

RIVER CONTRACTS

WATER 22

River contracts are participatory management structures whose objective is to bring together all the actors of a given river sub-basin, whether they are from the political, administrative, economic, associative or scientific spheres. The contracts are a tool to support local implementation of the objectives of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) 2000/60/EC.

Nearly 90% of the territory under contract

In March 2017, there were 14 river contracts in Wallonia. Of the 262 Walloon municipalities, 236 (88% of the territory) were partners in a river contract¹. The river contracts draw up three-year action programmes, for which the implementation aims to develop the basin's water resources and restore and protect water courses and their surroundings. The development of action programmes is based on an inventory of water courses. In 2014-2016, a total of 11,300 km of water courses were inventoried (46% of the total linear of water courses²), making it possible to identify nearly 29,600 "black spots"³ of which about 11,350 were classified as priorities.

Evaluation of the period 2014-2016

At the start of the period 2014-2016, just over 8,050 actions were planned by river contracts and their partners. At the end of the planning period, 57% of the actions had been completed, 14% were in progress, 24% had not been completed (partially carried over to the next action programme) and 5% had been cancelled. These figures are up on the previous year.

Period 2017-2019: 1,250 additional actions

The new programmes to be implemented by the end of 2019 comprise a little over 9,300 actions. Their implementation should make it possible to tackle nearly 6,430 priority black spots, i.e. about 55% of the priority degradations observed. One third of the actions are directly linked to measures of the WFD

(waste water treatment, reduction of discharges, etc.); 8% of the actions are linked to the directive on flood risk management (2007/60/EC). For the rest (59%), the actions mainly concern the fight against invasive alien species, waste management and the restoration and protection of sensitive habitats and species. As regards the nature of the actions undertaken, they mostly relate to awareness-raising and management work.

Stabilised funding and strengthened partnerships

Nearly 900 water stakeholders are among the partners involved (approximately 100 more than in the previous programme). The public authorities (SPW, municipalities, provinces and inter-municipal associations) are involved in just over 78% of the actions (9% for the SPW) and the private and associative sectors (companies, farmers, etc.) in 26% of the actions. In addition to monitoring the full three-year programme, the coordination units are responsible for 11% of the total volume of actions. In terms of funding, 215 municipalities and 4 provinces have pledged to support the functioning of river contracts for an amount of about €990,000 per year over the period 2017-2019. Wallonia covers €1,874,000 per year, or 62% of operating subsidies.

[1] → Map 55 | [2] It should be noted that of the 24,500 km of the linear length of Walloon water courses, about 35% are considered difficult to inventory (difficult or prohibited access) | [3] Any disturbance affecting the water course, its banks or its environment (various pollution and degradation)

Fig. WATER 22-1 Actions planned within the framework of the Memoranda of Understanding 2017-2019 of the river contracts in Wallonia

