

# Water Framework Directive

<b>Official reference</b>	Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy	
<b>Relevant dates</b>	Document	23/10/2000
	Publication	22/12/2000
	Entry into force	22/12/2000
	Implementation by Belgium	23/06/2010
	Implementation by Flanders	18/07/2003
	Implementation deadline	22/12/2003
<b>Policy level</b>	European	
<b>Type of instrument</b>	Directive	
<b>Geographical reach</b>	EU Member States	
<b>(Legal) coverage in the BNS</b>	Flemish region, transitional waters, coastal waters (i.e. surface waters, situated at the land side of a line, of which each point is situated at a one nautical mile distance seawards, from the closest point of the baseline, if necessary, extended towards the outer limit of a transitional water) For chemical status: extension towards territorial sea	
<b>European contact point</b>	Directorate-General Environment (DG ENV)	
<b>Competent authorities in Belgium</b>	For the Flemish region and the internal waters: Integrated Water Policy Coordination Committee (CIW) (secretariat CIW = Flemish Environment Agency(VMM)) For the one-mile zone seawards starting from the baseline and the territorial sea: Federal authorities; FPS Health, Food chain safety and Environment; DG Environment; Agency Marine Environment	
<b>Transposition on the federal level</b>	Koninklijk besluit van 23 juni 2010 betreffende de vaststelling van een kader voor het bereiken van een goede oppervlaktewatertoestand	
<b>Transposition on the Flemish level</b>	Decreet van 18 juli 2003 betreffende het integraal waterbeleid	

## // abstract:

The European Water Framework Directive (WFD) stipulates that, by 2015, all European 'natural' surface waters have to achieve (at least) 'good ecological status' and 'good chemical status'. For 'heavily modified' or 'artificial' water bodies, the ecological goals are adapted, and the term 'good ecological potential' is used. The deadline (2015) to achieve these goals can be extended on certain conditions, but extensions are limited to a maximum of two further updates of the river basin management plan (2021/2027). For the good ecological status, the WFD extends to 1 nautical mile from the baseline, and for the good chemical status of surface waters this extends to 12 nautical miles seawards from the baseline.

The 'good ecological status' has to be described based on 5 biological quality elements, such as phytoplankton or phytobenthos, macrophytes, angiosperms (seaweeds or plants of tidal marshes), benthic invertebrate fauna and fish (in transitional waters). The limit values between the two most important ecological status classifications (very good/good and good/average) are legally defined in Commission Decision 2008/915/EC. If the waters do not reach the limit values between a good and an average status, measures need to be taken to improve their environmental status. The limit values for polluting chemicals are also legally defined in the [Subsidiary Directive on Priority Substances](#) (2008/105/EC; p.86).

To achieve the goals of the Water Framework Directive, the Member States need to draw up river basin management plans every six years. This happened for the first time for the period 2010-2015. The next version of the management plan will focus on the period 2016-2021, and will also implement the [Floods Directive](#) (2007/60/EG; p.84). All surface waters of the Belgian coastal areas are part of the international Scheldt river basin: in conformity with the competences of the Flemish and federal authorities, the river basin management plans are divided into a Scheldt river basin programme and a programme for the Belgian coastal waters. The coordination between the managing authorities of the river basin district (the Netherlands, France, the three regions and the federal authorities of Belgium) takes place through the International Scheldt Commission (ISC) and on the Belgian level, through the Coordination Committee International Environment Policy (CCIM).