

THE WATER AGENCIES
and French water policy

Liberté • Égalité • Fraternité
RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

Ministère de l'Écologie, du Développement durable et de l'Énergie

LES AGENCES DE L'EAU

ÉTABLISSEMENTS PUBLICS DU MINISTÈRE EN CHARGE DU DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLE

THE MEANS OF ACTION OF THE WATER AGENCIES FOR THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WATER

They are responsible for one or more river basins in order to implement French national water policies, which themselves come under European Union objectives.

In this way, the water agencies help achieve good water status :
- by contributing to the reduction of pollution from all sources,
- by protecting water resources and the aquatic environment.

In addition, water policy has been included in the broader context of sustainable development. The law of 30 December 2006 on water and aquatic environments thus specifies that the water agencies plan and implement the objectives of basin water management plans (SDAGE, French management plans of the Water Framework Directive) and foster the "well-balanced and efficient management of water resources and aquatic environments, drinking water supply, flow regulation and the sustainable development of economic activities".

This includes assignments of consensus-building, knowledge, assessment, solidarity and institutional cooperation, information and public education in order to support water policies.

Crucial players in the implementation of public water policy, organised in France around the principle of the concerted management of river basin districts, the water agencies fulfil their duties within the framework of multi-year action programmes.

THE ECONOMIC INSTRUMENTS

The fees received by water agencies come from :

- domestic pollution fees (residential users)
- authorities' sampling fees
- industrial sampling fees
- agricultural sampling fees
- industrial pollution fees
- agricultural pollution fees
- miscellaneous

To achieve sustainable water management, the water agencies have economic instruments at their disposal (fees and subsidies).

The fees of the water agencies, amounting to 2.2 billion euros a year, are environmental tax revenues levied on users (consumers and economic activities) in application of the principle of prevention and the principle of repairing damage to the environment. The fees are pooled on the basis of basin solidarity.

There are seven broad fee categories: fees for domestic or non-domestic water pollution, fees for modernising collection networks, fees for diffuse pollution, fees for water resource sampling, fees for obstruction of waterways, fees for protection of the aquatic environment, and fees for storage of water during periods of low water levels.

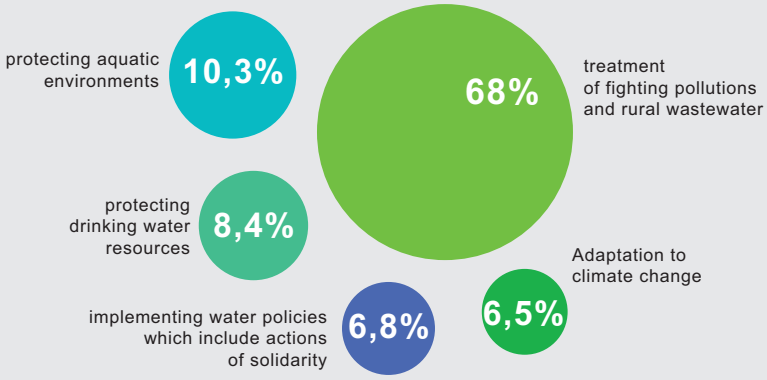
Fee bases are consistent between all regions, whereas rates are defined by law and set by the water agency management boards upon the assent of the basin committee.

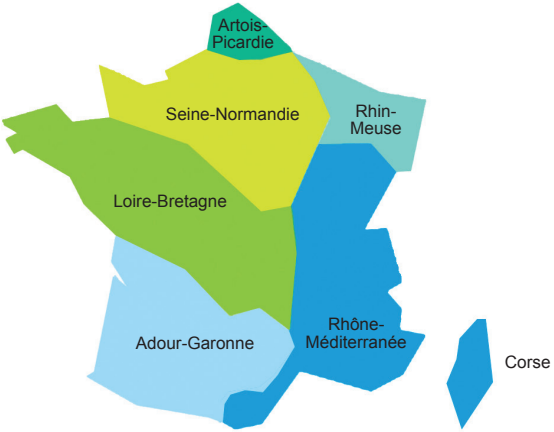
Most of the fees are received through the payment of water bills by residential users. Each resident contributes individually to this action for the common good and the environment, through the price of water. The water agency fees may be up to 20% of the cost of a cubic metre of water.

Thanks to the fees received, the water agencies provide financial support (subsidies and loans) to public entities and private individuals who carry out river basin actions or projects for the common good, with the goal of achieving the balanced management of water resources. For the period 2013-2018, the total amount of financial aid comes to 13,3 billion euros, which has mostly been allocated to the treatment and collection of urban and rural wastewater and to the protection of drinking water resources.

OF THE WATER AGENCIES

Breakdown of financial aid given by the water agencies 2013-2018





7 river basins in mainland France

5 overseas French basins :
Guadeloupe, Guyane française, Martinique, Réunion and Mayotte

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