

Adapting to climate change in the transboundary site of the low Scarpe and Escaut valleys

VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT AND ADAPTATION PLAN SUMMARY

CONTEXT

The [Scarpe Escaut Regional Nature Park](#) and [the Plaines de l'Escaut Nature Park](#) are jointly involved in the [LIFE Natur'Adapt](#) study to study the vulnerability of the wetland area of the "low Scarpe and Escaut valleys" to climate change. This cross-border perimeter shares common characteristics based on the presence of water, a dense hydraulic network and a diversity of wetlands (meadows, forests, ponds, etc.). This wetland character provides a wealth of flora and fauna recognised by the "nature park" label and by the double Ramsar label for part of the cross-border territory.

VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT

Present and expected climatic changes show a global drying up and a high vulnerability of these wetlands with a strong risk of modification of the ecological richness of the territory. These climatic pressures will also influence the economic and social balance due to changes in practices and uses in the area, which will in turn have an impact on the natural environments and on the ecosystem services provided.

Within the framework of this study, a dual approach to the vulnerability of natural wetlands is proposed: an approach focused on the vulnerability of the emblematic species of the territory's wetlands and an analysis of the vulnerability of the ecosystem services provided by this type of environment.

This dual approach allows wetland managers and stakeholders to realise the expected losses and to implement management measures to maintain wetlands and their associated features. In addition to the implementation of specific and adaptive management measures, this analysis raises questions about historical and current practices that need to be re-examined in the light of climate change. Indeed, the reduction of wetlands

in the area is primarily due to intensive practices and the fragmentation of a densely populated area where many activities take place.

In addition to **the vulnerability of heritage species, the study shows a modification of ecosystem services.** While some services will tend to increase, other services considered essential for the territory will decrease significantly (preservation of water resources in quantity and quality, flood control, carbon capture, erosion, etc.) and raises questions about the development choices to be made in the coming decades and the need to strengthen cross-border cooperation.

ADAPTATION PLAN

The diagnosis of vulnerability carried out in the study area shows a progressive drying up of the wetlands resulting in:

- ➔ **The remarkable biodiversity of the wetlands** of the low valleys of the Scarpe and the Escaut is becoming scarcer. This vulnerability calls into question the territory's specificity, the risk of trivialisation and the maintenance of its recognition as a "Park" territory and the Ramsar label.
- ➔ **A change in the ecosystem services provided by wetlands**, including a decrease in services recognised as essential. Development choices will thus have a particular impact on the maintenance or prioritisation of particular ecosystem services.

If climate change accentuates a process of environmental degradation, it is still necessary and relevant to reflect on the methods of use and management of the territory and to question certain practices currently in use.

The proposed adaptation plan aims to maintain the wetlands of the perimeter by targeting a series of issues and objectives to be integrated into the reflections of the Parks' charter revision.

Several steps are needed to work on this issue:

- **Raising awareness and communicating** the study and the results and consequences for the territory,
- **Taking account of the climate change issue** in management and framework documents,
- **Preserving and restoring** wetlands,
- **Maintaining water resources** and restoring natural river dynamics,
- **Raising awareness about access to water resources** and the need to share them,
- **Promoting a sectoral approach** to changes in practices and management arrangements,
- **Using the European Grouping for Cross-Border Cooperation** as a tool for governance and coordination of specific measures.

**ENTIRE DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE
HERE (FR)**

[Vulnerability assessment \[FR\]](#)

[Adaptation plan \[FR\]](#)



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