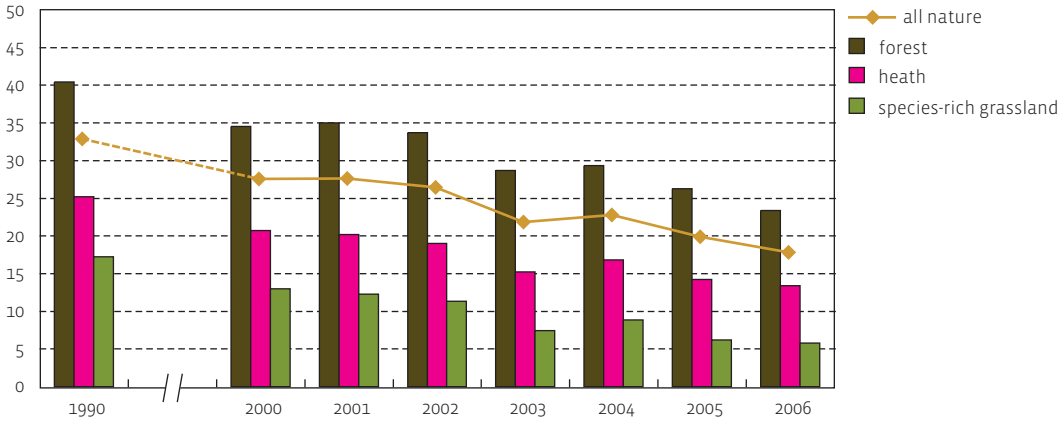




exceedance (kg N/(ha.year))



Source: VMM

Critical load exceedance leads to damage to vegetation

Eutrophication causes damage to natural vegetation. The biodiversity is affected. 'Critical loads' have been determined for eutrophication for each type of vegetation. If these deposition limits are exceeded, this can in the long term lead to harmful effects on the vegetation. In 2006, on 91 % of the total area of vulnerable terrestrial ecosystems (forest, heath and species-rich grassland) the critical load for eutrophication was exceeded. It is notable that for forest and heath the exceedance still occurs on 100 % of the area.

What are the effects of long-term exceedance?

The long-term objective is no nature area with an exceedance. The emission reductions planned for 2010 will not be enough to bring about a large improvement. In 2010 the ecosystem area with an exceedance of the critical load for eutrophication in Flanders is still 82 %.

The average exceedance, calculated as the average deposition above the critical load, is decreasing but not enough to get out of the danger zone. Moreover the long-term exceedance of the critical load leads to an accumulation, whose impact is not yet understood very well. This implies that eutrophication is a much greater threat for the conservation of biodiversity than acidification.

average critical load exceedance for eutrophication (kg N/(ha.year))	1990	2000	2005	2006
forest	40.4	34.5	26.3	23.4
heath	25.2	20.7	14.2	13.4
species-rich grassland	17.2	13.0	6.2	5.8
<i>total</i>	32.7	27.3	19.6	17.6