



Press release common

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## **“Nature neighbours”: unique collaboration between Natuurpunt, Natagora and Electrabel, SUEZ Group**

**On Friday, 11 January signed Natuurpunt and Natagora, the respective nature conservation associations in the Flemish and French-speaking parts of Belgium, a partnership agreement with Electrabel. The collaboration between the two nature organisations and Electrabel forms part of the international campaign Countdown 2010, aimed at stopping the dramatic loss of biodiversity in ecosystems all over the world. The agreement runs from 2008 to 2010.**

Natuurpunt and Natagora have drawn up an ambitious action plan for a number of practical projects over the next three years, in order to support vulnerable species and their habitats in Belgium. The support given by Electrabel to the Natuurpunt/Natagora projects reflects a deliberate decision by the SUEZ Group to focus attention on the environment and on socially responsible enterprise.

With Countdown 2010 the European Union aims to put a complete stop to the loss of biodiversity in Europe. Measures include actively involving the private sector, getting national policies to take account of biodiversity and investing more in research into biodiversity. But one of the most important features is to involve individual citizens and give them more responsibility: only in this way can the objective be reached by 2010.

In recent years Electrabel has made the concept of “sustainable development” a key part of its own activities. It has invested heavily in reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by its generating activities as much as possible, and has given renewable sources of energy (including wind and hydroelectric power) a prominent role in its European generating facilities. The results have been impressive: Electrabel managed to reduce its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per kWh generated by 50% between 1980 and 2007, and now produces enough “green electricity” to supply more than 5 million households. Its services to customers have similarly been brought into line with this policy, with various renewable energy projects being carried out (including a solar power project) for industrial customers, and support provided to residential customers to help them rationalise their consumption.

### **Practical initiatives in Belgium**

Inspired by the objectives of Countdown 2010, Natuurpunt and Natagora with the help of Electrabel have launched the campaign “Natuur in de buurt/Nature de proximité” (Nature neighbours). With “key projects for key species” the initiative-takers aim to involve individual citizens and authorities alike, inspiring and enthusing them to ultimately take practical initiatives.

Natuurpunt and Natagora plan to mount various national campaigns in the next few years, counting on the collaboration of the general public. One of these is the National Butterfly Census on 2 and 3 August 2008. As well as surveying the situation of our butterflies, this is aimed at getting people to make their gardens “butterfly-friendly” so as to support the butterfly population. 5,000 people have already taken part in a pilot project in 2007.

Another national campaign is aimed at encouraging people to make their garden ponds into rich biotopes for amphibians. Pond owners will receive tips from Natuurpunt/Natagora on how to make their ponds as hospitable as possible for our native frogs, toads and newts. The nature associations of course hope to receive as much information as possible from the pond owners about the status of the amphibian populations.

In addition, resources will be made available to mount local actions for conserving threatened species (bats, owls, orchids etc.) and for keeping the general public informed about these initiatives.

With this investment of one million euros in this Natuurpunt/Natagora action plan but also by carrying out an awareness-raising campaign among its customers and members of personnel financially to the tune of nearly one million euros, Electrabel confirms that environment is a key objective for her.

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