

## MANAGEMENT OF LOCAL SOIL POLLUTION

In most cases, polluted soils are a legacy of past practices that did not adequately address environmental issues. They can pose risks to human health, water resources and ecosystems. In addition, they slow down local economic redevelopment (lack of attraction for investors, freezing of land for economic purposes, etc.).

### Ever-evolving legislation

The Decree on soil management of 05/12/2008 introduced the principle of harmonised management of all potentially polluted soils, previously managed according to regulations for certain categories of sites<sup>1</sup>. Both as regards investigations aimed at identifying, quantifying and delimiting soil pollution, and as regards risk assessment or remediation, reference protocols<sup>2</sup> have been imposed since 2013. Until now, the decree has been applied on a voluntary basis or by decision of the Public Service of Wallonia; other elements generating obligations are provided for<sup>3</sup> but have not yet entered into force. In addition, developments are still expected in order to make the "Soil Status Database" (*Banque de données de l'état des sols - BDES*) operational, centralising information on soils, their possible pollution and their stage of management.

### The legacy of a rich industrial past

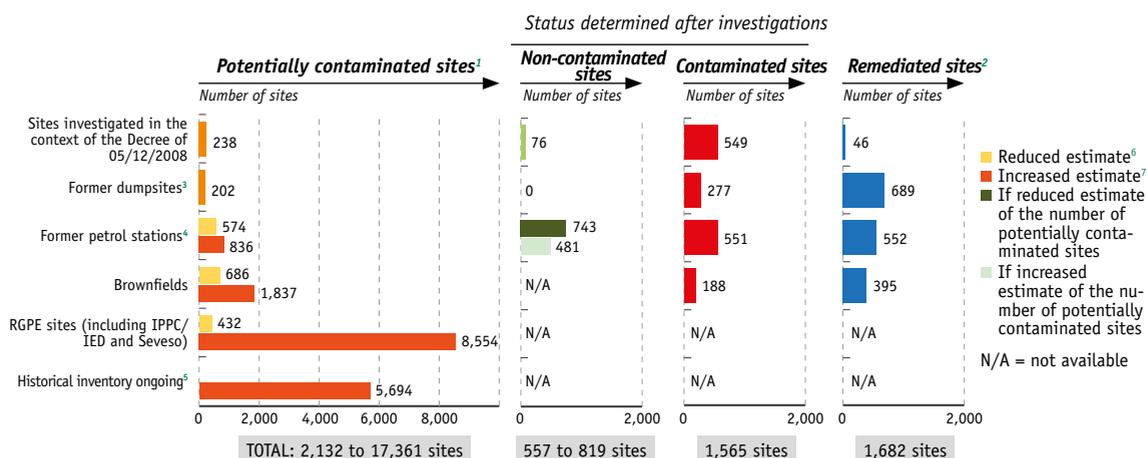
According to estimates taking into account all the categories of sites concerned by legislation targeting or having targeted soil pollution<sup>4</sup>, the number of sites likely to be polluted in Wallonia is in the order of 2,100 to 17,400<sup>5</sup>, i.e. an average density of 1 to 10 sites/10 km<sup>2</sup>. This density is higher along the Haine-Sambre-Meuse axis, which was the cradle of industrialisation in the past. Significant efforts are being made to consolidate inventories and refine these estimates<sup>6</sup>.

### Ways to speed up the reconversion

Since 2005, the evolution of legislative and management tools has been accompanied by an increase in financial resources *via* the "Marshall Plan" and "Marshall Plan 2.vert": €369 million has been allocated to the remediation of 60 "sites to be remediated" (*sites à réaménager - SAR*)<sup>7</sup> and €205 million to the remediation of 176 SAR which are not contaminated, or only slightly. Additional funding of €130 million for the management of other SAR to be designated at the end of 2017 is envisaged under the "Marshall Plan 4.0.". In addition to these resources made available through loans contracted by Sowafinal, there are also regular budgets for the management of contaminated soil (SPAQuE, SPW - DG04) and assistance for certain sites benefiting from ERDF funds. However, the "polluter pays" principle continues to apply whenever a solvent duty holder can be identified.

<sup>[1]</sup> Dumpsites, brownfields and petrol stations | <sup>[2]</sup> Walloon compendium of sampling and analysis methods and Walloon Code of Good Practices | <sup>[3]</sup> (i) Assignment and application for an environmental permit for any land which has been occupied by one of the 233 activities likely to pollute the soil (Annex III of the decree), (ii) bankruptcy/liquidation and cessation of such activity, (iii) environmental damage to the soil. An amending decree in the process of revision calls these principles into question. | <sup>[4]</sup> Waste legislation (including Walloon Government Decree of 20/12/2007), RGPE (including the Decree of 11/03/1999), RGPT (including the Walloon Government Decree of 04/03/1999), CWATUP, CoDT, Decree of 05/12/2008, Directive 2010/75/EU known as IED, Directive 2012/18/EU known as "Seveso III" | <sup>[5]</sup> Figure including sites with low probability of pollution and uncertain data with risk of duplicates | <sup>[6]</sup> Inventory of sites to be remediated (SAR) 2014-2015 (online), work of the ULg - CHST and centralisation of geo-referenced data within the BDES | <sup>[7]</sup> Most SAR are brownfield sites.

Fig. SOILS 5-1 Local soil pollution in Wallonia: sites inventoried by category and stage of management (as of 01/03/2017)



<sup>[1]</sup> Sites hosting or having hosted an activity or facility likely to pollute soil or groundwater | <sup>[2]</sup> Or having been the subject of pollution management measures | <sup>[3]</sup> Sites investigated under waste legislation | <sup>[4]</sup> Sites investigated under RGPT | <sup>[5]</sup> Vandermaelen maps (published around 1850); inventory currently being enriched with other sources | <sup>[6]</sup> Reliable sources, limited duplication | <sup>[7]</sup> Uncertain data, risk of duplication