



STRATEGIC PLANNING

2009-2015



inbo
Research Institute for
Nature and Forest

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Cover: Ludo Goossens/Vilda

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INBO.M.2009.8

Depot number D2009/3241/510

NUR 940

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How to obtain this publication?

Order your free copy of the Strategic Planning 2009-2015 from INBO, Communication Department, Kliniekstraat 25, 1070 Brussel or via e-mail publicaties@inbo.be

The publication can also be downloaded from www.inbo.be

Printing

Corelio Printing

Printed on FSC-certified paper



Flemish Government



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INBO at a glance

The Research Institute for Nature and Forest (INBO) is the Flemish research and knowledge centre for nature and its sustainable management and use. INBO conducts research and supplies knowledge to all those who prepare or make policies or are interested in them.

As a leading scientific institute, INBO works for the Flemish government primarily, but also supplies information for international reporting and deals with questions from local authorities. In addition, INBO supports organizations for nature management, forestry, agriculture, hunting and fisheries. INBO is a member of national and European research networks. It makes its findings available to the general public.

Besides generating fresh knowledge, INBO gathers and disseminates existing knowledge and promotes knowledge transfer. The institute is a platform for knowledge transfer between stakeholders.



INBO employs some 250 staff, mainly researchers and technicians. In addition to its Brussels head office, INBO has branches in Geraardsbergen, Groenendaal and Linkebeek.

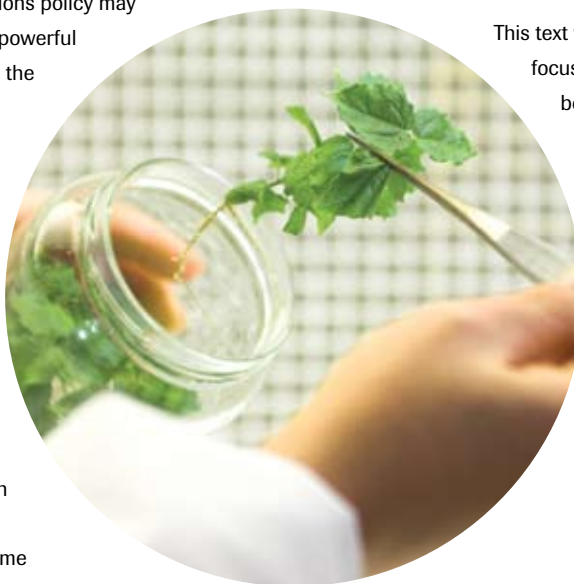
Strategic Planning 2009-2015

What is it all about?

INBO is a scientific institute and works primarily for the Flemish government. We want to assist the government in functioning efficiently and effectively, so we need to be able to provide answers to relevant questions rapidly. In order to be able to do this to high standards, research needs to stay one step ahead of the questions policy may ask. For that reason we have developed a powerful strategy to help us prepare the answers to the questions of the future.

This document provides the general characteristics of INBO research activities. Our 12 strategic targets give a further indication of where our efforts will be concentrated between 2009 and 2015. Relevant developments in the field of biodiversity research have guided us in defining our strategic targets and research themes. We have talked to other agencies within the Flemish government, scientific institutes, universities, consultants, wildlife organizations, game and fishery organizations, forestry and other relevant organizations prior to defining our strategic targets. On the basis of this dialogue we have also determined our priorities.

This document will also deal with how we have translated this into our new organizational structure. Furthermore we will be defining our niche in the research community, in the Flemish government, and in society in general.



This text will give a clear insight into our future focuses and efforts, so we can work together even better with our partners inside and outside the Flemish government. This cannot be a static document. In case of a new budgetary situation or a new management agreement, it will be adapted where possible.

Our biodiversity and us

Biodiversity is a representation of the number, diversity and variability of living organisms, and how these change in place and time. It encompasses diversity within species, between species and between ecosystems. In brief: the variety of all life on earth. Ecosystems fulfil basic needs in life such as food, fibre, pure water and clean air. They contribute to protection against natural calamities and disease. They shape religion, culture and spirituality. They maintain essential processes on earth. Loss of biodiversity affects ecosystems, making them more vulnerable to upset and diminishing their capacity to supply valuable services.

Man's influence on his natural surroundings is considerable and increasing still: there have been more changes to biodiversity in the last 50 years than ever before.

It is undoubtedly in our own interest to have a thorough understanding of biodiversity and its interaction with daily life. We need to know the natural processes, but also the social and economic processes linked to them. Only when we fully understand these interactions will we be able to conduct a policy aimed at a sustainable use of biodiversity, taking into account the needs of every single individual.





INBO on the move

INBO aspires to be a dynamic research institute that supports policy makers as much as possible, while taking into account changes in the environment and in society. This implies attention to the prevention of loss of biodiversity and to the sustainable use and management of biodiversity. In order to be up to that challenge, INBO has initiated a lengthy period of metamorphosis.

“INBO on the move” describes the process by which we laid the foundations of a smoothly operating organization. We identified strategic and operational goals and defined follow-up indicators. A new structure for the organization and personnel plan were developed as part of the process. These elements form the basis of the management agreements and the annual business plans of the institute.

Without compromising its long-term vision, INBO also aims to direct the evolution of its research programme so as to more closely reflect the requirements of its clients, both within and outside the Flemish government. For that reason, we developed a strategic vision concerning the in-house knowledge required to give full support to policy makers in the future.





Mission and Vision

Mission:

INBO delivers policy-orientated scientific research and scientific services aimed at the preservation, promotion, sustainable management and use of biodiversity and its natural environment. INBO periodically reports on the status of the natural environment.

Vision:

By providing scientific services of which both the value and relevance for policy making are recognized, we aim to be an internationally respected institute. This recognition implies we set our standards high so that they meet international criteria in the areas of knowledge provision, objectivity and critical attitude.

General characteristics of INBO research

In order to provide Flemish policy makers with maximum support, different types of research are necessary. INBO research planned for 2009 to 2015 is characterized by its applied character, its responsiveness and innovation. Let's look at these characteristics in detail.

APPLIED RESEARCH

In the long term, INBO has to be able to supply the Flemish government with the necessary knowledge on biodiversity so policy makers can develop optimally supported actions. With this aim in mind, INBO has developed a set of strategic targets that include the research considered necessary for this.

RESPONSIVE RESEARCH

Our strategy is based on analysis of relevant developments in biodiversity research, but also research with a broader scope. We look into the consequences of these developments on a Flemish, European and international policy level and into the new questions that arise from it.

INNOVATIVE RESEARCH

INBO's strategic planning also incorporates ambitious, innovative research that has some risks and that will only find its practical application in the future. We aim for a balance between the costs of this kind of research, the value of the exploration of new horizons and the inherent chances of failure.

CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH

INBO sets aside part of its budget to be able to respond quickly to questions arising from current developments and acute problems. A good example is biodiversity related research as part of climate change studies.

Additionally, INBO also conducts a very limited amount of **basic research**. This type of research has no immediate practical application, but supports the responsive, applied research that will be conducted by INBO in the long term.

Core tasks

INBO's core tasks are stated in article 3 of its establishment decree and are as follows:

INBO's tasks:

1. to conceptualize and initiate multidisciplinary scientific research, based on the requirements of policy makers;
2. to organize, conduct and participate in scientific research that helps prepare and support policy;
3. to translate and integrate the insights gained into policy support, preparation, execution and evaluation;
4. to offer scientific services that support policy making as well as stakeholders, by supplying advice, experimental analysis, products, techniques and documentation. With this in mind, it is possible to establish a financial framework aimed at co-financing our own initiatives or to participate in other financial frameworks, set up by third parties;
5. to gather and disseminate knowledge relevant to policy, via scientific publications, research reports and lectures;
6. to take care of biodiversity monitoring, the sustainable use of nature and the quality of the environment whenever applicable to nature and the natural environment;
7. to periodically report on the status of nature and the natural environment, on the effectiveness of environmental policy and the degree to which targets have been met, and to explore the future and to evaluate knowledge and the monitoring.

What choices do we make?

INBO needs to make choices: research topics are systematically adjusted as policy changes, but also as a result of new research insights and new technologies. Choices also need to be made for the long term. For this reason, INBO has determined a number of high priorities. Together with the set of strategic targets, they offer a clear view of what INBO intends to realize in the period between 2009 and 2015.

INBO will focus primarily on research for:

- scientific as well as operational support for the execution of European directives related to biodiversity
- knowledge support for stakeholders concerning the conservation and sustainable use of nature and forest
- reporting on nature and evaluating past policy

In doing so, INBO will pay attention to:

- research aimed at acquiring general knowledge with special attention to new threats such as climate change and invasive species
- fast and thorough conceptual and organizational development of environmental monitoring
- fast and thorough planning and organizational development of data and information systems.

Strategic aims

INBO is an efficient institute

INBO organizes its processes in the area of organization and science management in an efficient manner.

INBO coordinates nature and forest research

INBO coordinates the Flemish scientific research into nature and forest. INBO develops the strategy for Flanders for nature and forest research and consolidates its position in a European and international context.

INBO communicates concerning scientific research

INBO communicates the importance of scientific research for the conservation of nature and forest. INBO also communicates the results of its research activities.

INBO reports on nature and forest and evaluates policy

INBO organizes and develops Flemish and international reporting about nature and policy evaluation.

INBO manages data and makes them accessible

INBO is a data management hub. It looks into appropriate data gathering methods and means by which to disseminate data and make them readily available.

INBO supplies advice grounded in science

INBO supplies high-quality scientific advice based on scientific facts, data and insights, both proactively and on demand.

INBO monitors and investigates the diversity of species and ecosystems

INBO performs research into the diversity of populations, species and ecosystems in order to be able to evaluate area-specific policy measures¹ and optimize them in order to improve the viability of species and ecosystems in the long term.

INBO monitors and investigates genetic diversity

INBO performs research into genetic diversity of populations and species in order to evaluate and possibly modify the effectiveness of the area-specific policy measures employed.

INBO monitors and investigates the interactions between biotic and abiotic elements

INBO carries out research into the natural environment's biodiversity potential and the effects of natural or man-made changes upon it (soil, water and air quality, climate).

INBO carries out research into ecological management

INBO performs research to develop expertise on the ecological management of species and ecosystems, ultimately aimed at conserving, restoring or developing biodiversity.

INBO performs research into the sustainable use and management of nature and forest

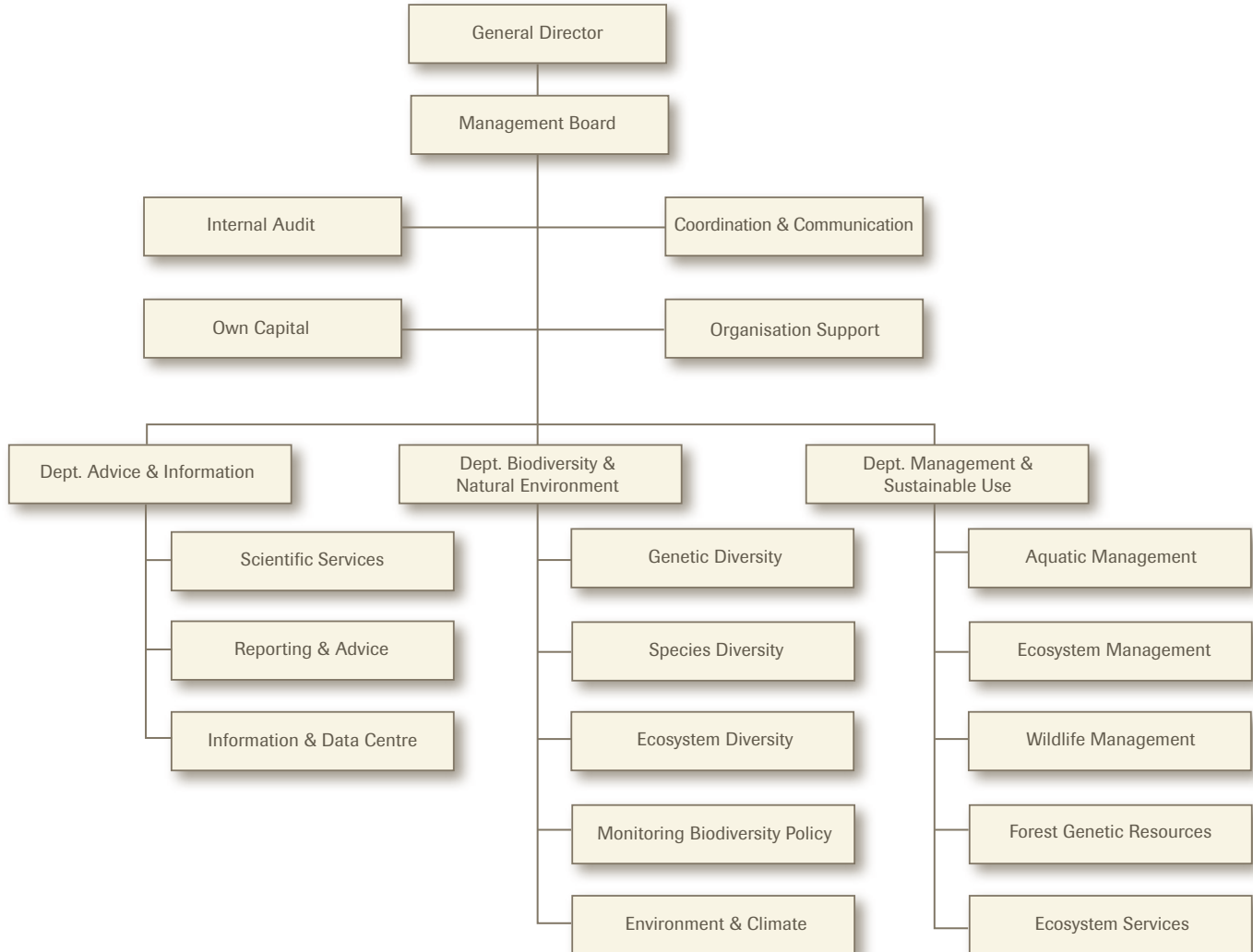
INBO investigates the sustainable use and management of nature and forest. With this knowledge, we support stakeholders who wish to make use of nature and forest and/or participate in its management.

INBO performs research into biodiversity and society

INBO conducts socio-economic research into the economic valuation of biodiversity and public awareness of it.

¹ Area-specific policy measures apply to areas with a degree of biodiversity driven protection, for instance Natura 2000 Special Protection Areas under the European habitat and bird directives, Flemish Ecological Network areas, nature reserves, forest reserves, nature development areas, areas with nature-orientated management agreements, national parks and regional landscapes. They also apply to open waters since these are covered by the EU Water Framework Directive..

A new structure





Innovation

Innovation is important for any scientific institute. INBO strives to be innovative, not only in its ideas and research, but also in their translation into policy.

Biodiversity research is evolving rapidly. Simply keeping abreast of new developments is insufficient, we need to be one step ahead. Promising new techniques and concepts need to be refined and ready for use.

A variety of very different disciplines will need to be addressed in order to realize this: scientists from both social and economic sciences will help make INBO an innovative institute with attention paid to all biodiversity related interests.

Our position in the research world



Flemish scientific research and policy support in the areas of preservation, development, management and sustainable use of ecosystems, biological diversity and the natural environment, are heterogeneous. There exists a broad spectrum ranging from university research groups devoted to basic research, to consultancies concentrating on practical assignments.

INBO has a very specific role in the Flemish government in generating and providing knowledge. This is always taken into consideration when priorities are set. We try to avoid duplication or any overlap in research amongst the different contributors in the field.

INBO is devoted to policy support. Scientific policy support through research and services is our core task. This is in contrast to universities, where scientific research and education are paramount and policy support may be an additional target. In turn, consultancies have their own commercial interests at heart.

INBO cooperates closely with Flemish and federal research institutes, often by submitting joint research projects.

INBO also plays an important role internationally by setting up and participating in the networks of CONNECT, ALTER-Net, LTER, EFI, UFRO, EIFAC and SER. INBO offers its expertise in support of international organizations and conventions like Wetlands International, the Bonn, Bern and Ramsar Conventions, AEWA, MCPFE and CBD. It is our intention to build still further upon this international renown for expertise.

Amongst colleagues

INBO is part of the government, and as a result there are direct links with Flemish policy makers (Department of Environment, Nature and Energy, Agency for Nature and Forests, Flemish Environment Agency, Flemish Land Agency) and also external departments and agencies with obvious relevance to the natural environment, such as Waterwegen & Zee-kanaal and NV De Scheepvaart (waterways managers). INBO is also close to the end user and can be called upon at short notice – this makes us able to offer support efficiently. In addition our activities are for the common good, without being influenced by other interests. Finally, INBO stands for long-term continuity in the fields of research, knowledge providing, data management and monitoring. It contributes to both the mid-term and long-term thinking on policy.

Within the government, INBO itself does not really prepare or execute policy, but we support it by means of data, information and knowledge. INBO takes a strategic central position in the development of policy-orientated information and knowledge systems, and the scientific research they require. INBO is also of assistance during policy preparation through its involvement in the planning of scientific research.

INBO takes a strategic and coordinating role in the initiation, development and sometimes in executing monitoring activities within the framework of scientific research, policy evaluation, trend analysis and more. This role translates into the overseeing of various existing monitoring programmes for nature and forest, both within and outside the government.



All together now

INBO does not only want to deliver excellent scientific research, but also to highlight its relevance to society, with particular attention to all those who utilize nature. INBO wants to be a research institute with a scientific, objective and open mind, and wants to deliver the foundations for a responsible and sustainable use of biodiversity to anyone concerned.

Characteristically, INBO cooperates with stakeholders that are also involved in scientific research.