**Report of the European Court of Auditors of 16 June 2020**

**“EU transport infrastructure: speeding up the implementation of megaprojects to generate the network effect within the planned lead times”**

The European Court of Auditors published a report on 16 June 2020 entitled “EU transport infrastructure: speeding up the implementation of megaprojects to generate the network effect within the planned lead times”. Its purpose is to assess the European Commission's supervision of 8 European transport megaprojects co-financed by the EU, one of which is the Seine-Scheldt link.

As a result, the court noted a number of good practices in the implementation of the Seine-Scheldt link. In particular, it underlined the quality of the international cooperation underpinning the project. This is made up of an integrated governance revolving around the following two bodies:

* The intergovernmental commission (IGC) which brings together France, Flanders and Wallonia and sets the main guidelines for cooperation;
* The Seine-Scheldt European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG) in charge of implementing cooperation, composed of De Vlaamse Waterweg, the Public Service of Wallonia, the Société du Canal Seine-Nord Europe and Voies Navigables de France.

The European Commission is associated with these two bodies through its regular participation in their meetings. It has also been a member of the supervisory board of the Société du Canal Seine-Nord Europe since 2017.

In particular, thanks to the strong international cooperation, a virtuous practice was observed by the auditors regarding the development works of the Lys Mitoyenne for which each partner can conduct works and manage projects in the regions of the other players thanks to an international agreement signed by Wallonia, Flanders and France.

The court also pointed out the good integration of the Seine-Scheldt stakeholders who were well informed, able to contribute and enhanced the process. The Grand Chantier process for the Seine-Nord Europe Canal and the complex projects procedure for the Bossuit-Kortrijk canal were accordingly mentioned as examples.

Regarding the Seine-Scheldt link, the court lamented a 199% increase in the costs for the Seine-Nord Europe Canal. However, this analysis is based on a 1993 estimate (see page 76), for which the feasibility of the structure was not yet validated and whose specifications (layout and template) were very different from those of the current project. If the court had taken as a point of comparison the costing at the time of the declaration of public utility (2006) on the basis of the pre-project studies – as it did for the other megaprojects studied and as recommended by the European Commission in its answers[[1]](#footnote-1)–, it would have noted a change in the costs close to inflation and would have put Seine-Scheldt alongside the projects that have kept a good control of their costs.

Finally, the court highlighted the relevance of the implementing decisions which can be used to specify the activities and the timetable of the megaprojects supported by the EU. Such a decision was signed in June 2019 for Seine-Scheldt formally recognising the commitment of France, Belgium and the European Union for the completion of this major sustainable transport project to support the development of the region, by 2030.

1. Extract from the Answers of the European Commission in the Appendix to the report entitled, “The first relevant cost estimate could only be established in 2006 after the feasibility studies; therefore the initial estimate should be that of 2007 (i.e. €4.002 billion).” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)