



Luxembourg, 16 December 2025

## Environmental and Social Completion Sheet (ESCS)

### Overview

Project Name:	<i>Flanders Sustainable Wastewater Treatment (AQF)</i>
Project Number:	<i>2019-0250</i>
Country:	<i>Belgium</i>
Project Description:	<i>The project comprised the construction of sewage collectors, storm water overflow systems and small and medium size wastewater treatment plants, as well as the upgrade of existing wastewater treatment plants for tertiary treatment in the Flemish Region. The project was implemented between 2019 and end of 2022.</i>

### Summary of Environmental and Social Assessment at Completion

The Promoter is Aquafin, a large public company that has a statutory monopoly on the provision of supra-municipal household wastewater collection and treatment services in Flanders. Its service area had about 6.8 million inhabitants in 2024. In addition, the company provides municipal wastewater collection and rainwater management services in over 50% of the Flemish municipalities, mostly through a structural partnership with the water utilities.

#### **EIB notes the following Environmental and Social performance and key outcomes at Project Completion.**

This was the eleventh operation with Aquafin.

The investments financed by the project were part of Aquafin's 5-year rolling Investment and Optimization Programme (IOP), which was reviewed and approved by the Flemish Region on an annual basis. The IOP was also subject to consultations with the Scheldt and Meuse River Basin Committees.

The project ensured continued compliance with the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive 91/271/EEC and improved the quality of water bodies as required by the River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs), implementing the requirements of the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC (WFD).

An urban planning permit was needed to build, renovate, demolish, dig, cut down trees, put up fences, etc. which concerned a large part of the investments of the project. The urban planning permits and the environmental permits are integrated into one permit since 2018. As a result, the competent environmental authorities, are the same for both permits. Depending on the project, this was the De Vlaamse Waterweg NV, the Flemish Environmental Agency, the Permanent Committee of the Province or the Municipality (with a possible delegation to the Permanent Committee of the Province).

The project took into consideration the environmental and social aspects as required by national and European environmental requirements and in particular the Decreet Algemene Bepalingen Milieubeleid (DABM), the MER-besluit, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive



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(2011/92/EC) as amended by Directive 2014/52/EC, the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC, the Birds Directive 2009/147/EC, and the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.

In line with their contractual obligations, the Promoter submitted six EIAs for publication on the EIB website.

The upgrading and expansion of the capacity of the sewer system resulted in additional sewer connections discharging to a wastewater treatment plant and a reduced leakage of sewer pipes, thus improving the groundwater quality. The upgrading of the wastewater treatment plants improved the effluent quality, reducing the pollution to receiving surface water. The replacement of combined sewers with separate sewers and the upgrading of stormwater drainage systems reduced discharges of untreated wastewater in the receiving surface water during heavy rain, thereby further reducing the pollution of these water bodies.

The project also supported the Promoter in adapting to the impact of climate change on precipitation in Flanders by reducing the risk of overflowing sewers during heavy rain and increasing the hydraulic capacity of the wastewater treatment plants. It further resulted in a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and thus helped to mitigate climate change.

Thus, the project generated substantial health advantages and lasting environmental benefits in the form of increased service coverage and quality, higher quality of surface and groundwater resources, and increased resilience of urban infrastructure. The benefits outweighed the negative temporary impacts, which occurred mainly during construction (traffic, noise and dust) and were mitigated as much as possible.

The counterparty is in scope and screened out of the PATH framework, because it is not considered high emitting nor high vulnerability.

**Summary opinion of Environmental and Social aspects at completion:**

EIB is of the opinion based on reports from the promoter and site visits by the EIB team that the Project has been implemented in line with EIB Environmental and Social Standards, applicable at the time of appraisal.