

SEINE-SCHELDT, A NETWORK FOR THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN INLAND WATERWAY TRANSPORT

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The Seine-Scheldt network is a flagship achievement in the field of inland waterway transport and navigation. With its 1,100 km of large-gauge waterways, it aims to connect, at the heart of Europe, two countries, France and Belgium, and six regions: Hauts-de-France, Île-de-France, Normandy, Grand Est, Flanders and Wallonia. Its network of large-gauge canals, rivers and waterways will link the Seine and Nord-Pas-de-Calais basins in France to the Scheldt basin in Belgium. This ambitious project, the result of unprecedented European cooperation, includes the modernisation and regeneration of existing waterways, as well as the construction of the "missing waterway link", the 107 km Canal Seine-Nord Europe.



● SEINE-SCHELDT AT A GLANCE

Europe's **first sustainable large-gauge inland waterway transport network**

1,100 km of waterways between Belgium and France (including a new **107 km** waterway link between Compiègne and Aubencheul-au-Bac: the Canal Seine-Nord Europe)

By 2035, more than **9.8 billion tonne-kilometres** transported by waterway (equivalent to 2.3 million heavy goods vehicle journeys avoided)

5 seaports (Le Havre, Rouen, Dunkirk, Antwerp and Zeebrugge), **60** inland ports and **90** marinas

360 municipalities served

Seine-Scheldt is an investment in the future of sustainable transport in Europe. It represents a commitment to low-carbon transport adapted to future economic and environmental challenges. The network is a major asset for the territories it serves, offering long-term opportunities for wealth creation and employment while contributing to the energy transition and the fight against climate change.

Seine-Scheldt is also **a symbol of exemplary cross-border cooperation**, responding to current and future economic and commercial needs while contributing to the development of a territory of more than 40 million inhabitants. This Franco-Belgian partnership is supported by the European Commission, the French Transport Infrastructure Financing Agency (AFIT France), the Flemish Region, the Walloon Region, the Grand Est, Hauts-de-France, Île-de-France and Normandy Regions, and France's water agencies.



Inland waterway convoy on the Seine (Photo credit: © Francis Cormon)

THE 3 PILLARS OF THE SEINE-SCHELDT NETWORK:

INNOVATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION

The Seine-Scheldt network illustrates a **strategic vision** for the future and the development of sustainable transport in Europe. This ambitious project is built around three fundamental pillars:

- **Future Mobility:** Seine-Scheldt is designed to be a driver of innovation in the transport sector. By creating a new transport offer for both freight and passengers, this waterway network aims to gradually transform the movement of goods and people across Europe. Emphasis is placed on modal shift towards inland waterways, an approach that promotes waterborne transport, recognised for its energy efficiency and low carbon footprint. This initiative forms part of a sustainable mobility strategy, addressing today's challenges of road congestion and greenhouse gas emission reductions.
- **Economic Development and Employment:** The Seine-Scheldt network is a significant driver of economic growth. By facilitating freight transport, it stimulates economic activity in the regions it crosses. This momentum results in the creation of direct and indirect jobs, particularly in logistics, shipbuilding and related services. The network also supports the development of new industrial and logistics zones, thereby strengthening the economic attractiveness of the territories concerned.
- **Ecological Transition:** In line with the objectives of the European Green Deal, Seine-Scheldt plays a crucial role in adapting to climate change. The project is committed to promoting sustainable water resource management and minimising its environmental impact. Initiatives include the use of clean technologies, the preservation of biodiversity along waterways and the implementation of environmentally responsible construction practices. The network is therefore a tangible example of how transport infrastructure can contribute to the ecological transition.



Reopening of the Condé-Pommeroeul Canal and environmental compensation areas
(Photo credit: ©VNF Ph. Houzé)

● KEY PROJECTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The Seine-Scheldt network marks a significant step forward in the development of European inland waterway infrastructure. Several key projects have been completed or are currently underway, demonstrating the ambition and effectiveness of this cross-border network.

The **modernisation of the River Lys corridor in Flanders** for CEMT Class Vb vessels is continuing. Following the completion of the new lock complex at Sint-Baafs-Vijve, work on the downstream riverbanks is progressing rapidly. In Kuurne, the road bridge has been raised to allow the passage of vessels carrying three layers of containers. The permit for the renovation of the Wevelgem-Lauwe bridge, currently the lowest bridge on the Lys, has been obtained and works began in August 2026.

To improve industrial access along the Roeselare-Leie Canal, studies have been launched to renovate quays and expand the lock complex at Ooigem with a new lock.



The new banks of the River Lys at Zulte (Photo credit: © De Vlaamse Waterweg nv)

The **modernisation of the Obourg lock complex** on the large-gauge Centre Canal in Wallonia is a key project for the Seine-Scheldt network. The construction of a second lock, 149 metres long and 12.5 metres wide, will notably remove a bottleneck between the Obourg economic area and France.



Modernisation of the Obourg lock complex on the Centre Canal, Wallonia (Photo credit: © SPW)

Another notable development is the reopening of the **Condé-Pommeroeul Canal**, which had been closed to navigation since 1992. The widening, redevelopment and reopening to navigation in July 2024 of this 11 km cross-border section between northern France and the Walloon backbone enables 3,000-tonne vessels to save half a day of navigation by avoiding a 30 km detour via the Nimy-Blaton-Péronnes Canal.

The extension of the lock at **Quesnoy-sur-Deûle** (Nord-Pas-de-Calais) to 144 metres, completed at the end of 2025, has harmonised the length of all locks along the Deûle-Lys corridor, making it possible to accommodate increasing inland waterway traffic along this large-gauge route.



Extension of the Quesnoy-sur-Deûle lock in 2025 (Photo credit: © INGENO)

Within the Seine basin, works on the **Poses-Amfreville barrage** have been completed after five years of construction. The renovation of this major structure within the Seine waterway network will ensure its long-term sustainability and improve the reliability of its operation, which is essential both for navigation on the lower Seine and for the river's ecosystem and riverbanks.



The new Poses footbridge (Photo credit: © VNF)

Finally, the **Canal Seine-Nord Europe** has reached new milestones through the progress of several major operations. In the Oise department, construction of the Montmacq-Cambronne-lès-Ribécourt lock is continuing, while excavation works have begun along the 18 kilometres of the first TOARC section (Earthworks, Engineering Structures and Transport Link Reinstatement). In the Somme department, preparatory works for the construction of the future Canal Bridge have started. In Nord-Pas-de-Calais, the launch of works on the Oisy-le-Verger lock in June 2026 marked the start of canal construction works in this area. From 2027 onwards, the award of contracts for the locks, together with the five TOARC contracts between the Oise and Nord departments, will enable works to commence along the entire route of the project.



The Somme Canal Bridge (Photo credit: © Canaleau Lavigne Chéron Architectes)



Construction site of the Montmacq-Cambronne-lès-Ribécourt lock in the Oise (Photo credit: © SCSNE – Odile and Jean-Christophe Hecquet)

These achievements and ongoing projects illustrate the scale and complexity of the Seine-Scheldt network, an ambitious project shaping the future of inland waterway transport in Europe.



The De Blauwersbrug cycling bridge in Menen, Flanders, inaugurated in August 2025 (Photo credit: © De Vlaamse Waterweg nv)

SEINE-SCHELDT,

SHAPING A SUSTAINABLE AND PROSPEROUS FUTURE

As the Seine-Scheldt network continues to develop, its next milestones and objectives are becoming increasingly clear:

- **In the short term**, the focus is on completing ongoing works and continuously improving existing infrastructure to optimise efficiency and sustainability.
- **In the medium term**, the objective is to strengthen the network's integration into the European economic and environmental landscape by increasing freight volumes and expanding waterway connections to enhance connectivity.

The Seine-Scheldt network is therefore far more than transport infrastructure: it is a visionary project embodying Europe's commitment to a sustainable and interconnected future. The ongoing efforts of all partners involved ensure not only the success of the project but also its significant contribution to a healthier environment and a stronger European economy.

A synergy of partners and funding bodies

The success of the Seine-Scheldt network is based on a unique synergy between a wide range of institutional and financial partners. Each stakeholder makes a specific contribution, whether through technical expertise, waterway management or financial support. This multidimensional collaboration between French, Belgian and European entities perfectly illustrates the effectiveness of transnational cooperation in delivering major infrastructure projects.

To address the strategic challenges facing the Seine-Scheldt network and implement the Execution Decision, several cross-border working groups have been established in recent months:

- A first group, dedicated to **alternative fuels**, is finalising a study aimed at defining a coordinated roadmap for the deployment of refuelling and recharging infrastructure across the network.
- A second group is conducting an assessment of **water availability and water management** across the network.
- In parallel, a study on **socio-economic impacts** is being carried out to identify future network stakeholders and associated economic development opportunities.
- A fourth group has developed **a harmonised network mapping system** incorporating, among other things, gauge data and the characteristics of the different sections.

STAKEHOLDERS OF THE SEINE-SCHELDT NETWORK

- The **Seine-Scheldt Intergovernmental Commission (IGC)**, the political governance body linking France, Flanders and Wallonia.
- The **Seine-Scheldt European Economic Interest Grouping** (Seine-Scheldt EEIG), a partnership body established on 26 March 2010 between the four inland waterway organisations in France and Belgium: Voies navigables de France (VNF), the Société du Canal Seine-Nord Europe (SCSNE), De Vlaamse Waterweg nv (DVW) and the Service public de Wallonie (SPW).
- **De Vlaamse Waterweg nv** (DVW), responsible for implementation of the network in Flanders.
- The **Service public de Wallonie** (SPW), responsible for implementation of the network in Wallonia.
- **Voies navigables de France** (VNF), responsible for implementation of the network within the Seine and Nord-Pas-de-Calais basins in France.
- The **Société du Canal Seine-Nord Europe** (SCSNE), responsible for construction of the Canal Seine-Nord Europe.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE SEINE-SCHELDT NETWORK

- The **European Union**, which has already granted €1.8 billion to the Seine-Scheldt network since 2007 through the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF).
- The **French Republic**.
- The **Walloon Region** and the **Flemish Region**.
- French local and regional authorities: the **Grand Est**, **Hauts-de-France**, **Île-de-France** and **Normandy** Regions, as well as departments and intermunicipal authorities.
- France's **water agencies**.

CONTACTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION



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