

## Covenant on Soil and Groundwater Sanitation

Government and Corporation Cooperating for a Healthier Environment

### Organisation Name

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Umicore

### Problem

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Over 100 years of industrial activity has gravely polluted the soil around several Umicore sites. As a responsible business, Umicore wants to end the practice of passing on this inheritance of previous generations to the next. It aims to turn this page in its history and look ahead in order to further develop Umicore into a future-oriented, innovative and responsible group. To achieve this goal, Umicore signed an agreement with the government authorities, the Flemish Public Waste Authority (OVAM) and the Ministry of Environment of the Flemish region.

### Solution

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Umicore is undertaking a large-scale sanitation project of the soil and groundwater on and around its four sites in Flanders – Hoboken, Balen/Lommel, Overpelt, Olen. In order to cover the considerable costs of this sanitation, Umicore has for several years been setting aside provisions. In the coming years, Umicore will invest a total of approximately €62 million. Flanders and Umicore are each investing an extra €15 million in a fund established to eradicate pollution in the surroundings of the Umicore sites. To this end, on 23 April 2004, the Flemish Minister of Environment, Jef Tavernier, OVAM and Umicore signed a covenant. In 1997, Umicore had already signed a voluntary agreement with the Flemish government to clean up this historical pollution. The current covenant builds on this agreement.

Controlling risks for people and the environment is the starting-point for the soil and subsoil water sanitation. In practice, this means removing the most polluted soil and preventing the further spread of existing pollution. The soil sanitation projects started in 2004.

Umicore and OVAM have set up a time table in which concrete form is given to the activities that are being communicated to surrounding citizens and local governments. In some residential areas, where the sanitation is part of the covenant, preparatory work started almost immediately. In other areas there was a need for more preliminary research.

### Constraints

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- This large-scale soil sanitation project is extremely costly. The sum needed was covered by Umicore through a long term process of creating financial means.

### Benefits

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This project presents a unique opportunity for Umicore to settle its ecological debt by:

- Improving the quality of life of the surrounding communities.
- A return of the natural riches of the environment.
- Building cooperation between government and a corporation on a historically important activity aiming to create a healthier environment.

### Period Of Implementation

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2004

### Place Of Implementation

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Flanders, Belgium

### Themes

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Health and Safety

Environment

### **Solution Champion**

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