

RIVER CONTRACTS

A SUSTAINABLE AND COLLECTIVE WATER MANAGEMENT

River Contracts are an innovative methodology for water management as it is based on the active participation of local actors.

The first River Contract took place in France at the beginning of the 80's. From that moment, and due to the gained success, this method was soon to be expanded and adopted in the entire country. In fact, [more than 150 River Contracts are operative today in France](#), which cover approximately 10% of the national territory. This methodology is now also being implemented in other European countries and the EU supports these practices through different programmatic tools. In the European context, the experience of the River Contracts in the Walloon Region (Belgium) represents a reference point of these innovative methodologies, as it involves all of the interested local actors of the entire area.

A River Contract is an effective measure to recover, improve and preserve a river through concerted initiatives of all public administrations, water management services, companies, associations and all other organized territorial actors.

The River Contract action plan provides with an impact framework for: water quality improvement; river banks recovery, management and maintenance; floods prevention; management of water resources; management of water use according to the different end users (citizens, farmers, and entrepreneurs); environment and landscape protection and improvement; and information dissemination.

The action plan which is usually based on studies and scientific diagnosis realized by competent services is defined by a participative process of all the communities along the river. The Contract represents a formal act through which public and private actors as well as associations commit to carry out all those planned initiatives through technical, financial and operative assistance for the achievement of the overall planned river management objectives.

The experience ongoing in the Walloon Region (Belgium) is considered as a reference point because the strategy of the River Contract is applied to the entire regional territory, thereby creating a considerable positive impact on the local water and river management.



In the Walloon Region, 16 River Contract Management Committees were constituted to ensure a strong participation of local eco, cultural, and sports associations, as well as involving local authorities and government bodies. These associations promote the direct participation of all actors in the efforts for the river banks management and recovery, resources inventories, elimination of invasive plants, water cleansing and generally to all those initiatives foreseen in the Contract.

Through the [websites of the 16 River Contracts in Wallonia](#) it is possible to appreciate the common elements of these experiences, as well as the wide variety of initiatives that these River Contracts can generate according to the specific needs of each territory and also the type of support, creativity and innovation that stakeholders can commit to.

The website of the [Matarraña River Contract in Spain](#) clearly illustrates every step to follow in order to correctly implement these types of contracts and particularly: the promotion and planning phase; the Committee constitution and commissioning of activities phase; the development, implementation and monitoring of the results phase which can have a duration of 5-7 years. A technical secretariat is normally responsible for the executive coordination of the activities of all partners. The funding is generally provided by national and regional programs of relevant institutions and contract partners. Each River Contract capitalizes on other successful experiences by adapting the used methodologies to their socioeconomic, political and administrative contexts and needs.

An important point to emphasize is that the preparation phase of the River Contract implies the collection of all necessary technical information as well as conducting specific studies, analysis and diagnosis of the river basin conditions and problems it may be affected from. However, all technical aspects identified by the experts are discussed with local people who have an exhaustive perception and understanding of the territory. Focus groups, with the active participation of all local actors, are held in order to develop and agree upon a common vision, objectives and action plans for future implementation.

Another relevant aspect of this methodology is that the River Contracts, while ensuring the permanent, ecological and sustainable management of the river, could also play a fundamental role in solving water related conflicts.

To know more

[River Contract Ardeche - France](#)

[River Contract Arve – France](#)

[River Contract Haut Adour – France](#)

[River Contract Semois-Semoy – France - Belgium](#)

[River Contract Semois-Semoy Brochure](#)

[River Contract Amblève – Belgium](#)

[Guide to establish a River Contract-Wallonia](#)



[River Contracts Walloon Region - Belgium](#)

[River Contract Escaut-Lys – Belgium](#)

[Brochure Escaut-Lys - Belgium](#)

[River Contract Dyle Gette - Belgium](#)

[River Contract Gave de Pau Amont](#)

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[River Contract in Martinique](#)

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