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Evolution in water management at the level of a River Basin in Seine-Normandie - France

Three main steps mark out the evolution in water management in France. A new water law materialize each of them.

1. **Adopted in 1964, the first French water law** divides the national territory into 6 major catchment areas. Each one has:
 - a basin committee, which is really a water parliament that brings together all concerned water users in order to establish 5 year management plans and to undertake projects thanks to incentives and subsidies,
 - a water agency, which is the executive branch of the basin committee.

The tool implemented by this law in order to prevent water pollution and improve water quality for human uses is a financial mechanism based upon the “polluter - pays principle”, reinforced by the on-going “consumer-pays” principle & mechanism. These systems/devices progressively made the agencies become the first organisations to subsidize water works in France: out of some 20 billions euros spent on new infrastructures in the nineties, about 10 billions (50%) came from the agencies.

2. **The second step was the water law published in 1992.** Its first article asserts that water is part of a common national heritage and that it is in the general interest to protect it, use it optimally...

Decision makers shall take into account the protection of all aquatic ecosystems and not only the users' satisfaction.

The new tool to ensure this policy is the water management master plan (S.D.A.G.E.) drawn up in each basin by the basin committees and adopted by the law.

3. **The third and last step is the European Water Framework Directive** came into effect **in 2000** and is going to be transposed into domestic law in 2003. This text assigns to all types of water an environmental objective: good status by the year 2015.

It gives an international-wide ambition to the former river basin management.

Furthermore the WFD calls for an active involvement of the public, in particular in the production, review and updating of the River Basin Management Plans.

The third French Water Law will include three main points: **Public participation. All types of water are concerned. Outputs based water policy.**