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Engaging basin actors in the evaluation and evolution of the Water Directives : the role of the International Scheldt Commission

Leon Dhaene – Secretary General International Scheldt Commission

"19th International Conference EUROPE-INBO"
9 December 2021 (via videoconference)



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The International Scheldt Commission : *mission* *parties* *responsibilities*

➤ **MISSON**

Intergovernmental organisation for the coordination of joint actions and the monitoring of **water quality and quantity** (surface and groundwater) aiming at a **sustainable and harmonised water management**, at the international level in the International Scheldt District.

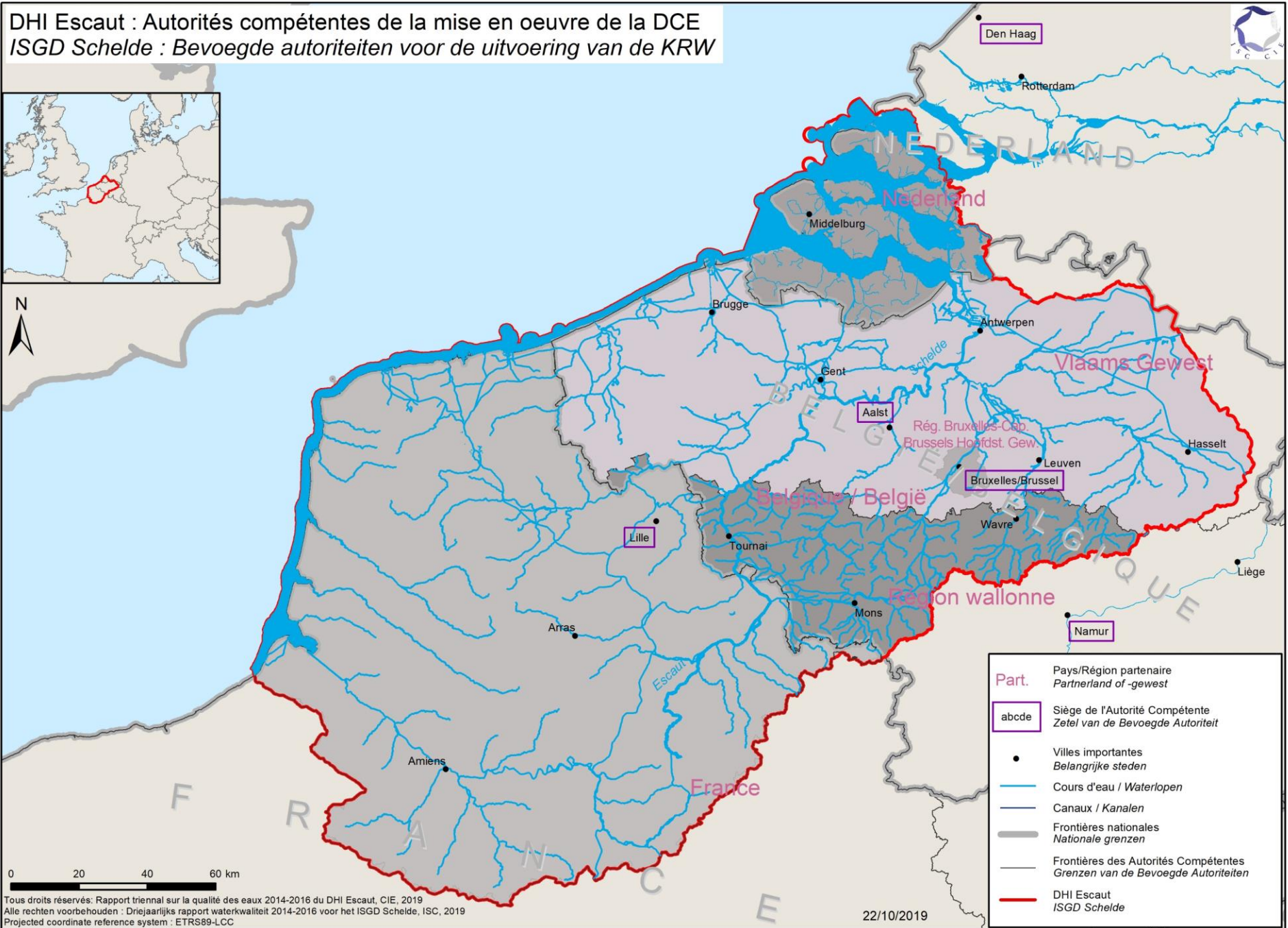
➤ **PARTIES**

- France
- Flemish Region
- Wallonia
- Brussels-Capital Region
- Belgian Federal State
- The Netherlands

➤ **INTERNATIONAL FORUM FOR COÖRDINATION OF**

- **European water directives** in the Scheldt district:
 - Framework Directive Water, establishing a framework for community action in the field of water policy (2000/60/EG),
 - The EU Floods Directive, on the assessment and management of flood risks (2007/60/EG),
- **Adaptation to climate change**, including measures to prevent and reduce the impact of drought
- Transboundary **management of accidental pollution** of all water bodies in the Scheldt District

DHI Escaut : Autorités compétentes de la mise en oeuvre de la DCE
 ISGD Schelde : Bevoegde autoriteiten voor de uitvoering van de KRW



Tous droits réservés: Rapport triennal sur la qualité des eaux 2014-2016 du DHI Escaut, CIE, 2019
 Alle rechten voorbehouden : Driejaarlijks rapport waterkwaliteit 2014-2016 voor het ISGD Schelde, ISC, 2019
 Projected coordinate reference system : ETRS89-LCC

22/10/2019

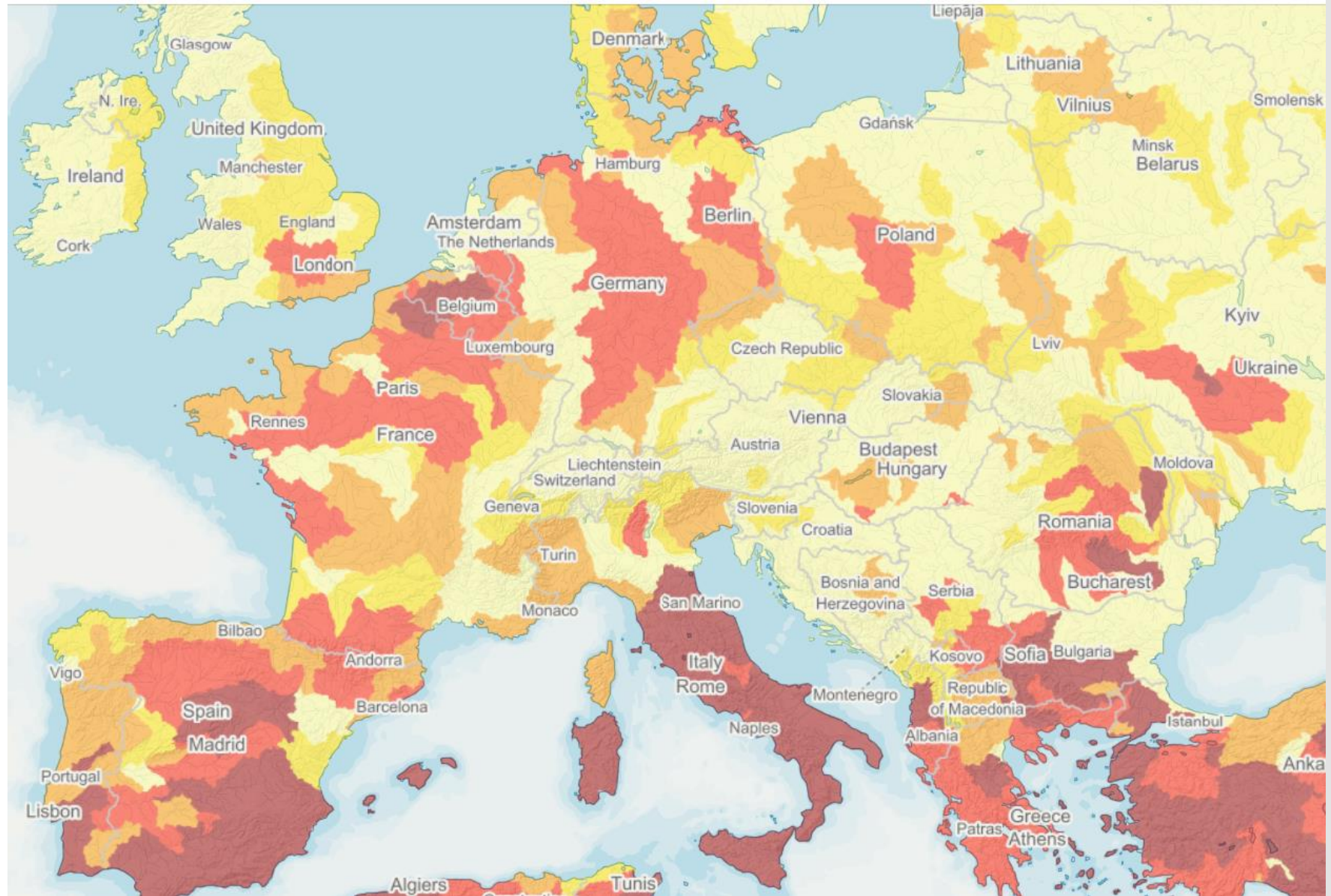
- Surface : 37,170 km²
- Population : > 14,5 mio
- High population density : > 100-2000 / km²
- Water scarcity
- Dense network of waterways and motorways
- Considerable industrial & urban structure
- Intensive agriculture
- Old industrial (polluted ?) sites
- High flood risk areas



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The International Scheldt District : The smallest but the most challenging

*Map of levels of sustainable
water bodies in Europe
(based on most recent
Eurostat data)*





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The International Scheldt Commission : the EU Water Framework Directive

Key objectives :

- expanding the scope of **water protection** to all waters, **surface waters and groundwater**
- achieving "**good status**" for all waters by a set deadline
- water management based on **river basins**
- "combined approach" of **emission limit values** and **quality standards**
- getting the **prices** right
- getting the **citizen involved** more closely
- **streamlining legislation**



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The EU Water Framework Directive :

What to be done and how...

What to be done and how:

- Member states must create **six-yearly plans** (article 11) :
 - **Evaluating** the situation in the river basin district
 - Performing a **pressures and impact analysis**
 - Creating a framework of **standards**
 - Listing the **environmental goals and exceptions** to those
 - Agreeing on a programme of **measures**
- The new **third plan (2022-2027)** is building on the **findings** of the previous **second plan**, incorporate the **comments** made by the **European Commission**, and ensure there is a **transnational coordination** of the national and local plans, so that these reinforce each other rather than working against each other.
- Currently **public consultation** of the national and local plans are being organized
- **Timing for approval of the cross-border plan** : 22 March 2022



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The EU Water Framework Directive :

How to achieve...

How to achieve:

- Implementing the **EU comments on the Second Cycle** of the River Basin Management Plan 2016-2021
- **Evaluation** of the **Second Cycle** of the River Basin Management Plan 2016-2021
- Member states agreed on the coming “**Important water management issues of general interest**” (key issues), as a base for the new plan (04/12/2019)
- **Triannual Report** on Water Quality 2014-2016 (04/12/2019)
- Ongoing evaluation in the **expert groups**
- Base cross-border plan = **national / regional** management plans
- Focusing on **cross-border issues and impact of measures**



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The International Scheldt Commission : *objectives* *key issues*

*(approved at the ISC Plenary
Meeting of
4 December 2019)*

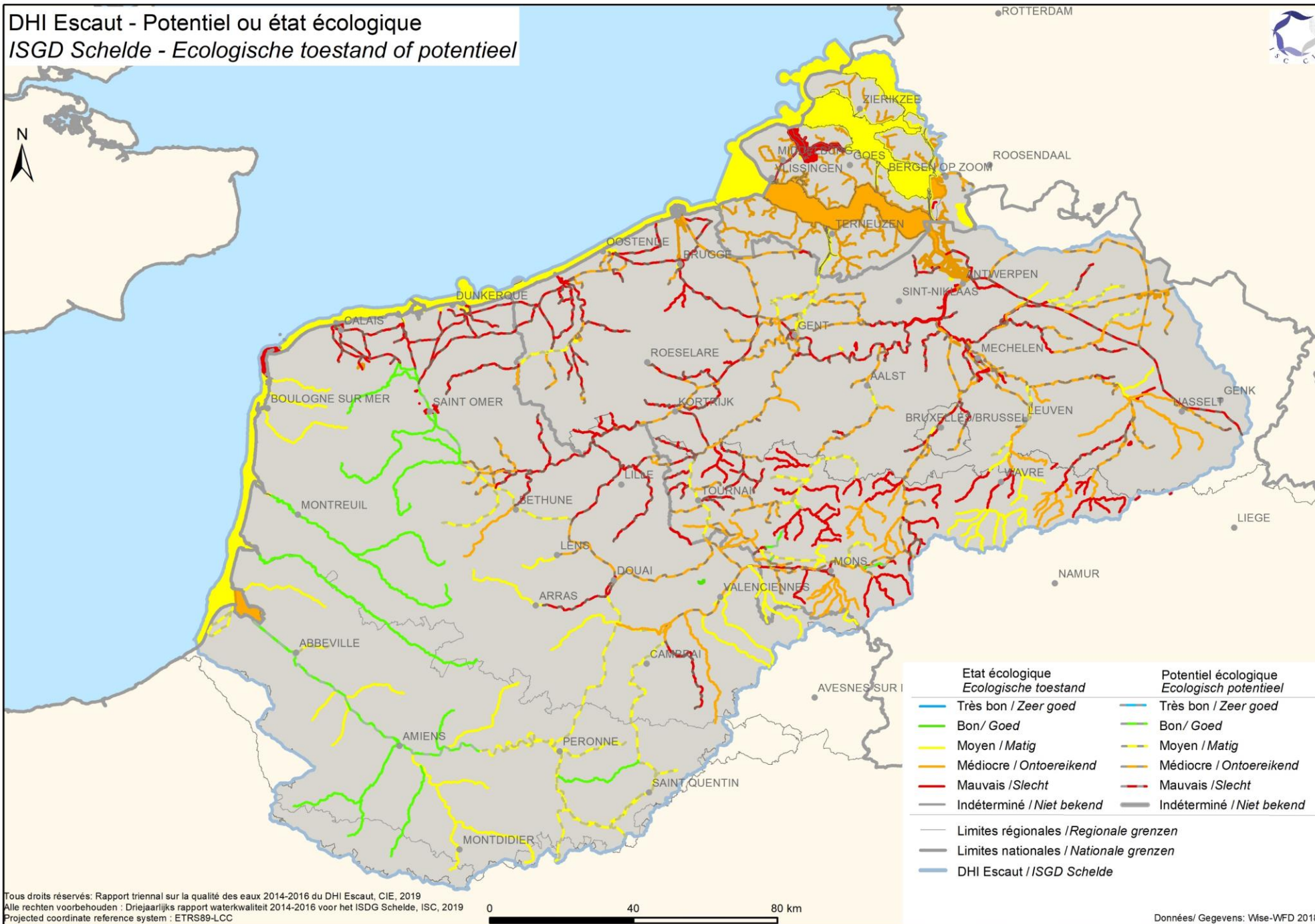
- Two core objectives :
 1. Coordinating the **water management** between the different Parties
 2. Protecting the **biological and chemical quality** of all water systems, inclusive sea and coastal areas
- Key issues :
 1. **Quality of** all surface **water** in the context of hydromorphological changes
 - a. Pollution (local or diffuse)
 - b. Emerging substances (ex. medical pollution, PFAS = perfluorinated substances,...)
 - c. Biodiversity
 - d. Manage standards and crossborder information exchange of the Homogeneous Measurement Network of the Scheldt
 2. Sustainable, qualitative and quantitative **management of groundwater** reserves
 3. Providing **information** on challenges in the water management **to** the **stakeholders** in water and the **general public**
 4. **Safeguard the costal areas** from the consequences of climate change, and coordinate with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive
 5. **Good quantitative water management**
 - a. Monitor low water
 - b. Manage floods, in the context of the EU Flood Directive
 - c. Analyse impact of changes in water metrics (flow, temperature, new polluting substances, increasing sea water levels, salinisation, etc...) on drinking water quality, agriculture, demographic risks, etc...
 6. Ensure **governmental policies are in line** with the water objectives



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The International Scheldt Commission : conclusions *triannual report* (approved at the ISC Plenary Meeting of 4 December 2019) - Conclusions

- Conclusions :
 1. **Not** all of the **goals** are **reached**, but the overall **quality** of the water bodies in the Scheldt District has **improved**.
 2. The **actions** taken will have a **measurable** and **positive effect**.
 3. The **main parameters** (oxygen, organic matter, nutrients, metals) have been **significantly improved**.
 4. **Biology** and **biodiversity** is slowly **improving**.
 5. The Scheldt district is on the way to **continuous improvement** and **sustainable development** of water management.



GENERAL ECOLOGICAL STATUS OF THE SCHELDT DISTRICT

- **Increased** level of **water quality** in the entire Scheldt District (fish returned to the Scheldt river)
- Challenges remain in **densely populated areas**: increasing water needs
- **Pollution** and **low water** as a permanent threat

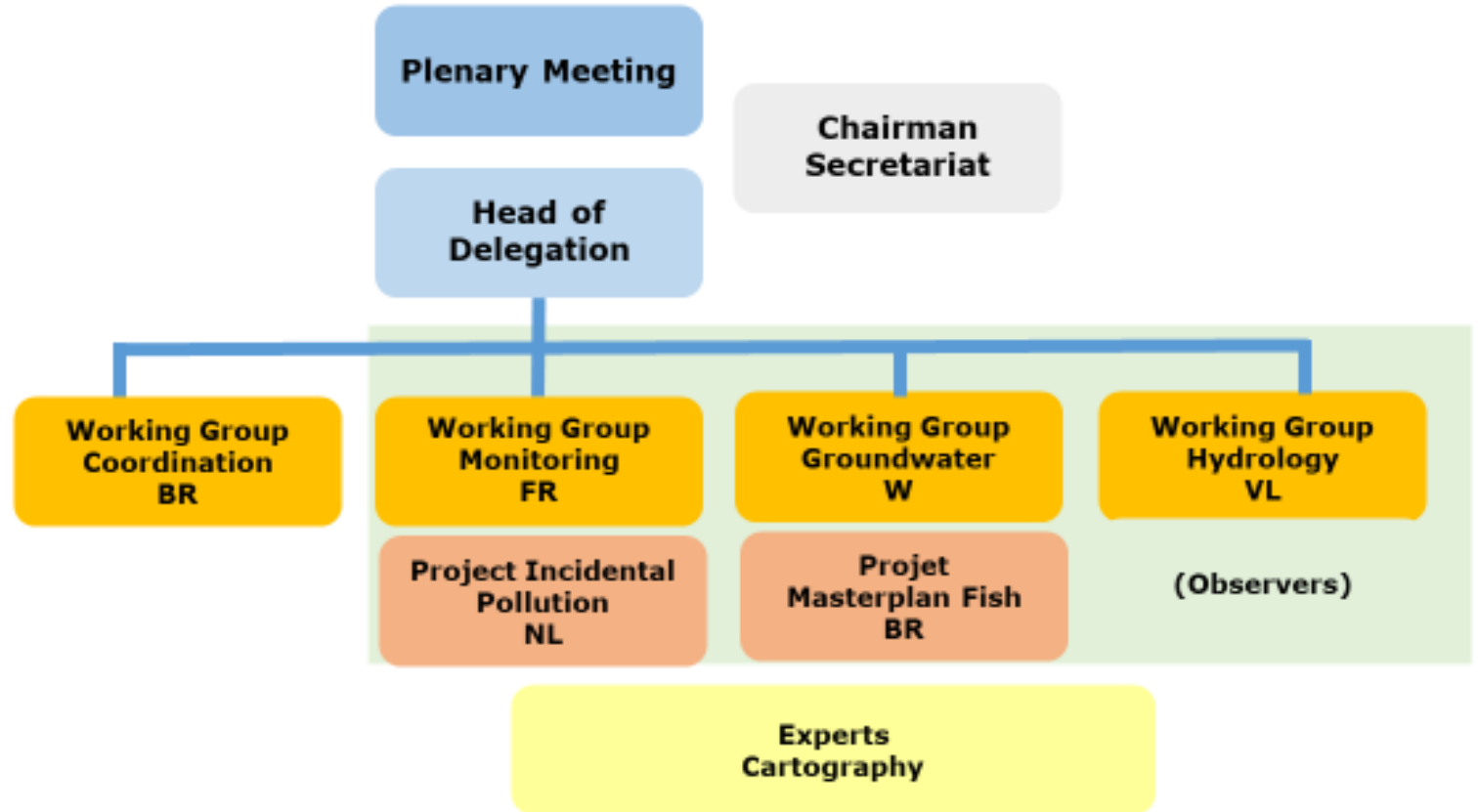


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The International Scheldt Commission : *Expert Groups Decision tree*



Organigramme ISC : 2021





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The International Scheldt Commission :

triannual report

(approved at the ISC Plenary
Meeting of
4 December 2019)
- General warning

- General warning:

*Climate change has a direct **impact on water quantity**, the frequency of **extreme events** (droughts and floods), but indirectly also on **water quality** and its **use** (shipping, fish migration, drinking water production, agriculture, etc...).*





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The International Scheldt Commission : *climate change challenges*

Threats :

- Less rain and more **thunderstorms**
 - Water is drained into the sea rather than sinking into the soil
 - Reduced water reserves
- Rising **temperatures**
 - Danger to biodiversity
 - Increased usage of water
 - Invasive species
 - Interaction between groundwater levels and local heat waves
- **Water resources** are endangered
 - Decreasing levels of water reserves
 - Low flows
 - Increased **subsidence**
- Increased **flood** risks
 - Management of flood risks at an international level
- Impact of **emerging substances** (PFAS)
- Impact of **accidental pollution** (April 2020 pollution kills all fish in the Upper Scheldt – FR+W)



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The
International
Scheldt
Commission :
*for more
information*

❖ International Scheldt Commission

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2000 Antwerpen

❖ **New public website** : <https://www.isc-cie.org>
(expected for yearend 2019)

❖ **Contact details Secretariat ISC** :
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