF-Belgium* (1997, 24p).

Un avenir pour la forêt wallonne. *WWF-Belgium* (2000, 13p).

FSC-Info (6x per year). *WWF-Belgium*.

Newsletter Club'97 (4x per year). *WWF-Belgium*.

List of FSC labeled products. *WWF-Belgium*.

Aïélé (4x per year). *WWF-Belgium*.