

# Highlights report 2022



**National Scientific Secretariat  
on Invasive Alien Species  
Belgium**

With the support of the Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment, Bruxelles Environnement, Agentschap Natuur en Bos, Instituut voor Natuur en Bos Onderzoek and Département Nature et Forêt.

The NSSIAS is hosted at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences.



# Foreword

The EU Regulation n° 1143/2014 on Invasive Alien Species – the IAS regulation - has entered into force in 2016 with the adoption of the first list of species of Union concern.

The IAS regulation is implemented in a coordinated way in Belgium following the entry into force of a cooperation agreement between the Federal State, the Communities and the Regions in 2019. The founding of the **National Scientific Secretariat on Invasive Alien Species (NSSIAS)** is a direct result of this cooperation agreement.

The main missions of the NSSIAS are to ensure the scientific expertise needed by the authorities to be able to implement the Regulation. This entails, amongst other things, the support to inspection services, the prioritization of pathways on which action plans can be based, the coordination of the reporting to the European commission and the analysis of the feasibility of management. Additionally, following the coordinated execution of the Action plans to prevent spread and introduction of IAS, the NSSIAS is engaging with stakeholders.

This highlights report gives an overview of the main tasks conducted by the NSSIAS in 2022.

## Facts and numbers of 2022



Participation in April 2022 to the **International Conference on Aquatic Invasive Species**: sponsoring, chairing of sessions and presentation of the results of the national survey on biosecurity



Study visit in July 2022 to the **Great-Britain non-native species secretariat**. Exchange of expertise and experience on risk prioritization and contingency plans, functioning of an IAS inspectorate, communication campaigns and biosecurity



Contribution to the Belgian review of the summary for policy-makers of the **IPBES IAS assesment**



Coordination of the Belgian feedback on the **IUCN review of the Union list**

**22**

Species added to the Union list in August 2022\*

**6**

Meetings of the National IAS Committee

**12**

Presentations given during workshops and trainings

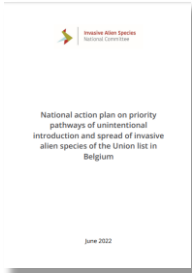
**+ 60%**

Increase of followers on Twitter

\* For 4 species a 2-5 years transition period will apply



# Pathways Action plan



According to Article 13 of the EU IAS regulation, all Member States are obliged to establish an action plan to address the **priority pathways of unintentional spread and introduction of IAS**.

Thanks to the coordinating effort of the NSSIAS, Belgium has adopted its first national **Pathway Action Plan** in June 2022. This plan consists of **three thematic chapters**:



- 1) Thematic action plan on introduction and spread of species through **public or private possession**;
- 2) Thematic action plan on introduction and spread of species through **recreational and commercial/professional use of freshwater**;
- 3) Thematic action plan on introduction and spread of species through **transportation of habitat and nursery material and machinery**.

You can download the Belgian Pathway Action Plan [here](#).

## Support to inspection

The NSSIAS provides Belgian inspection services with **scientific support in identifying IAS of the Union list**. Several actions were undertaken in 2022.



### Workshop for policy officers (May 2022)

We brought together federal and regional inspection administrations to exchange on practices and challenges and learn from the experience of other countries (Netherlands, UK and Spain). a small sample of the topics discussed were **contaminants of fish stocks**, the **trade and mislabeling of aquatic plants** and the new technologies to support the search for infringements of the IAS regulation in **e-commerce**.

### Training for inspectors (May 2022)

Inspectors from the federal (douanes, AFSCA/FAVV) and regional inspection services were invited for a full day of training for **identification of the IAS of Union Concern** by experts. This workshop consisted of a combination of theoretical sessions and hands-on experience on aquatic plants and crayfish.



### List of experts and characteristics

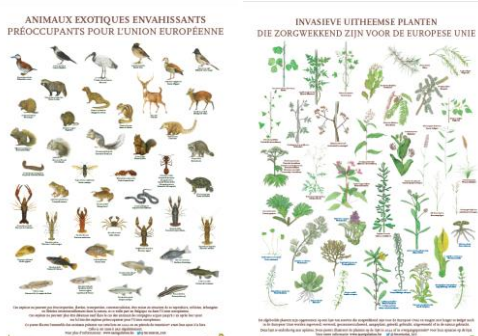
The NSSIAS is tasked with assisting the morphological identification of specimens seized during controls.

We have therefore established 1) a **list of experts** for morphological identification, and 2) a **list of characteristics** than can be used to identify the species of Union Concern and discriminate them from look-a-like species.





# Awareness raising

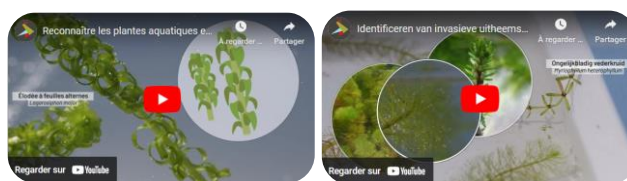



## IAS Posters

The NSSIAS has produced **two popular posters** on Union listed plant and animal species. Drawings were made in collaboration with RBINS artists. In 2022, existing posters were updated to include the **22 new species of Union Concern**. The posters are produced in FR, NL, DE and ENG and will be distributed in the coming year.

## Videos on aquatic plants

Two instructional **identification videos** have been released. Their aim is to support field practitioners and nature enthusiasts in identifying two groups of aquatic invasive plants (waterweeds and watermilfoils) and their look-a-likes.



 [NSSIAS Youtube channel](#)



The **national web portal [iasregulation.be](http://iasregulation.be)** was restructured and rewritten in 2022 to improve user experience and include new relevant content.

# Biosecurity

In the framework of the thematic pathway action plan on freshwater activities, the NSSIAS is in charge of conducting an action pertaining to **biosecurity in the management of waterbodies**. The objective of the project – which will span multiple years - is to help managers in Belgium to adopt best practices of biosecurity and increase awareness on risks linked to IAS. The first two steps of the project were undertaken in 2022:

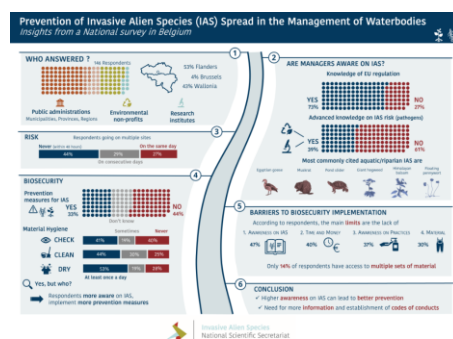
## National survey

A national survey was conducted among actors in charge of management and monitoring of waterbodies. The survey polled the general level of biosecurity awareness, current implemented practices related to IAS and helped in identifying challenges and opportunities for future campaigns.

## Pilot project

A pilot project on biosecurity best-practices was conducted with teams from the three regions working near water systems, involving:

- Realization of a [biosecurity handbook](#) and user-friendly checklist
- Training of teams on hygiene practices
- Improvement of teams practices and material storage
- Development and composition of a biosecurity kit, which will be further distributed in 2023





## CONTACT US

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