seine scheldt

THE LARGEST EUROPEAN INLAND WATERWAYS NETWORK

ANNUAL REPORT

2025 / Seine-Scheldt EEIG

Co-funded by the European Union

THE PROJECT IN A NUTSHELL

Seine-Scheldt: Europe's 1st high-capacity navigable waterway network

The Seine-Scheldt network is the result of an unprecedented European cooperative project. It will link the Seine basin in France to the Scheldt basin in Belgium, thanks to the construction of a new waterway link, the Seine-Nord Europe Canal, alongside work to modernise and regenerate existing waterways.

The network will boost European transport options thanks to 1,100 km of waterways, suitable for large vessels, encouraging intermodal transport as well as innovation. Seine-Scheldt is modern and efficient, tackling some major European, as well as local, challenges: it is encouraging low-carbon transport to meet future economic and commercial needs and is boosting territorial continuity for an area with more than 40 million inhabitants.

1,100 km
OF HIGH-CAPACITY navigable waterways

2
COUNTRIES CROSSED France and Belgium

The future Seine-Scheldt network is the result of a collaborative project led by France and Belgium. It is co-financed by the European Commission, the French Republic, the AFITF (France's transport infrastructure financing agency), water agencies, 4 French regions (Grand Est, Hauts-de-France, Île-de-France, Normandy) and 2 Belgian regions (Flanders and Wallonia), as well as departmental and intermunicipal authorities. Operational coordination is provided by the Seine-Scheldt European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG), which brings together 4 partners:

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE
Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité

vnf Voies navigables de France

SOCIÉTÉ DU CANAL SEINE-NORD EUROPE

De Vlaamse Waterweg

Wallonie

Co-funded by the European Union

5
MAJOR SEAPORTS,
60 inland ports and
90 marinas connected

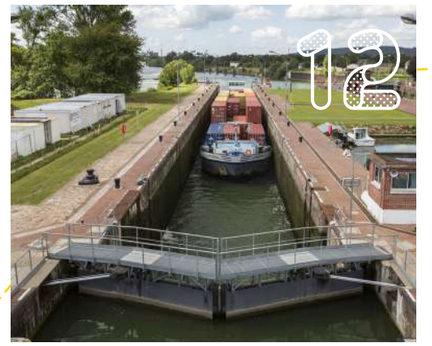
175,000
DIRECT/INDIRECT JOBS created

360
TOWNS AND MUNICIPALITIES near the network

25%
MORE TRAFFIC, from 2035

1,700 hectares
OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

150 MT
OF GOODS estimated to be transported by 2035



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A MESSAGE FROM...
GILLES RYCKEBUSCH
Manager of the Seine-Scheldt EEIG and Territorial Director of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais department of Voies navigables de France

2025 confirmed the steady progress of the Seine–Scheldt network construction sites, which are clearly visible across the networks of each of our members. This momentum is driven by the ongoing commitment of the Walloon, Flemish and French partners united within the Seine–Scheldt European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG). Together, we coordinate our investments and harmonise our technical choices to ensure the coherence and progressive capacity increase of the network. It is this close cooperation that gives strength to our shared trajectory.

In 2025, several milestones were reached: adaptation of the Lys, modernisation of structures in the Seine Basin, development of locks in Wallonia and Nord-Pas-de-Calais, rollout of remote operation on strategic routes, initial major contracts and the launch of preparatory construction sites across all sectors of the Seine–Nord Europe Canal. These advances mark a decisive entry into a large-scale implementation phase.

Support from the European Union remains a key driver. Within the framework of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), over €1 billion have already been mobilised in support of Seine–Scheldt during the current programming period. The proposal presented in July 2025, providing for a new 2028–2034 CEF, reaffirms the commitment to continued investment in cross-border infrastructures. This outlook is crucial for maintaining momentum and ensuring the continuity and stability of project implementation.

This report also highlights ongoing innovation for the development of the Seine–Scheldt network. Remote operation, River Information Services, digital tools for monitoring construction sites and consideration of alternative fuels; these developments are gradually transforming our approach to designing and operating the waterway. They improve navigation reliability and enhance its appeal in the context of environmental and logistic transition.

Beyond the infrastructures, usage is our shared challenge. The aim is to provide our clients and regions with a seamless, efficient and sustainable waterway connection, capable of shifting a portion of freight flows from road to waterway, while supporting local initiatives, including tourism.

INTERVIEW WITH

MATTHIEU BLANC

President of the European Barge Union (EBU)

As a European organisation representing inland waterway freight operators, the European Barge Union advocates on behalf of waterway users with European institutions and infrastructure managers.
As the Seine–Scheldt network is being gradually rolled out, Matthieu Blanc shares the perspective of carriers, ports, and economic stakeholders on the concrete expectations associated with the development of this major European inland waterway corridor.

What role does inland waterway transport play in Europe today, and what does the Seine–Scheldt network represent for economic stakeholders?

Inland waterway transport plays a role that is both discreet and essential. Discreet, because it remains largely out of sight in public debate, yet essential for many industrial activities. Beyond a certain volume of goods, the waterway becomes a decisive logistical tool for the competitiveness of industrial sites and ports.

In this context, the Seine–Scheldt network is clearly aligned with a European approach. Its goal is to connect major industrial and port basins, ensuring continuity for large-gauge navigation between the Benelux and the Seine Basin. This type of infrastructure goes beyond local concerns; these are structuring investments, whose impacts are often measured over several decades.

What main challenges are users of the inland waterway network currently facing?

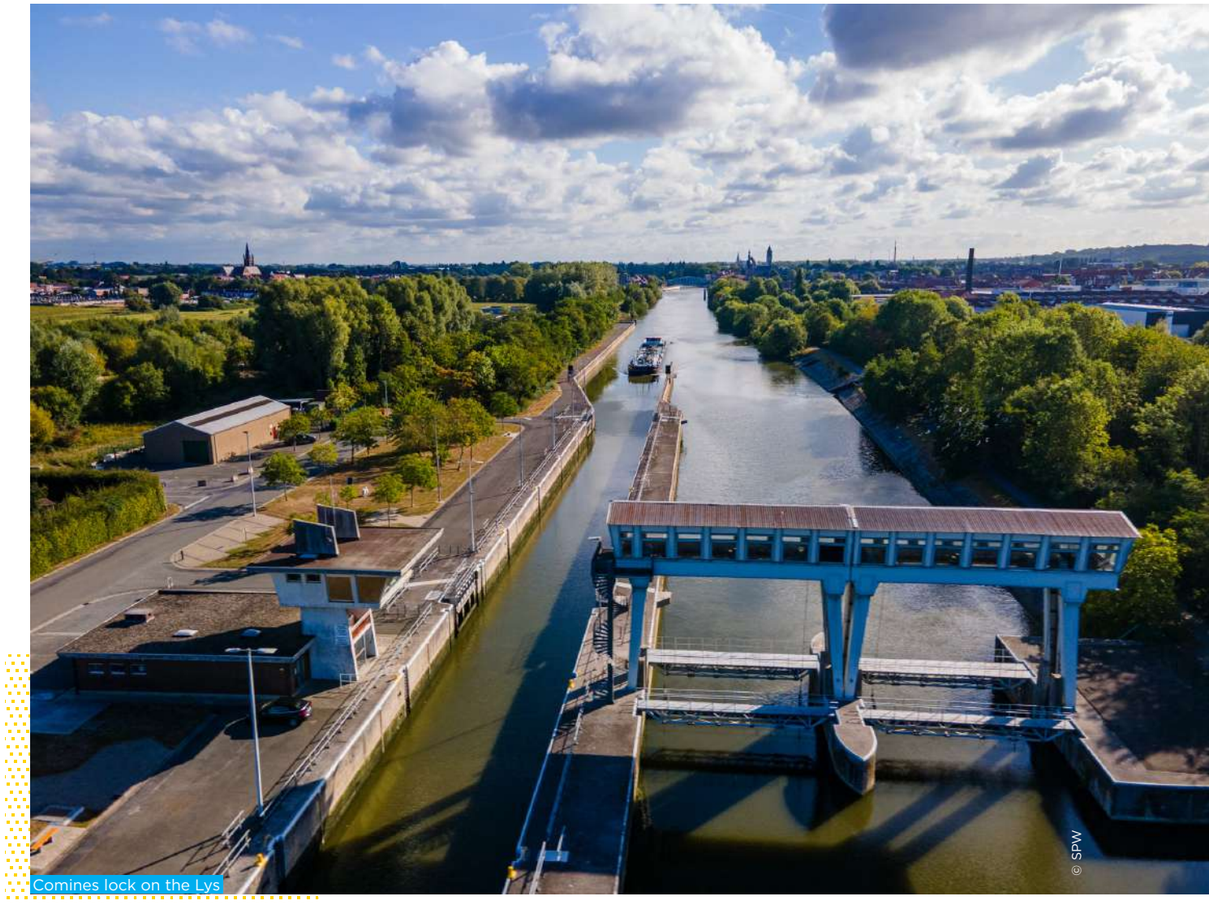
One major challenge concerns the performance of existing infrastructures, and their maintenance in particular. Building a facility is a significant step, but maintaining a consistently high level of service is equally essential for users, who require reliability and predictability.

The energy transition of the sector is another challenge. Decarbonisation will undoubtedly involve several complementary solutions, including the use of biofuels, the rollout of electrification, and the installation of associated facilities, such as charging points. These developments are already under way, but require sustained investment and long-term support.

What expectations do industrial stakeholders and ports have of major networks such as Seine–Scheldt?

Expectations primarily concern the ability to provide efficient and continuous infrastructures, enabling the transport of large volumes over long distances. A link such as Seine–Scheldt opens up new prospects for modal shift and the organisation of multimodal logistics chains.

There is also a challenge in terms of project visibility and understanding. For certain economic stakeholders, the commissioning horizon may still seem distant, which makes it necessary to undertake information and awareness-raising efforts. The ability to transport significant volumes between the major northern ports and the Paris Basin represents a clear strategic advantage on a European level.



Comines lock on the Lys

Which developments do you consider most promising for enhancing the attractiveness of inland waterway transport?

Several innovations could gradually transform the sector. Automation and navigation assistance systems are already being developed and are expected to continue advancing in the coming years. At the same time, the use of alternative fuels and vessel electrification, i.e., the use of boats operating wholly or partly on electricity, are key avenues for reducing the environmental footprint of inland waterway transport. Finally, it is vital we do not overlook other aspects of inland waterway development, particularly tourism, which is seeing significant growth in Europe and also contributes to the enhancement of regions crossed by major river corridors.

> A link such as Seine–Scheldt aligns with a strong European ambition to establish lasting connections between major industrial and logistics hubs.

The electrification of inland waterway transport, a change already underway

This initiative involves developing vessels which operate partially or entirely on electricity, either in addition to or as a replacement for combustion engines.
The development draws on on-board batteries or quayside charging facilities.
It represents one of the main avenues to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in inland waterway transport and strengthen its role in the energy transition of the logistics sector.

INNOVATION TO MODERNISE AND FUTURE-PROOF THE NETWORK

The year 2025 confirmed that the modernisation of the Seine–Scheldt network is based not only on infrastructure, but also on the transformation of its operating methods. Remote operation of facilities, River Information Services, the energy transition of fleets, initial tests in autonomous freight, and innovations implemented at the Seine–Nord Europe Canal construction site: these advances reflect a coordinated evolution of the inland waterway model, serving its performance, reliability, and sustainability.

Building of a works quay for the Seine–Nord Europe Canal at Aubencheul-au-Bac

Remote operation for modernised management of the inland waterway network

Operating a lock or a dam remotely from a centralised control centre is now a reality on many European inland waterways. Remote operation is transforming the management of the inland waterway network by enhancing safety, reliability, and service continuity. Gradually rolled out by French and Belgian infrastructure managers, it is one of the main drivers of modernisation for the Seine–Scheldt network.

Modernised operations thanks to remote piloting

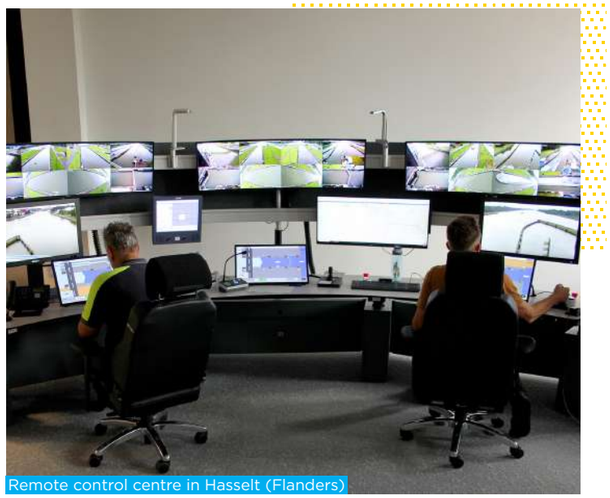
Traditionally, locks and dams were operated locally, with staff present at each site. Facility managers have gradually equipped their networks to monitor traffic and facilities remotely and more efficiently, starting with certain priority routes. In France, Voies navigables de France (VNF) has thus strengthened this monitoring capability. Remote operation goes further; it enables not only facility supervision, but also direct operational intervention from a centralised control centre (CCC), while providing an overall view per route, which is essential for anticipating traffic and managing water levels. For operating teams, this development marks a major shift.

In Wallonia, this modernisation is already fully operational on certain strategic routes. "*On the Sambre, all eight sites are now operated remotely from a management centre. This makes it possible to harmonise operations and offer extended navigation hours, while ensuring a high level of safety*," says Christophe Blerot, director of inland Waterways Operations at the Service public de Wallonie.

An innovation already extended to several networks

In Flanders, remote operation has now become a widely-established mode on high-traffic routes. Operators can thus manage several facilities simultaneously, while maintaining an overall view of the infrastructure. *"From our control centres, operators can remotely manage several locks and movable bridges, while continuously monitoring their operation. This ensures continuous and more efficient network operation,"* Agnès Peil, remote operation programme manager at De Vlaamse Waterweg nv, explains.

This organisation enhances service continuity and optimises flow management, particularly on the busiest routes, where several facilities are operated from a single control centre.



Remote control centre in Hasselt (Flanders)

A lever for reliability and coordination across the entire network

Beyond technical modernisation, remote operation delivers tangible benefits to users. It harmonises facility operations, limits service interruptions by adjusting manoeuvres more rapidly in the event of an incident, for example, and helps to anticipate periods of high traffic or maintenance.

It also facilitates coordination between infrastructure managers in a network that crosses several regions and countries. Centralised supervision and the associated digital tools enable more coherent traffic management and help to strengthen the overall reliability of the Seine–Scheldt network.

Progressively deployed across the entire network, this innovation thus represents a key driver of change, guiding the modernisation of existing facilities and preparing for the operation of the future major European inland waterway network.

River Information Services, for smoother and better coordinated navigation

From knowing the real-time position of a vessel to anticipating a lock closure or preparing a route on a European scale, River Information Services are transforming navigation and network operations. Gradually rolled out across the entire Seine–Scheldt network, they serve as a key driver for enhancing safety, fluidity and coordination in a cross-border context.

Comines lock on the Lys

Now essential tools for navigation and planning

River Information Services (RIS) comprise digital tools that provide information on traffic, navigation conditions and the state of facilities. They enable waterway users (freight operators, passenger transport operators or recreational boaters) to plan their journeys in advance, and infrastructure managers to ensure more efficient network operations.

For Voies navigables de France, these services are now fully integrated into operations. *"RIS provide users with reliable, up-to-date information on navigation conditions, restrictions or the state of facilities. This helps them to better plan their journeys and anticipate any potential disruptions"*, Alaric Blakeway, national RIS coordinator at VNF, explains.

In Wallonia, these tools also play a central role in traffic management and providing information to users. *"Notices to skippers, announcing works, passage restrictions or temporary closures, for example, enable users to be informed swiftly. This is an essential element to ensure safety and traffic flow,"* Christophe Blerot, director of inland Waterways Operations at the Service public de Wallonie, points out.

A structured information network on a European level

RIS come into their own within a cross-border network such as Seine–Scheldt, where vessels travel between several regions and countries. The challenge is to ensure continuity of information, regardless of the region crossed.

In Flanders, these services now form a core digital infrastructure, at the heart of coordinated network management. *"RIS make it possible to centralise and share real-time information on navigation, traffic and facilities. They form an essential foundation for coordinated network management and providing users with reliable and consistent services"*, says Piet Creemers, head of Innovation for inland navigation at De Vlaamse Waterweg nv.

The European EuRIS platform represents one of the key achievements of this development. In particular, it enables users to consult navigation conditions, track vessels and plan routes on a European scale, thereby facilitating international journeys.

A driver of performance and the future of inland waterway transport

Beyond real-time information, RIS help to improve traffic management and coordination between facility managers. They enable the anticipation of operational situations and enhanced vessel traffic organisation. *"Inland waterway traffic is, by its very nature, international. It is vital that information systems communicate with each other, so that users can navigate without any break in information when crossing from one region to another,"* says Christophe Blerot. By facilitating data sharing and coordination between facility managers, these services support the scale-up of the Seine–Scheldt network and help make navigation more reliable, smoother, and better organised on the European level.

Alternative fuels, a strategic priority for inland waterway transport

Already environmentally efficient, inland waterway transport emits on average four times less CO_2 than road transport over the same distance and volume.
However, to meet European emission reduction targets and maintain its competitiveness, it must now address the energy used on board vessels.
On the Seine–Scheldt network, alternative fuels now represent a core driver of this transition.

Gradual development to existing fleets

The longevity of inland waterway vessels, whose hulls can remain in service for several decades, enables a gradual transition. Some alternative fuels can be used without major modifications to existing vessels.

So-called 'drop-in' solutions, such as HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil), reduce emissions without the need to change existing propulsion systems. *"Alternative fuels are currently the main operational lever for reducing emissions in the short term, because they enable action on existing vessels without waiting for major fleet transformations,"* Olivier Burel, head of Innovation at Voies navigables de France, points out.

In the medium term, configurations combining electric propulsion, batteries and a generator are paving the way for more ambitious solutions. Hydrogen or fully-electric vessels offer, in the longer term, prospects for navigation with a drastic reduction in emissions during use, subject to technological maturity and energy availability.

Major developments in power supply organisation

The transition does not only concern vessels. It also requires organising power supply across the entire network.

While some existing facilities can be upgraded to accommodate alternative fuels, other solutions, particularly those related to hydrogen or electricity, require more structural investments. Service public de Wallonie launched the creation of a multimodal station on the Escaut, initially focused on electricity and hydrogen. This project represents a structuring investment led by Wallonia. *"Facility managers must invest upstream in basic infrastructure. It is unreasonable to expect a private operator to bear the full responsibility for such major infrastructures alone,"* says Thierry Ledent, director, project manager for Service public de Wallonie.

Pooling with road transport appears to be an essential condition to ensure the economic viability of these facilities and secure the necessary volumes.

European coordination to boost competitiveness

In a cross-border network such as Seine–Scheldt, ensuring consistency in energy choices is a key challenge. *"Inland waterway transport is an inherent part of largely cross-border networks. Decisions regarding taxation and support for alternative fuels must be coordinated to avoid discrepancies in treatment between countries,"* says Jan-Willem Barbier, public policy advisor for climate, energy and sustainability at De Vlaamse Waterweg nv.

Standardisation of equipment, interoperability and regulatory stability are all conditions required to secure investments. The European objectives – a reduction of at least 35% in emissions by 2035 compared to 2015 and carbon neutrality by 2050 – must be achieved without undermining a sector with limited margins.

The Seine–Scheldt EEIG roadmap thus aims to anchor this transition within a progressive and coordinated trajectory, reconciling environmental ambition with economic sustainability.

Autonomous inland waterway freight, an evolution in operational methods

Often associated with the image of vessels sailing alone, present-day autonomous inland waterway freight reflects a more nuanced reality. It is less an immediate breakthrough than an evolution towards units incorporating greater automation, digital assistance and remote piloting. On the Seine–Scheldt network, the discussions and trials under way form part of a pragmatic approach, based on safety and economic utility.

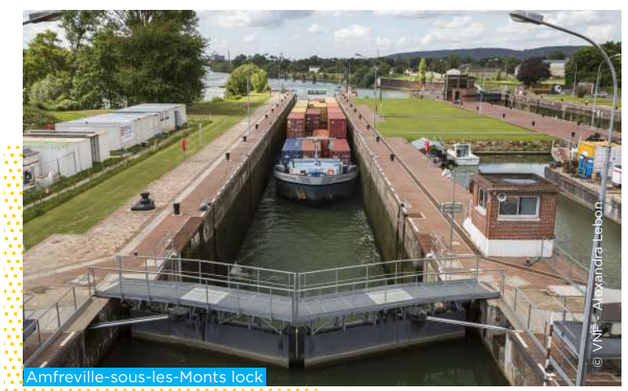
Various levels of automation

In practice, full autonomy without a crew remains experimental and is confined to very limited cases. Autonomous inland waterway freight encompasses a range of configurations corresponding to different degrees of automation. "*This may involve enhanced navigation assistance, remote control from shore, a reduced on-board crew, or remote supervision by a qualified professional. The autonomous vessel is not a one-size-fits-all model; it adapts to uses and operational contexts*," says Fionn Haleman, project manager for autonomous vessels at the territorial directorate for the Seine Basin and Lower Loire at Voies navigables de France.

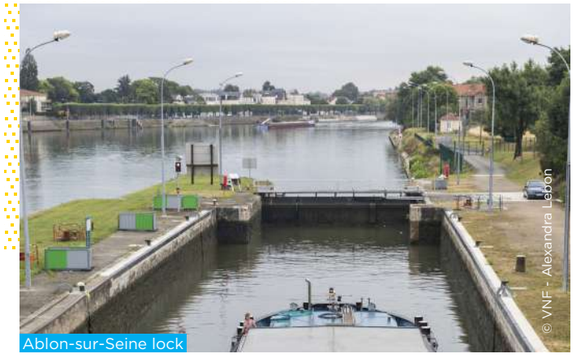
The main difference from traditional navigation lies in the changing role of crews; from direct operators on board, they become the supervisors of digital systems, sometimes from a shore-based centre.

Structured and supervised trials

On a European level, the sector has entered an advanced experimental phase. In Flanders, the entire inland waterway network has been a test area since 2018 for automated navigation, allowing different levels of automation to be tested within a dedicated regulatory framework. "*When a pilot project is carried out in a controlled and successful manner, we can consider commercial operation while retaining the technology tested. This offers legal security for businesses*," Sylvie de Craecker, head of innovation at De Vlaamse Waterweg, points out.


© VNF - Alexandra Lebon

Amfreville-sous-les-Monts lock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Ablon-sur-Seine lock

VNF is also supporting pilot projects in France, particularly those related to urban logistics and the revitalisation of certain routes. "*We are taking a phased approach; each new feature must demonstrate that it offers at least an equivalent level of security to that already in existence*," says Fionn Haleman.

An essential digital and collective cornerstone

The development of autonomous inland waterway freight does not rely solely on the vessels themselves. It relies on an existing technical and organisational environment.

The remote operation of locks and bridges, via centralised control centres (CCC), demonstrates that it is possible to securely operate critical functions from a distance. River Information Services (RIS) provide shared, real-time data on traffic, infrastructure and navigation conditions.

Safety, acceptability, professional training and economic viability thus remain essential conditions for a controlled scale-up. In this context, autonomous inland waterway freight emerges as a regulated change in practices, set to become a long-term feature in the development of the Seine–Scheldt network.

Seine–Nord Europe Canal, a testbed for innovation

The Seine–Nord Europe Canal serves as a large-scale demonstrator for new methods of design, construction, and construction site management. Designing more resource-efficient structures, improving material reuse, or enhancing the safety of interventions… These innovations address very tangible challenges associated with the construction of a 107-kilometre infrastructure and reflect the strong aim set by the Supervisory Board of the Seine–Nord Europe Canal Company (SCSNE) in its innovation policy. They help to reduce the environmental footprint of the construction site, improve project management and establish methods that can be applied to other projects.

Innovating from the design stage to reduce carbon footprint

Innovation is integrated from the design stage of facilities, with a clear objective: to minimise the use of materials, particularly concrete, while ensuring infrastructure durability. This task concerns locks in particular, which are among the major facilities of the Canal. *"We use slim lock walls, i.e., thinner lock walls made possible by appropriate technical choices. This reduces concrete volumes and therefore the carbon footprint of the facilities,"* Arthur Nigeon, eco-design and energy transition project manager, explains.

On certain sections, where local conditions allow, the Canal draws on natural soil properties to ensure its watertightness. This approach limits the use of artificial devices. Optimising earthworks movements also helps to reduce the distances travelled on the construction site and, consequently, CO_2 emissions from machinery.

Digital tools for enhanced soil management and construction site supervision

The construction of the Canal requires the excavation of considerable volumes of earth. Their management is a major challenge in order to limit transport and associated impacts. "*We have developed tools such as Terra Canal, which help us track the journey of excavated soil and organise its reuse close to the construction site. This optimises the movement of materials and reduces the distances travelled,*" Franck Rousseau, director of earthworks and innovation, explains.

These tools help to identify the origin of the soil, monitor its storage, and facilitate reuse in other areas, to shape riverbanks or carry out landscaping works, for example. Additionally, and for the first time, satellite imagery, combined with artificial intelligence, is used to monitor the progress of works along the route and verify the implementation of environmental measures.

Making safety a priority shared by all stakeholders

The building of the Canal simultaneously involves numerous companies and several thousand workers. To ensure a high level of safety, the SCSNE, together with the Professional Building and Public Works Prevention Organisation (OPPBTP), introduced the Canal Prevention Passport, a compulsory awareness programme prior to any intervention on the construction site. *"Safety is the SCSNE's number one priority. This system ensures that each participant has the same level of information regarding risks and preventive measures. This fosters a shared safety culture right from arrival on site,"* states Vincent Hulot, member of the management board.

This system is complemented by the testing of new technologies, such as driver assistance systems capable of detecting the presence of other machinery and pedestrians, and then alerting operators in the event of a collision risk.

The Seine–Nord Europe Canal serves as a true open-air laboratory. The solutions developed are helping to transform practices and can be transposed to other major infrastructure projects.


© OPPBTP

Pilot project for the Stop Collision system

2 COLLECTIVE MOMENTUM IN ACTION

2025 marked a new milestone in the implementation of the Seine–Scheldt network. On both the existing waterways and along the route of the Seine–Nord Europe Canal, works progressed, facilities evolved and partners continued, together, to build a leading European inland waterway network.

Widening of the Nimy-Blaton Canal

© SPW

Obourg

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In 2025, progress on the Seine–Scheldt network was reflected in a wide range of operations carried out across the various regions. Modernisation and remote operation of facilities, adaptation of inland waterway routes, gradual rollout of construction sites on the Seine–Nord Europe Canal, and the launch of studies preparing for subsequent phases. These actions, carried out by all the partners, illustrate the progressive and coordinated nature of the network's rollout.

A European project taking shape on the ground

A cross-border project by definition, Seine–Scheldt is based on cooperation between France, Wallonia and Flanders, with the support of the European Union. The funding provided via the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) supports both the modernisation of existing waterways and the development of new infrastructures.

In this context, 2025 was marked by numerous tangible advances. In Flanders, work continued on the Lys axis, with the adaptation of bridges, channel upgrading, i.e., the adjustment of its dimensions (depth, width and clearance) to allow larger vessels to pass, as well as various developments aimed at improving route performance. In Wallonia, several construction sites progressed on the Walloon backbone waterway, notably the widening of the Nimy-Blaton Canal and the construction site for the future Obourg lock, with the ultimate aim of allowing navigation for vessels of greater capacity. In France, facility modernisation, the development of remote operation and ongoing works on several routes, both in the Seine Basin and in Nord–Pas-de-Calais, have gradually helped to strengthen the reliability and service quality of the network.

Strengthening the network

At the same time, the Seine–Nord Europe Canal project reached several milestones. The completion of environmental procedures, the launch of major contracts and the initiation of preparatory construction sites across all sections of the route mark the transition to a larger-scale implementation phase.

Taken together, these advances reflect a collective momentum across the entire network. They illustrate the complementarity of actions undertaken by the partners and the preparation of a more efficient network, capable of accommodating larger convoys and supporting the development of inland waterway transport in Europe.

The following pages present the perspective of the project partners, each of whom reflects on the key developments in 2025 within their respective territories.

UPDATE ON THE ROLLOUT

OF SEINE-SCHELDT IN WALLONIA...

... with Nicolas Dubois,

program manager at the Service public de Wallonie (SPW)

What were the most significant advances in the Seine–Scheldt network in Wallonia in 2025?

The year was characterised less by spectacular commissioning than by steady progress across numerous construction sites and key milestones shaping the next phases of the project. The remote management of facilities on the Sambre was thus completed; the eight lock sites have been operated remotely since January, with harmonisation and extension of navigation hours. Furthermore, work continued to progress on the Walloon backbone waterway, particularly regarding the widening of the Nimy-Blaton Canal and the construction site of the future Obourg lock.

Nimy-Blaton Canal

How do these advances improve navigation conditions and prepare the next stages of the project?

Extending operating hours on the Sambre provides greater flexibility for boat operators and simplifies journey planning. In the longer term, the work undertaken on the Walloon backbone waterway will enable the navigation of vessels with greater capacity, up to 2,000 tonnes. This represents a significant driver for modal shift and enhancing the appeal of inland waterway transport for economic players.

In parallel, several studies conducted in 2025 are helping to prepare the next steps, notably the completion of strategic environmental studies, or navigability studies aimed at refining facility designs, as well as a study dedicated to navigation services, focusing in particular on the refuelling of vessels i.e., their fuel or power supply and shore-to-ship electrification.

The Seine–Scheldt network in Wallonia

Obourg lock

UPDATE ON THE ROLLOUT

OF SEINE-SCHELDT IN FLANDERS...

... with Frank Serpentier,

Seine-Scheldt investment project manager at De Vlaamse Waterweg nv (DVW)

What progress marked the rollout of the Seine–Scheldt network in Flanders in 2025?

The year was marked by tangible progress on several sections of the network, particularly on the Lys axis. Several bridges were completed or modified to increase clearance, i.e., the space available beneath the structures, to allow the passage of vessels carrying stacked containers. Following the completion of these works, only three bridges have yet to be adapted along the entire network to achieve the target set.

At the same time, the waterway calibration works, i.e., adapting the waterway to allow the passage of higher-capacity vessels, progressed with the completion of dredging, (removal of accumulated sediment from the bottom of the canal to ensure sufficient depth) on the section between Deinze and Schipdonk on the Lys diversion canal, and the development of new ecological banks between Vive-Saint-Bavon and Deinze.

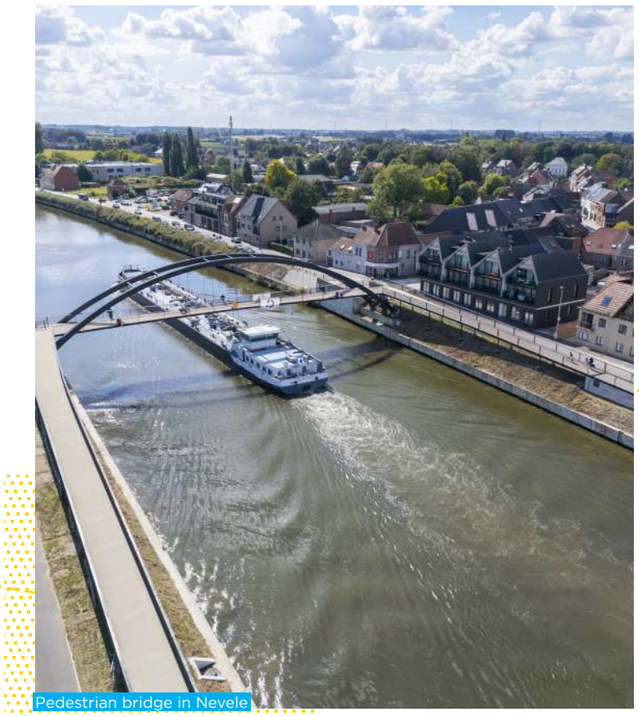
Other operations moved forward, such as the redevelopment of the Waregem-Barrage site or the start of building works for a fish pass in Menin, a facility that allows fish to pass through hydraulic structures and move freely along the waterway.


Redevelopment of the Waregem dam site

How do these works enhance the performance of the network and prepare for the next stages of the project?

These operations help to gradually improve transport capacity and traffic flow on the Lys axis, while also enhancing the reliability of the network for users. They also represent essential steps to support the development of traffic and inland waterway transport modes in the years ahead.

Other construction sites are also progressing, notably on the Roeselare–Leie Canal, where studies were launched to increase the capacity of the Ooigem lock, as well as on several quays and bridges that help improve access to industrial zones. All of these works contribute to enhancing the appeal of inland waterway transport for economic players.


Pedestrian bridge in Nevele

The Seine-Scheldt network in Flanders

UPDATE ON THE ROLLOUT

OF THE SEINE-NORD EUROPE CANAL...

... with Jérôme Dezobry,

Chairman of the Executive Board of the Société du Canal Seine-Nord Europe (SCSNE)

Development of ecological ponds in the Somme

What progress marked the Seine–Nord Europe Canal project in 2025?

This year marked a significant milestone, with the completion of the environmental authorisation procedures, which means we can begin the main construction works. These decisions also allowed us to launch consultations for all major works contracts.

In parallel, several construction sites made progress on the ground. In Oise, the first bridges were delivered. The Oise River was also redirected to a new course over several kilometres to allow for the building of the Canal, and the construction site for the Montmacq—Cambronne-lès-Ribécourt lock was set up. This major structure marks the effective start of building the Canal's main infrastructure.

How do these stages signify a ramping-up of the project?

These developments reflect the gradual transition from a preparatory phase to the implementation phase on a larger scale. The launch of the main contracts and the increasing number of construction sites reflect this growing momentum along the entire route.

The project also took on a very tangible dimension in the field; by the end of 2025, more than 700 people were working on the Canal and 120 companies were involved, a significant proportion of which are based in Hauts-de-France. More than 200 hectares of environmental enhancement works have also now been completed, reflecting the attention given to integrating the project into its surroundings.

Meanwhile, numerous preparatory operations were carried out across all the regions, whether in the form of preventive archaeology, utility diversions or the development of quays to ensure construction site logistics. These new stages were carried out via a process that is important to us, i.e., engaging in dialogue with stakeholders and local residents.

All of these actions help to prepare the future integration of the Canal into the Seine–Scheldt network.

The Seine–Nord Europe Canal

Construction of the Montmacq—Cambronne-lès-Ribécourt lock

UPDATE ON THE ROLLOUT

OF SEINE-SCHELDT IN THE HAUTS-DE-FRANCE AND THE SEINE BASIN...

... with Gilles Ryckebusch,

Territorial Director of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais department of Voies navigables de France (VNF) and manager of Seine-Scheldt EEIG

Extension of the Quesnoy-sur-Deûle lock

What progress marked the rollout of the Seine–Scheldt network in France in 2025?

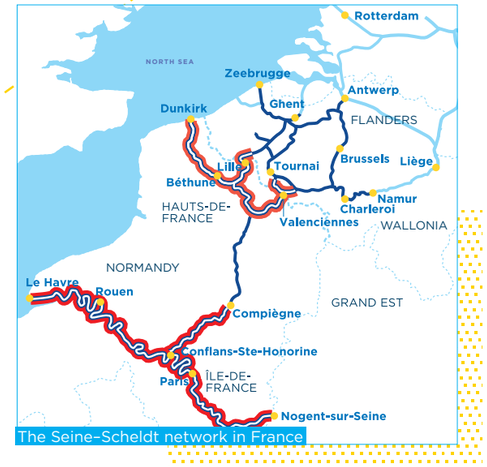
Several operations in the Seine Basin focused on modernising facilities and improving network operations. The commissioning of the centralised control centre at Notre-Dame-de-la-Garenne marks a significant milestone in the development of remote operation, enabling certain facilities to be managed remotely and enhancing service reliability. Furthermore, several operations progressed, notably the modernisation of the Suresnes dam, the launch of rehabilitation studies for the Denouval dam, and the completion of studies on the Oise route as part of the MAGEO project, as well as interventions on various facilities along the Seine.

In the Nord and Pas-de-Calais river basin, the year was notably marked by ongoing studies for the duplication of the Fontinettes lock, the extension of the Quesnoy-sur-Deûle lock to 144 metres, and the expansion of remote operation.

How do these works enhance the performance of the network and prepare for the next stages of the project?

All of these operations primarily help to gradually improve the reliability and quality of service provided to users, whether they are transport operators, industrial players or ports. Facility modernisation, remote operation rollout and the adaptation of certain locks help to streamline navigation and meet the needs of inland waterway transport more closely.

These works also represent essential steps for the expansion of the Seine–Scheldt network in the years to come. In several areas, the developments under way aim to enable the passage of larger convoys and to strengthen the continuity of routes for large-gauge vessels. In parallel, ongoing studies and preparatory operations help to anticipate future needs, ensuring that the network can sustainably support evolving traffic flows and the development of inland waterway transport on a European scale.



The Seine–Scheldt network in France

WHAT'S IN STORE FOR 2026

In Flanders

Studies

- Continuation of studies on the capacity increase of certain facilities, particularly in the Roulers-Lys canal sector and the Ooigem lock.
- Additional studies related to the gradual adaptation of the network.

Works

- Continuation of the Lys axis adaptation, notably upgrading several bridges to standard gauge to allow the transport of containers stacked three levels high.
- Ongoing waterway calibration works on various sections, in continuity with operations already under way between Deinze and Schipdonk and along the banks between Vive-Saint-Bavon and Deinze.
- Progress on localised operations contributing to improved route performance, particularly at certain facilities and port areas.

In Wallonia

Studies

- Finalisation of strategic environmental studies related to upcoming works and development phases.
- Ongoing navigability studies aimed at refining the design of certain facilities and their operating conditions.
- Studies relating to navigation services, particularly vessel refuelling.

Works

- Continuation of works to widen the Nimy-Blaton Canal.
- Progress on the construction site of the future Obourg lock and developments on the Walloon backbone waterway.
- Continuation of facility modernisation operations, in line with the remote management programmes and infrastructure adaptation.

In France

Seine–Nord Europe Canal

Contracts

- Awarding of major works contracts, including the design and construction contract for the Somme canal bridge, the TOARC (engineering facilities and restoration of communications works) for sector 1 in Oise, and the locks at Oisy-le-Verger (Pas-de-Calais) and Noyon (Oise).

Works

- Construction sites under way, notably the Montmacq – Cambronne-lès-Ribécourt lock and the viaduct over the A2.
- Ongoing preparatory works: utility or road diversions and quayside developments…
- Continuation of the environmental compensation measures, particularly in the Somme.

Seine Basin and Nord-Pas-de-Calais

Studies

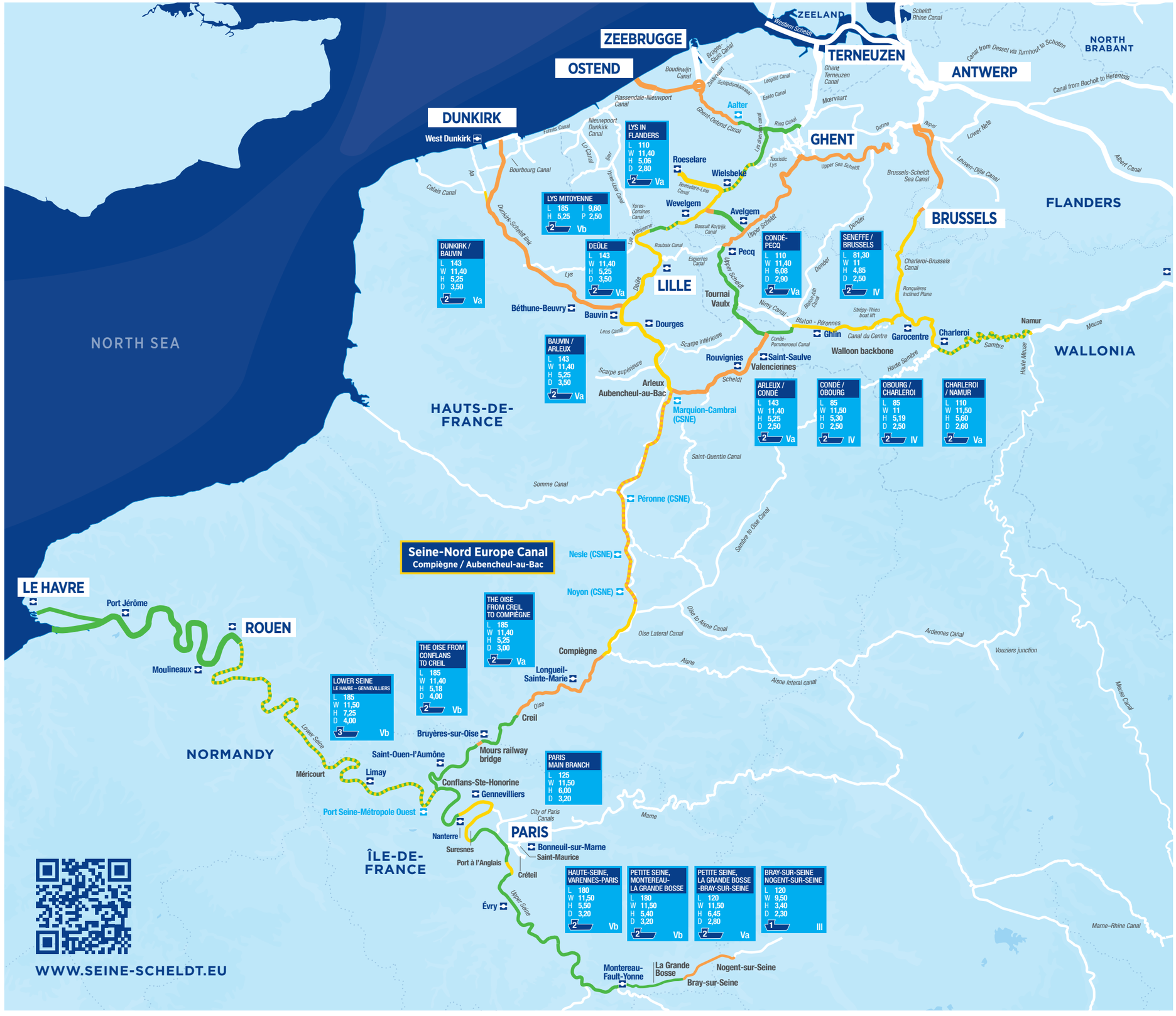
- Launch of the project studies for the duplication of the lock at Fontinettes.
- Completion of the preliminary study for the recalibration of the River Sensée.
- Environmental permits pending for the turning basins at Béthune and Valenciennes.
- Environmental permit obtained for works on the Beaulieu dam.
- Launch and validation of detailed design (PRO) studies for deepening and extension works to the Ablon lock.
- Continuation and validation of the MAGEO project detailed design (PRO) studies.
- Ongoing studies for remote operation and the setting-up of a centralised control centre in Conflans-Sainte-Honorine.

Works

- Completion of remote operation rollout on the Bauvin–Dunkerque axis.
- Completion of the environmental enhancement works associated with the lock at Quesnoy-sur-Deûle.
- Ongoing recalibration operations on the border section of the Lys, including sediment dredging.
- Completion of ecological and landscaping works on the banks and paths along the Condé-Pommerœul canal.
- In the Seine Basin, commissioning of the Vives-Eaux centralised control centre on the Seine.
- Ongoing renovation and modernisation works on the Suresnes gated dam.
- Launch of renovation and modernisation works on lock No.4 at Notre-Dame-de-la-Garenne in Normandy.
- Launch and execution of renovation and modernisation works on the Chatou lock on the Seine.
- Inauguration of the Poses dam on the Seine.
- Launch of preparatory works for the Beaulieu dam.

MAP SHOWING THE PROGRESS OF THE SEINE-SCHELDT NETWORK

DECEMBER 2025



KEY

- IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION'S IMPLEMENTING DECISION
- WORK UNDER WAY, SERVICE LEVEL ALREADY IMPROVED
- STRUCTURE IN OPERATION
- WORK UNDER WAY
- PREPARATORY WORK UNDER WAY
- STUDIES IN PROGRESS
- OUTSIDE THE SEINE-SCHELDT NETWORK
- BORDER
- REGIONAL BOUNDARY

LE HAVRE MAJOR SEAPORTS AND EUROPEAN HUBS

- MULTIMODAL HUB (EXISTING)
- MULTIMODAL HUB (PLANNED)

DIMENSIONS IN METRES (2023)
L Length
W Width
H Height under bridge
D Depth

MAX CONTAINER LAYERS: MAX : 1 | MAX : 2 | MAX : 3

ECMT CLASS	TON
III	650 - 1000
IV	1000 - 1500
Va	1000 - 3000
Vb	3200 - 6000

SCALE

0 — 50 — 100 km

WWW.SEINE-SCHELDT.EU

Synthetic map compiled from maps supplied by Voies navigables de France and with the help of De Vlaamse Waterweg nv, SCSNE and Service public de Wallonie

[Non-contractual document - produced by Transmanche Consultants]

seine SCHELDT

THE LARGEST EUROPEAN
INLAND WATERWAYS NETWORK

Graphic design: stratéact - Production: bdc conseil - Groupe Rouge Vif – June 2026 - Cover photo credit: Extension of the Quesnoy-sur-Deûle lock © ingeo

Follow the network's progress :

seine-scheldt.eu

Réseau Seine-Escaut

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Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité

vnf Voies navigables de France

SOCIÉTÉ DU CANAL SEINE-NORD EUROPE

De Vlaamse Waterweg

Wallonie

Co-funded by
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