



**Clean watercourses**  
for subsequent generations and  
a living environment  
in harmony with water

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2019





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## Strong partner for the Flemish Region and municipalities

Have you ever wondered what happens to the waste water after you wash up, take a shower or use the toilet? Before, it usually went straight into brooks and streams. Fortunately, things are different now. Aquafin collects the waste water from the municipalities and treats it so that it can be returned to nature. At the end of 2018, 84% of all domestic waste water in Flanders was connected to one of Aquafin's waste water treatment plants.

Every year, the Flemish Region assigns us a programme of projects for the further development and optimisation of the supra-municipal water treatment infrastructure necessary for this. Towns, cities and municipalities can also rely on us. At the end of 2018, 107 local authorities worked with Aquafin for their sewer management, either directly or via a partnership with water companies water-link or De Watergroep (Riopact). Our subsidiary Aquaplus applies our knowledge and expertise for industrial customers with their own water treatment facilities.

The expertise we possess around the water cycle also enables us to bring water into harmony with our living environment. Dealing with rainwater smartly helps to cope with periods of drought and reduce the risk of flooding. In this way, together with local policymakers, we can mitigate the impact of climate change.

Follow Aquafin NV on





## Aquafin in 2018

**1,143**  
employees



**1,762** pumping stations  
and storage settlement tanks\*



**318** waste water  
treatment plants\*



**107** municipalities  
as customers



**6,372 km**  
of pipes\*

\* Infrastructure managed on behalf of the Flemish Region as at 31 December 2018



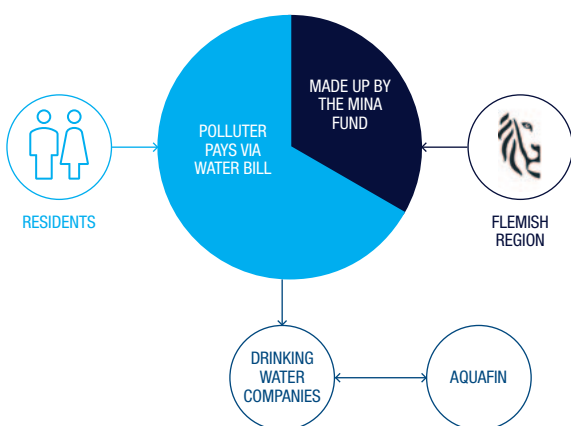
## Matchmaker between supralocal and local projects

From the coast to deep into Limburg, Aquafin operates literally all over Flanders. Not from a central control tower, but with local experts who know their area thoroughly. Neither watercourses nor sewers follow municipal borders. There are no physical transitions between the regional and municipal infrastructure for waste water and rainwater and there is plenty of interaction between them. For this reason, we work closely with all stakeholders such as local authorities, watercourse managers, sewer operators and so on. With their contribution and our expertise, we put the good water quality intended by the Water Framework Directive into practice and devise solutions for rainwater which transcend local boundaries.

Since we are familiar with the interests of both the Region and the municipalities, we aim to match investments on both levels in order to achieve the best possible return. This not only leads to more efficient planning, but also to cost savings.



### Dividing the Flemish treatment bill



### WHO PAYS THE BILL?

In Flanders, the water companies are responsible for treating the water they deliver to their customers. They enter into an agreement for this with Aquafin, which assumes the task of treatment for them. Aquafin invoices the water companies for the investment costs as well as the operating costs for the development and management of the regional treatment infrastructure. The water companies pay a part of Aquafin's invoice via a grant from the MINA fund, which is funded by general tax revenue. They pass on the remainder to consumers via water bills, according to the principle of 'the polluter pays'. Consumers also pay the contribution for the removal of waste water via the municipal sewers through their water bills. The municipality or its sewer operator must use this income to invest in its sewer infrastructure.



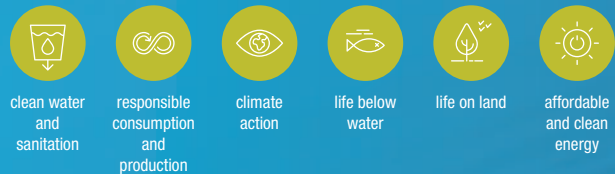
## Corporate Social Responsibility

Our mission and aim to work towards clean watercourses and a living environment in harmony with water already have great social value. But our approach to achieving these objectives also has to be as sustainable as possible. Based on our operating activities and with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as our compass, we have developed a vision of what corporate social responsibility means for Aquafin.

This vision is summed up in three major pillars: Act green, create opportunities and have a positive impact on our environment. Each pillar comprises a number of areas on which we intend to focus in the coming years. In addition, specific goals are set for each focus area, which we review annually. Since corporate social responsibility is integrated into our business processes, the actions which we undertook in this brochure last year follow directly from the theme to which they relate.



The United Nations sustainable development goals are incorporated in our vision of corporate social responsibility:

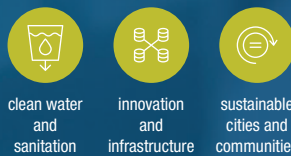


In the coming years, we will focus on these specific aspects:

## TO ACT GREEN

- immission-oriented treatment and transportation of wastewater
- greater biodiversity at our plants and in our projects
- refining and implementing our policy plans around energy and mobility
- applying circular thinking to our activities





## CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

- facilitating employees with regard to jobs that are changing in a dynamic environment
- to make Aquafin a “great place to work”

## POSITIVE IMPACT

- opening our doors to municipalities, partners, local residents, other companies, ...
- causing less nuisance to the neighbourhood of the infrastructure works that we carry out
- innovation as a driving force for global development
- contributing to projects in developing countries
- playing an active role in landscaping public spaces by incorporating the superstructure in sewerage projects. Using plenty of vegetation and water is key here.



# Visible in society

## What does the watercourse need?

Some watercourses are more vulnerable than others. In view of the Water Framework Directive, it is important to know what the actual watercourse needs in order to achieve good quality. For this reason, the Flemish Environment Agency has developed a model that calculates the maximum pollution load that can be discharged into each watercourse. Aquafin and the sanitation partners make substantial investments to reduce the pollution load entering the watercourse. We monitor the results of these efforts, paying particular attention to the phosphorus parameter, as this is most critical for water quality. The monitoring applies to treatment plants, overflows and the further development of the network, so that untreated waste water no longer enters the watercourse directly. These actions are designed to lead to a reduction in the phosphorus content discharged. In this way, they help speed up improvements in water quality.







## Improved water quality

When Aquafin was established in 1990, just 30% of domestic waste water was treated. The Flemish Region gave Aquafin the task of closing this large gap compared with neighbouring countries rapidly. So far, through Aquafin, Flanders has invested more than 3.9 billion euros in developing and improving the regional waste water treatment infrastructure. As a result, Aquafin currently treats around 84% of domestic waste water before it reaches a stream or river. Therefore, the quality of our watercourses has improved by leaps and bounds. However, major efforts are still required in order to achieve the “good quality” for which the Water Framework Directive aims in all areas - often going beyond water treatment. But some watercourses are already getting there.



**84%**  
of Flemish  
domestic waste  
water is treated  
by Aquafin.

## Nature revived by clean water

Due to the recovery of our watercourses, more and more species of wildlife are returning. In 2018, nature experts Frank Resslerer and Joeri Cortens sought out some really special creatures that depend on clean water for their survival. They were acting on behalf of Flemish nature conservation organisation Natuurpunt, and sought and found grass snakes, beavers, spoonbills, kingfishers and several species of fish. Want to know more about their adventures? Watch ‘Watermannen’ on Natuurpunt TV on YouTube.



# LIFE IS HARD

## Operation Perforation encourages Flemings to remove paving

Aquafin and the Flemish Public Spaces Info-Point (Infopunt Publieke Ruimte) launched Operation Perforation in 2018. Through this campaign, they called on local authorities, social purpose organisations, schools, neighbourhood committees and so on to tear up an area of paved surface and replace it with vegetation or permeable materials. Over 87 organisations entered a project to win the cash prize awarded by Aquafin to the best proposals. This financial boost awaited 11 organisations, including six schools. They will start carrying out their projects in 2019.

[www.operatieperforatie.be](http://www.operatieperforatie.be)



## Living environment in harmony with water

The consequences of climate change are becoming more and more evident. Extreme weather conditions such as heavy storms, floods, heatwaves and drought are already happening more often. 2018 was mostly characterised by a long period of drought. And when it rained locally, this took the form of brief but heavy downpours. So much water in a short time, combined with a high population density and extensive paved areas, inevitably leads to flooding. Water always seeks the easiest route.





The message is therefore to deal smartly with rainwater. The best option is to contain the rainwater and where possible allow it to soak into the soil. This can be slowed down if necessary by introducing more structure into the site. This means that rainwater can be collected perfectly to be used for applications that do not require mains water. Only in the latter instance would rainwater have to find its way to the sewer or drain.

We apply this methodology in the stormwater plans that Aquafin prepares for towns, cities and municipalities and seek solutions that offer added value for the environment. And, in the projects assigned to us by the Flemish Region, we also aim for designs with maximum consideration for allowing rainwater to soak away.





# Our expertise

## Developing a vision for the water chain

Where is there a chance of flooding with the existing infrastructure? What measures are needed in the public domain to resolve these and future bottlenecks? What can be encouraged in the private domain?

How can we prevent untreated waste water from entering a fragile stream? What is the interaction between watercourses, sewers and other water infrastructure?

With the vision we are developing across the entire water chain, we can make optimum use of our own infrastructure while also providing towns, cities and municipalities with sound advice by preparing stormwater plans.



### TOTAL CONCEPTS FOR WATER

At the request of municipalities, property developers or large land owners, Aquafin develops innovative concepts aimed at sustainable use of water now and in the future. We seek the most efficient solutions for waste water and focus on recycling and buffering of rainwater. The measures we propose for this always have a high natural and experience value.

Due to our aim to bring our living environment into balance with water, we also actively seek new partnerships in order to realise these total concepts.



### Sustainable water plan for zoo

ZOO Planckendaal in Muizen near Mechelen is working on a master plan for its future development. Water management plays a major role in this. Aquafin is devising a full water study with analysis of different scenarios for waste water and possibilities for making optimal use of rainwater. The solutions we devise are not just sustainable, they also have to look good and raise the natural value of the zoo.





## Project management

Every year, the Flemish Region assigns to Aquafin new projects for the further development and optimisation of the waste water treatment infrastructure. Aquafin manages each project right through from the feasibility phase to implementation, with the necessary respect for the environment.

In 2018, we put 170 million euros worth of projects for the Flemish Region out to tender and a further 60 million euros worth of sewerage projects for our municipal customers. This puts us among the largest clients for infrastructure works in Flanders.

To date, Aquafin has delivered almost 4 billion euros worth of projects for the Flemish Region. Whether we are connecting extra pollution load to a waste water treatment plant or disconnecting a stream from the sewer network, all of the projects we carry out for the Region have the goal of improving the water quality of streams and rivers in Flanders.

### LESS DISRUPTION, MORE INFORMATION

Sewage works tend to be disruptive, especially if they are carried out in the centre of a village or on a busy road. As the main contractor, Aquafin aims to keep the disruption for the surrounding area to a minimum. Therefore, from the design phase of a project onwards, we take into account the local situation. We hold discussions with utility companies at an early stage for them to work on their mains in the pavement prior to the sewage works.

The contractors who carry out the work for us have to apply Less Disruption measures from our specifications on site. We also pay a great deal of attention to accurate and timely information about the works for local residents and business owners.





### A high standard of work

We expect the consultants and contractors who work for us to meet our standards in terms of quality, safety and minimal disruption to the neighbourhood. For this reason, together with the sector, we have designed a framework whereby, apart from price, our satisfaction as a client is also a factor when selecting a contractor. Through this, we intend to guarantee a high standard of work for all of our sites. This new approach was applied for the first time to several new projects in 2018.

We want to build a relationship with all of our technical partners in which we work together to achieve a high-quality end result. Out of respect for this good collaboration, last year, we presented a 'partnership award' for the first time, in addition to the 'Less Disruption' award for contractors and the Quality Award for engineering offices which we have already presented annually for much longer.



### ADVICE FOR PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS

Where we are installing a separated sewer system, homeowners have to disconnect the rainwater falling on their plot from the sewer system. A disconnection expert from Aquafin can help them identify their existing drains and the best way to separate waste water and rainwater. We also hand out tips for how to do more with rainwater.

Those living in a remote location who cannot connect to a public sewer are responsible for treating the waste water from the home themselves. Here, installation of an individual sewage treatment system is mandatory. Aquafin can install and maintain individual systems on behalf of the municipality.



Any questions about Aquafin works?  
Our Contact Centre is there to help!



# 03 450 45 45

(on working days from 8am to 7pm)



[contact@aquafin.be](mailto:contact@aquafin.be)





## Asset management for infrastructure

The infrastructure we build and manage has to be reliable and do exactly what it is designed to do. Aquafin pursues a certified asset management strategy focussed on a maximum lifespan for our assets and the management of risks. We have long-term maintenance plans for our main assets to ensure good operation throughout the lifecycle. Thanks to continuous improvement and knowledge development, we can also respond to a rapidly evolving and complex environment.





## UNDERGROUND CAPITAL

A well-maintained sewer should normally last for 75 years. That is a long time, and fortunate as well, since in Flanders we have quite some capital underground. For municipal and supra-municipal infrastructure combined, we make almost 30 billion euros worth of investments for different generations. Naturally, we expect the best possible return on these investments.

## MAKING SMART USE OF RESOURCES

To keep the maintenance of the infrastructure affordable while also keeping the risks under control, Aquafin follows a risk profile-based methodology. For each sewer, we determine the consequences of a potential failure – ecologically, economically and socially. The sewers with the greatest criticality are inspected more often than others. If damage is found during an inspection, their repair is prioritised. We use state-of-the-art techniques adjusted to circumstances. This ensures that we target the available resources and eliminate the most important risks.



### **ISO55001: guarantee of reliable asset management**

In 2018, Aquafin achieved ISO55001 certification for the second time for the way in which it manages its assets. The certificate is valid for three years and confirms that the company manages its services, costs, opportunities and risks systematically, throughout the lifecycle of the assets. Apart from being a quality label, for Aquafin it is primarily also a tool for continuous improvement.







### Ambitious energy goals

Aquafin is one of the major consumers of energy in Flanders. We set ourselves the goal of optimising our consumption as well as consuming 1% less energy each year in relative terms. The power we buy comes 100% from renewable energy. On the one hand, we generate our own green electricity through the digestion of sludge, a by-product of water treatment. The organic fraction of the sludge is partially broken down and converted into biogas. In 2018, for the first time, we generated over 14 million kWh of green electricity in this way. However, the sites of some of our plants are also perfectly suited to solar panels. At the start of 2019, our first solar farm covering over 6,500 m<sup>2</sup> was installed at the Harelbeke treatment plant. This generates 820,000 kWh per year, or 20% of annual consumption on the site. Solar panels will also be installed in Ostend in 2019. Here, we also connect to the Beauvent heating grid, which recovers the residual heat from waste incineration.

### ENERGY-EFFICIENT TREATMENT

The treatment process, especially the step in which the pollution load is removed biologically, uses a lot of energy. Aquafin is therefore constantly looking for technology to reduce power consumption. For this reason, we are systematically replacing the aeration technology in our plants with more energy-efficient technology.



**230** million euros  
worth of new projects were assigned to Aquafin by the Flemish Region in 2018





## Transporting and treating waste water

Every day, Aquafin treats the domestic waste water of about 5 million Flemings. Via the municipal sewers, it goes into large collector sewers which transport it to a waste water treatment plant. The plant's capacity is directly related to the size of the connected treatment area. We mostly build small-scale sewer works today which are well-integrated in the surroundings. We have in-house knowledge on the wide range of treatment systems installed in Flanders.

After a mechanical and biological treatment process, the waste water is clean enough not to disturb the life in the watercourse.

The water that ends up in a river or stream via our waste water treatment plants has to comply with the standards set for 5 parameters: BOD (biochemical oxygen demand), COD (chemical oxygen demand), suspended solids, nitrogen and phosphorus. These standards set the upper limit for the concentration of the parameters in the treated waste water as well as a removal percentage through the treatment process.

Our treatment plants are not designed to remove microplastics (particles smaller than 0.5 mm). Likewise, other micropollutants like medicine residues are not entirely removed in classical wastewater treatment plants. Technically this is entirely possible, but other factors like investment costs weigh in.



### What can you flush?

Urine and faeces, dry toilet paper, food wastes that can pass through a sink strainer and non-corrosive cleaning agents can go into the sewer. Everything else should go in the bin or recycling containers.



**99%**  
of our treatment  
plants met all  
standards in 2018





### Oases of biodiversity

We have already been maintaining the vegetation in the grounds of our waste water treatment plants and pumping stations in an ecologically friendly way for a long time. For more than ten years, we have used no pesticides and only planted native varieties. In several locations, we already had flower meadows, fruit trees and amphibian pools. With the signing of the Green Deal for biodiversity on business sites in 2018, we are taking a step further. We are committed to take steps to increase biodiversity on a further 400 hectares by the end of 2021. Amongst other steps, this involves installing nesting boxes, bee hotels and hives, phased mowing and the creation of extra flower meadows, dead hedges and the planting of fruit trees.









## Cost-efficient finance

All of the projects we carry out for the Flemish Region are also financed by us. Hence the “fin” in Aquafin. Thus, in order to be able to carry out the projects, we have to constantly go to the financial market. While a project is in progress, we take out short-term loans. As soon as it is delivered to the Region, it comes under long-term finance. The water companies then reimburse Aquafin for the project, spread over 15 or 30 years.

Thanks to an excellent credit rating and a diversified investment portfolio, Aquafin soon manages to obtain finance for all of its projects. We find that investors increasingly want to invest in projects offering added value for the environment and society. Aquafin capitalises on this trend and has issued several green bonds in the past.



### Nomination for ‘Best Finance Team of the Year’

At the start of 2019, Aquafin’s Finance team was nominated by Financial Media for the ‘Best Finance Team of the Year 2019’ award. The jury was full of admiration for how we are diversifying our forms of finance in order to attract a diverse range of investors and meet our constantly growing requirements for finance.







# Beyond the projects we carry out for the Flemish Region

Els Roelof, deputy mayor  
municipality of Oostkamp

*“We receive advice from Aquafin, an opinion is never imposed on us. As a municipality, we decide for ourselves.”*



**107**  
municipalities  
as customers



## For towns, cities and municipalities

In Flanders, local authorities are responsible for collecting and removing domestic waste water from households in municipal sewers, where Aquafin's collector sewers take over. Using the knowledge and experience we gain from the projects we carry out for the Flemish Region, we can perfectly support them. Following a call for tenders, towns, cities and municipalities can appoint Aquafin to manage their sewer system in the form of a concession or via a partnership between Aquafin and the water companies water-link or De Watergroep (Riopact). A municipality can also remain the sewer operator itself and only entrust truly specialist work to Aquafin. In any case, we work closely with local policymakers and the municipality has the last word.

At the end of 2018, 107 municipalities were customers of Aquafin. Each of them is supported by a multidisciplinary team of experts who are familiar with the region.

### WORKING TOGETHER FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Flanders still has some major challenges ahead in the coming years. The EU requires all water systems to be in 'good condition' by 2027. Although the regional treatment infrastructure is almost fully developed, many missing links need to be put in place at local level for a further improvement in water quality. Most of the effort concerning the sewer infrastructure therefore has to come from towns, cities and municipalities.

Aquafin can help the local authorities use the revenue from municipal sanitation charges efficiently for maximum effect. Firstly, we can align local and supralocal interests more closely so as to avoid duplicated expenditure. Secondly, the municipality keeps its infrastructure in good condition through targeted investment in maintenance via Aquafin's asset management plan. With even a limited annual budget, they can keep the greatest risks under control.

Climate change also holds some major challenges for towns, cities and municipalities, such as flooding or water shortages, heat stress and a loss of biodiversity.

With a stormwater plan, Aquafin offers the municipality a vision for how it can adapt in order to mitigate the consequences of climate change. This vision is geared to the specific requirements and situation of the municipality, without shifting the problem to a neighbouring municipality.



## Solutions for industry

As a subsidiary, Aquaplus offers the knowledge and expertise of Aquafin to Belgian companies with their own water treatment facilities. Aquaplus can count among its customers several major companies from the food and drink sector, the chemical sector and the pharmaceutical sector. Projects vary and relate to all aspects of the water treatment cycle.

 [www.aquaplus.be](http://www.aquaplus.be)

  
**Aquaplus**

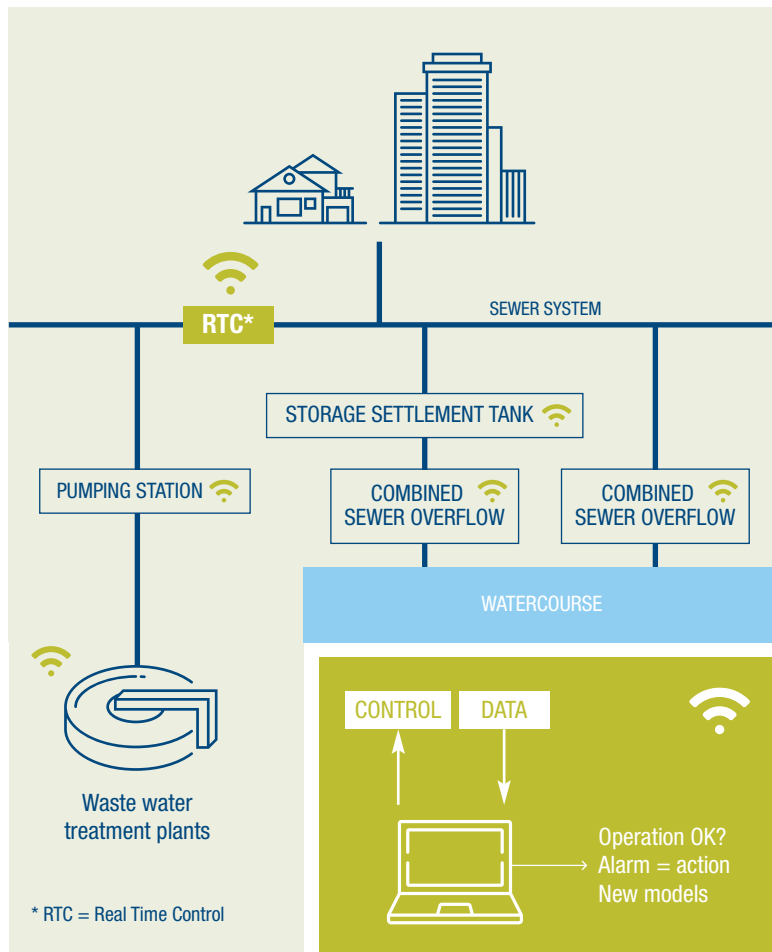


# Investing in innovation


Along with climate change, scarcity of natural resources and the continuing quest for renewable energy are without a doubt among the greatest challenges of the 21st century. Through research and innovation, Aquafin helps find sustainable solutions which we can offer via our activities.

## Smart sewers

The internet of things is also finding its way to the sewers. By installing all kinds of meters and sensors, we collect a vast amount of information about the operation of the infrastructure. This helps us with cost-efficient maintenance but also enables us to act quickly by generating alerts or even via automatic controls. Valves and gates in a sewer system controlled by an algorithm for closing or opening depending on the water flow, ensure, for example, that the capacity in the system is used to the maximum. This means that overflows will be slower to come into operation and less untreated waste water will end up in nature. Aquafin has already introduced this system in several water treatment areas. We intend to roll out this technology further in future. This can offer a perfect alternative to building expensive above-ground storage basins. However, for this, both the local and the supralocal infrastructure need to be able to be controlled in a smart way. There is actually no physical barrier between them.







Marjolein Weemaes,  
R&D manager

*"Removed phosphorus  
and nitrogen are converted  
into struvite."*

## Heat and energy from sewage

The waste water arriving at a waste water treatment plant still has some residual heat after a shower or a washing machine cycle. On average, it is 10°C warmer than surface water. Using a heat pump, this residual energy can be used to heat the water in a heating grid to around 60°C. This prevents a great deal of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Aquafin is a partner in a project for a new neighbourhood to be developed in Antwerp where the residual heat from the nearby treatment plant will be used for a heating grid.

The treatment process itself offers further possibilities for generating green energy. Aquafin has already been producing biogas from the digestion of sewage sludge for many years. This biogas has always been converted into energy which we use instead of power from the grid in the actual plant. What is new is that we are now also seeking an alternative to produce biomethane from the biogas, partly by extracting carbon dioxide. Biomethane can be used as a fuel for vehicles or be injected into the natural gas grid.

The sludge that is not digested and is left after digestion is incinerated or dried to form pellets with a high calorific value. The cement industry uses our pellets as a co-fuel in cement furnaces, replacing fossil fuels. The incinerator ash from this also goes into the cement product.

## Water treatment as a recycling process

What we flush down the toilet contains useful raw materials that can be recovered in the treatment process. For instance, urine is rich in the mineral phosphorus, natural reserves of which are under severe threat. Aquafin participates in international research to find a cost-efficient way of recovering phosphorus via the treatment process. At our treatment plant in Leuven, we operate a system for extracting struvite from the sewage sludge. This mineral is formed by the crystallisation of phosphorus. OVAM has awarded us a raw materials certificate for this. The struvite produced can then be used for the production of artificial fertilisers. We are currently looking for partnerships for this.

The organic matter in waste water also has potential for creating raw materials. For instance, it is possible to ferment domestic waste water and water treatment sludge to form volatile fatty acids. These are then used to produce bioplastic, omega 3 fatty acids for the food industry and microbial oils. Aquafin participates in the European research project 'Volatile' around this theme.

The toilet paper we flush away leaves its trace in water treatment too. The cellulose left behind makes a perfect ingredient for insulation materials and bioplastic. We are investigating possible outlets for the cellulose we recover using a test set-up.





Danny Baeten, Business Development  
& Innovation manager

*“Treated waste water has  
a constant quality and  
is always available.”*

## Water reuse

The treated waste water itself can also be reused. As a result of the long period of drought in 2018, it was widely considered as an alternative to expensive drinking water in certain applications. In an emergency, farmers can collect it from several of our plants to help irrigate their fields. Businesses can sign an agreement with Aquafin for the purchase of effluent that is of sufficient quality to be discharged into surface water. They can then treat it further themselves to any quality, even to drinking water quality. Some businesses systematically purchase treated waste water for use in the production process or as cleaning water. Water company IWVA in Koksijde uses our effluent as a basis to turn it back into drinking water. In conjunction with De Watergroep, Aquafin has even had a beer brewed from it. Rond’O not only uses treated waste water as a basis, the chamomile added to it has also been grown using recovered phosphorus.



### Circular economy at micro level

The Kruitfabriek is a former gunpowder factory in Vilvoorde which now houses several small businesses. Concerts are also held there on a regular basis. Property developer Matexi uses this site as a 'Living Lab' for trying out new concepts with a view to applying them in its housing projects. Aquafin has facilities for treating waste water from washbasins and kitchens on site and for recovering phosphorus and nitrogen from urine. The treated waste water is re-used in the Kruitfabriek itself, partly as rinse water at a bicycle repair shop. The recovered phosphorus and nitrogen are converted into struvite, which is used as a fertiliser for the plants in the 'Kruittuin' gardens. As a visitor to the Kruitfabriek, you can take a glimpse behind the scenes at this fine example of the circular economy on a small scale.

Flemish Environment Minister Koen Van den Heuvel officially started up the facility in March 2019.





# Working with and for people

Anyone who works for Aquafin helps to build a future in which generations to come will enjoy clean surface water and an environment with a valued role for water. For many employees, that is one of the main reasons for choosing Aquafin as an employer.

## Aquafin as an employer

The world around us is changing faster and faster. Digitalisation and new challenges require flexibility and are shifting the focus in jobs. Aquafin makes sure that its employees are prepared for this and offers them maximum opportunities for development. This involves giving them the necessary tools to shape their careers for themselves.

Besides the fascinating, often technically challenging jobs and the large degree of autonomy, employees of Aquafin appreciate the efforts the company makes to achieve a good work-life balance. Satellite offices and flexible workplaces reduce traffic stress and flexible working hours make it a bit easier to combine work with family life.

Aquafin offers maximum opportunities for development. The Aquafin Academy immerses new technical employees in all aspects of waste water treatment.

**>8,000**  
training days in 2018

**125**  
staff mutations  
in 2018







## Safe working environment

No one who works for Aquafin, whether they are an employee or a contractor, should suffer injury as a result. Rules about protective equipment, procedures and manuals provide guidance for carrying out activities safely. But safety actually begins much earlier than that. Even before work starts, the possible risks need to be considered. If it cannot be done safely, everyone has the right to stop working, or tell others to do so. Thinking and acting safely should be a reflex, for our technical partners too.

In 2018  
we said STOP  
**250**  
times in an  
unsafe situation



## Focus on mobility

Through a variety of initiatives, we want to contribute to smoother mobility. Aquafin has joined the 'Lean and Green – personal mobility' programme under which a number of specific actions are taken. To limit the number of journeys, for example, we use videoconferencing and digital tools. In addition, we launched a successful bicycle leasing scheme for all employees in 2018. By the end of the year, over 250 employees had already joined. They lease any type of bicycle for a three-year period at a preferential rate. The only condition is that they must cycle to work at least 20% of the time each year. In addition, they receive a bicycle allowance for kilometres cycled, which the company already granted. The bicycle leasing scheme is not only designed to make commuting less motorised, it also encourages more exercise.







### Clean water for everyone

Strictly speaking, Aquafin only operates in Flanders. However, water quality and using water sustainably further afield are also close to our hearts. For this reason, we support projects locally and in developing countries which are committed to this. In development projects, this often also concerns access to clean drinking water. Besides a financial contribution, Aquafin also supplies knowledge and expertise for these projects. In this way, employees are given the opportunity to combine their concern for the environment with their social engagement. In 2018, several colleagues devoted a total of nearly 500 hours of their free time to development projects supported by Aquafin.



## Connection with the outside world

### OUR DOORS ARE OPEN

Transparency towards and interaction with the world around us are important to us. For this reason around 20 of our waste water treatment plants are equipped to receive groups for tours. Each year, we also invite local residents from around several new or renovated treatment plants to come and see what happens to their waste water.

Since 2018, anyone looking for a place to work or study can go to Aquafin's head office. We have joined the Bar d'Office co-working network and, in the lead-up to exams, are a pop-up study place for students signed up to Study360, an initiative of Antwerp's Gate15.

© GATE15-Luc Roymans






### Rolling up our sleeves in Kenya

For the second year in a row, six Aquafin colleagues travelled together to Kenya with non-profit organisation Kitanda. At three sites of the Ebenezer Life Centre, which takes care of orphaned children and widows, they helped to install and repair infrastructure for drinking and waste water. They also arranged for the collection of rainwater to be used for irrigation. Thanks to this project, hundreds of children can go to school and live in a healthy environment and enjoy a healthy hot meal every day.







Aquafin employees are  
**Skilled**  
**Empathetic**  
**Environmentally driven**  
**Uniting**  
**Innovative**  
**Enterprising**

## **Want to know more about Aquafin?**

Request our brochures from [info@aquafin.be](mailto:info@aquafin.be) or download them from [www.aquafin.be](http://www.aquafin.be)

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### **Credits**

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The figures in this brochure relate to 2018.





# Our sustainability goals

**ACT GREEN**  
**CREATE OPPORTUNITIES**  
**POSITIVE IMPACT**



## ACT GREEN



clean water  
and  
sanitation



life below  
water

### Immission-oriented treatment and transport of waste water

**Goal:** the total phosphorus content reaching bodies of water on which Aquafin has an impact, should be reduced to 644,186 kg Pt. by 2027

**Current status:** 1,115,936 kg Pt in 2018

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life on  
land

### Greater biodiversity at our plants and in our projects

**Goal:** step up efforts towards biodiversity over a further 400 ha (Green Deal biodiversity companies) by 2021

**Current status:** ecological grounds management in specifications, expansion of number of flower meadows, nesting boxes, bee hotels, etc.

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#### Energy policy – phasing out consumption of fossil fuels

**Goal:** to totally phase out the use of gas and fuel oil by 2030

**Current status:** 4,013 MWh in 2018

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#### Energy policy – reducing energy consumption of WWTPs compared with model consumption

**Goal:** -1% every year compared with model consumption

**Current status:** 215,000 MWh in 2018, -4%

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#### Mobility policy – 20% less CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per FTE by 2021

**Goal:** 2,282 kg CO<sub>2</sub> per FTE

**Current status:** 2.678 kg CO<sub>2</sub> per FTE in 2018

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affordable  
and clean  
energy

#### Energy policy – increase energy generation

**Goal:** further increase each year by digesting more sludge and installing solar panels

**Current status:** 14 million kWh in 2018

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responsible  
consumption  
and production

#### Apply circular thinking in the purchasing process

**Goal:** to apply Green Deal circular purchasing to two accounts and refine the CSR component in all purchasing accounts. To apply Green Deal circular construction to the remodeling of the head office.

**Current status:** CSR-based component in all purchasing accounts (UN Global Compact principles)



# CREATE OPPORTUNITIES



decent work  
and economic  
growth

Facilitate employees in view of changing jobs and a constantly changing environment

**Goal:** to give our employees every opportunity to do meaningful and motivating work, today and in the future. We also facilitate them to grasp these opportunities.

**Current status:** launch of training programmes and change path around 'continuous feedback'

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reduced  
inequalities

Aquafin is an attractive employer

**Goal:** to increase diversity in our workforce

**Current status:** there is a low inflow of employees from an ethnic minority background

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decent work  
and economic  
growth

Aquafin is an attractive employer

**Goal:** to increase knowledge of water treatment externally and introduce jobseekers to Aquafin as an employee sooner

**Current status:** plans for the start-up of dual learning







## POSITIVE IMPACT



partnerships for  
the goals

### Open our doors to outsiders

**Goal:** growing participation in initiatives in which Aquafin participates (co-working, Study360, etc.) and to launch new initiatives

**Current status:** in 2018 3 Bar d'Office contracts and 987 check-ins for Study360

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### Contribute to development projects

**Goal:** take up the available amount of 100,000 euros with projects that are also relevant to Aquafin by 2021

**Current status:** 57,500 euros in 2018

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peace, justice and  
strong institutions

### Less disruption for the neighbourhood during our works

**Goal:** accurate and complete information about our sites on the website, optimisation of feedback from citizens and business owners

**Current status:** information about our works had a 15% margin of error at the end of 2018

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innovation and  
infrastructure

### Innovation as a driver of global development

**Goal:** to convert at least three innovative ideas into a Minimum Viable Product each year

**Current status:** start-up phase

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sustainable cities and  
communities

### Play a proactive role in landscaping public spaces through a superstructure with plenty of greenery and water

**Goal:** practical implementation of stormwater plans for municipalities

**Current status:** Southern flank Overijse in 2018