

# The EURASIA CENTER

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## Belgium: Environmental Overview



### *A Country in the European Union*

As one of the founding members of the European Economic Community, Belgium plays an important role in the European Union. Due to this many European institutions have placed their headquarters in Brussels (Belgium's capital city). With a very urbanized country there will be some environmental problems. One of these problems is the quality of water in the country. With sewage flowing in the rivers the country that plays host to a good number of the European Union's institutions, Belgium is scrambling to clean up its act.<sup>1</sup> Another one of its problems include air pollution as well as soil pollution

### *Demographics:*

- Belgium has a population of about 10,392,226. 58% of the people are Fleming and 31% are Walloon.<sup>2</sup>
- The dominant religion in Belgium is Roman Catholic which makes up 75% of the population while some religions such as Hinduism do not have "recognized status", others such as Buddhism are on the path to attaining it.<sup>3</sup>
- Belgium can be considered almost a complete urban country with 97.2% of the population living in an urban area.<sup>4</sup>
- Life expectancy at birth is 75.75 years for males and 82.24 for females. The population is growing with a growth rate of 0.12%.<sup>5</sup>
- The age composition of the population is as follows: *0-14 years: 16.5%, 15-64 years: 66.1%, and 65 years and over: 17.4%.*<sup>6</sup>



**The Atomium stands in Brussels, Belgium as a reminder of the World Fair that was held in 1958.**

<sup>1</sup> "Sewage-laden Belgian water worst in world." <<http://www.newscientist.com/article.ns?id=dn3458>>

<sup>2</sup> "Belgium." <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/be.html>>

<sup>3</sup> Belgium- Wikipedia <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belgium#Demographics>>

<sup>4</sup> <<http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/statistics/indicators/42.html/>>

<sup>5</sup> "Belgium" <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/be.html>>

Picture Above: [http://www.ejc.net/uploads/media\\_landscapes/belgium1.jpg](http://www.ejc.net/uploads/media_landscapes/belgium1.jpg)

- With a literacy rate of 98%, the national languages of Belgium are Dutch, French, and Standard German.<sup>7</sup>

## Education

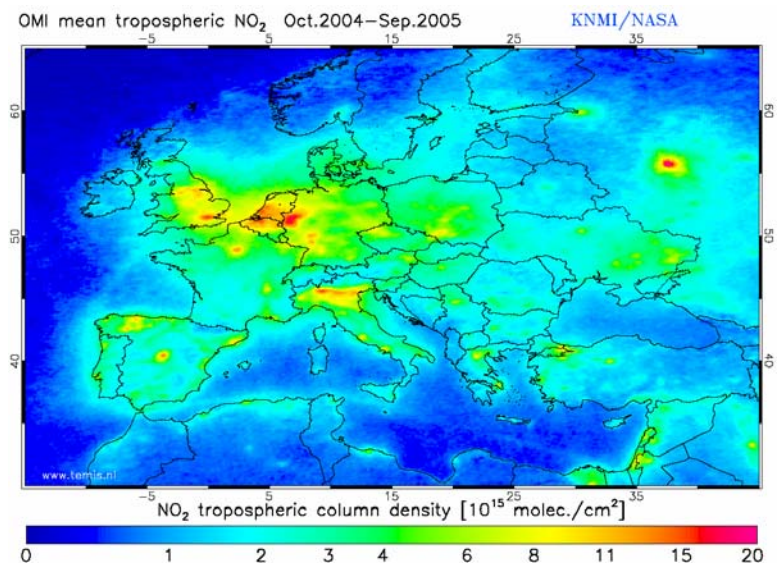
- The Belgium education system is divided into three groups: Schools owned by communities, subsidized public schools, and subsidized free schools (mostly affiliated by the Catholic Church).<sup>8</sup>
- According to a study by the OCED, Belgian students have scored well above the average score in all categories.<sup>9</sup>

## Geography/Natural Resources:

- Located in Western Europe, Belgium borders France, Germany, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands.
- Belgium has an area of 33,990 square kilometers which makes it the size similar to the state of Maryland.<sup>10</sup>
- Belgium due to its small size has very little natural resources. Some of its resources include construction materials, silica sand, and carbonates.<sup>11</sup>
- 4.4% of Belgium's export revenue is diamonds while petroleum gases and oils make up a meager 3.9% of its export revenue.<sup>12</sup>

## Agriculture

- Agriculture industry has been shrinking for a while. This is evident in-terms of both the GDP as well as the employment numbers.
- About 1/4<sup>th</sup> of Belgian land is agricultural or under permanent cultivation.<sup>13</sup>



**This map shows the level of NO<sub>2</sub> density in Europe. Belgium according to this map has one of the higher levels in all of Europe.**

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> "Ethnologue report for Belgium" <[http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_country.asp?name=BE](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=BE)>

<sup>8</sup> "Education in Belgium." <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education\\_in\\_Belgium](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Belgium)>

<sup>9</sup> Learning for Tomorrow's World – First Results from PISA 2003. <<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/1/60/34002216.pdf>>

<sup>10</sup> Geography of Belgium <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography\\_of\\_Belgium](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_Belgium)>

<sup>11</sup> "Belgium." <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/be.html>>

<sup>12</sup> "Economy of Belgium" <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy\\_of\\_Belgium](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_Belgium)>

<sup>13</sup> "Belgium: Agriculture" <<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-24990/Belgium>>

- Key crops include: sugar beets, flax, potatoes, and cereal grains.<sup>14</sup>

Picture Above: <http://www.gse-promote.org/gallery/NO2/no2text.html>

### *Relevant Environmental Laws and Regulations:*

#### **Kyoto Protocol**

- An international agreement in which countries, states, and cities pledge to limit their carbon emissions for the fight to decrease global warming.<sup>15</sup>

#### **Urban Waste Water treatment Directive of 1991- European Union**

- Adopted in 1991, "This Directive concerns the collection, treatment and discharge of urban waste water and the treatment and discharge of waste water from certain industrial sectors. Its aim is to protect the environment from any adverse effects due to discharge of such waters. Industrial waste water entering collecting systems, and the disposal of waste water and sludge from urban waste water treatment plants, are both subject to regulations and/or specific authorizations on the part of the competent authorities."<sup>16</sup>
- According to the latest report by the European Commission, the circumstances surrounding water treatment is still bleak with only Austria, Denmark and Germany completely fulfilling the directive's aims.<sup>17</sup>

#### **The Clean Air for Europe Programme (CAFE)**

- Amended in 2001 by the European Union.
- Its original aim was basic. They were related around improving the quality of the air.<sup>18</sup>
- CAFE amended the previous directive to "tackle transboundary pollution", established "target values for air quality". Another objective is to scientifically find the exact "effects of air pollution"<sup>19</sup>

### **Acknowledgements:**

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> "Kyoto Protocol" <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kyoto\\_Protocol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kyoto_Protocol) >

<sup>16</sup> "Urban Waste Water Treatment" <<http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/l28008.htm>>

<sup>17</sup> "EU Water Policy". <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/EU\\_water\\_policy#\\_note-0](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/EU_water_policy#_note-0)>

<sup>18</sup> "Management and quality of ambient air" <<http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/l28031a.htm>>

<sup>19</sup> "Clean Air for Europe (CAFE) Programme". <<http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/l28026.htm/>>

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