



mag: magnitude, arcsec: arcseconds

Source: VITO

## Almost six out of ten Flemish people think a dark sky is important

From the written environmental investigation (WEI) of 2008 it was found that 57 % of the Flemish people think that it is important to a lesser or greater degree that the nocturnal sky is dark. The excessive and wasteful use of artificial light is called light pollution. A certain form of this is the artificial sky glow or sky luminance. This occurs when artificial light is reflected by gas molecules in the atmosphere (such as water vapour and particulate matter). When there is too much reflection, the sky becomes too bright and the stars are no longer visible.

Astronomers identify the brightness of the sky as a specific intensity. The specific intensity is expressed on a logarithmic scale and can be converted into the sky luminance. When the night sky is unpolluted (natural sky luminance) the specific intensity has the highest value of 22.

## More than nine times the natural sky luminance

If the map of Belgium for the period after midnight were to be converted into a percentage of the natural sky luminance at a new moon, almost everywhere in Flanders more than three times the natural sky luminance would be measured (300 %) and even up to more than nine times (900 %) in the areas most affected by light pollution.

The target for 2010 in the MINA plan 3+ (2008-2010), namely that the artificial sky luminance must not anywhere be more than 9 times the natural sky luminance (between 3 am and 5 am) has not yet been achieved.