

The West Flanders Environmental Charter is an initiative of the GOM – West-Vlaanderen (Regional Development Authority West Flanders), Charter Zuid-West-Vlaanderen and BVQI. This initiative brings enterprises together which subscribe on a free basis to a few environmental objectives and therefore provide environmental performances which go beyond the legally imposed regulations. When an enterprise is granted a year certificate it guarantees that care for the environment and the neighbourhood is one of the priorities in its policy.

A participation in the West Flanders Environmental Charter is an important support for the enterprise and the environmental coordinator in particular as well as a help for a structured development and optimisation of the environmental policy pursued:

- obligation to formulate environmental objectives and actions and structuring of the environmental policy by the themes of the Environmental charter;
- the application of the principle “to measure is to know” – for environmental items as well – leads to economies of raw materials and catalysts and results in less waste and emissions and less wrapping;
- the Environmental charter is a visible instrument to sensibilise the staff as well;
- the initiative can be a good preparation for the implementation of an environmental management system;
- the audit by the Evaluation commission can reveal bottlenecks and propose recommendations which again may lead to an improvement of the environmental performances;
- a yearly update of the environmental policy and conformity with the regulations;
- the Environmental Charter helps to create a positive environmental image towards the neighbourhood, the customers and the authorities and is as such an instrument for legal security in the long run.

Each plant signing the West Flanders Environmental Charter pledges itself to accept and apply the following principles of environmental policy :

1. To draft an environmental declaration in which the observation of the environmental regulations, the integration of environmental control in the enterprise's policy and the striving for a constant improvement of the whole of environmental achievements are embodied and in which the themes of the West Flanders Environmental Charter which are applicable to the plant are included.
2. To convert and transpose the themes of the West Flanders Environmental Charter applicable to the enterprise into concrete objectives and into an action programme.
3. To report the objectives, the action programme and the achieved progress to the Evaluation Commission of the West Flanders Environmental Charter.
4. To improve a broader application of the environmental policy principles and themes of the environmental declaration by exchanging, wherever possible, experiences and results with other enterprises.

## **THEMES OF THE WEST FLANDERS ENVIRONMENTAL CHARTER**

1. To reduce the energy consumption in the enterprise by the application of the principles of Rational Energy Use. To keep an energy balance and to critically evaluate the energy consumption at regular times.
2. To reduce the water consumption in the enterprise by the application of the measures of Rational Water Use. To keep a water balance and to critically evaluate the water consumption at regular times. To tap high quality ground water layers only for activities requiring high water qualities.
3. To prevent or reduce the production of waste by preference, to prevent or to reduce as much as possible the harmfulness of waste materials and to strive for a useful application of the waste streams produced. To keep a register of waste materials and to critically evaluate the production of waste at regular times. To introduce a selective collection of waste.
4. To prevent emissions into soil, air and water and reduce these concerning both quantity and harmfulness. To carry out the required measurements and analyses and to critically evaluate the results at regular times.
5. To prevent and reduce inconvenience of noise, vibrations and smell in the direct neighbourhood. To visually integrate the plant buildings and infrastructure in the landscape and to keep the area clean in and around the plant buildings.
6. To strive for the introduction of new developments that contribute to the environmental profile of the product. To give information concerning the environmental impact of the products.
7. To reduce the quantity of packing material and to utilize reusable packing material or material that can be processed in an environmentally sound way.
8. To pursue an open communication policy towards the personnel, the authorities and the neighbourhood concerning the environmental policy adopted, the efforts made and the results that are achieved. To sensitize the personnel, to train them and implicate them in the execution of the environmental policy. To strive for a good neighbourliness by creating a positive relation with the neighbours.
9. To provide for emergency procedures in order to reduce the impact on the neighbourhood and the environment in case of a disaster.
10. To make efforts in order to reduce the impact of the enterprise on traffic.

When drafting these environmental themes, the starting point is to stimulate the enterprises and to support them to a concrete implementation of a structured environmental policy, which is applicable to all environmental compartments.

We are convinced that an environmental policy on this basis is a useful tool for the participating enterprises in order to give shape to their environmental efforts and to assure the economic cost-effectiveness.