

Rhine-Meuse Water Agency

National Consultation on Water 2008: national summary summary by basin

April 2009



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Introduction

In application of the European framework directive on water (FDW), a specific public consultation approach has been planned in the scope of the development of management plans for each hydrographical district. In 2005, an initial consultation focused on the inventory. In 2008, a second was organised on the MDMWR projects and the programmes of measures for the period 2010-2015.

The directive does not impose a form of consultation: it only imposes organising the “*active participation*” of the public and “*submitting for the observations of the public*” the main planning documents.

To do this, France chose to carry out a self-administered consultation by district under the joint responsibility of the Basin Committees and the Ministry of the Environment in two main forms:

- sending questionnaires to households;
- on-line questionnaire on dedicated websites and/or the websites of the Water Agencies, of the Ministry, etc.

In addition, various actions were implemented: making available questionnaires in public places, organisation of public meetings or group meetings, forums, exhibitions, etc. (see appended details). Some Water Agencies also organised group meetings or public meetings. Partners (in particular associations) were often involved in relay in the consultation.

All of this was accompanied by local and national communication campaigns.

Although situated in a common national framework, the approach implemented by each Water Agency, as the operator of the Basin Committee and the State, was more or less individualised. Thus, the questionnaires were different depending on

the districts¹ and went more or less into detail: from 4 to 15 questions, reserved space (or not) in the paper questionnaire for a written opinion, etc.

In addition, the results and observations presented here are a summary of the opinions gathered in each district. If the quantitative data can certainly be approved to evaluate the profile of respondents, the qualitative data cannot be, this is because without exception, the questions, although similar, were different from one district to another. The results cannot therefore be considered as representative of the French opinion on such or such an aspect of water policy.

For all that, by its broad audience as by its self-administered aspect, the consultation reached “Mr (mainly) and Mrs Everyday”, non-specialised in water issues, technical terms, the stakeholders involved, etc. They discovered the stakes of the consultation (DCE approach, definition of objectives, planning of actions, etc.) and therefore answered the questionnaire in a neutral way without prior knowledge.

The population sample thus contacted was certainly not representative of the general population. The objective of the approach and its form differentiated it however from a survey and therefore allows the impact of this discrepancy to be put into perspective. In addition, the number of responses (nearly 400,000) allows, in spite of everything, the reactions of all types of people to be understood; men and women, young and less young, working and non-working, workers, employees, executives, farmers, shop owners or handicraft workers. This is therefore particularly interesting for analysing the results.

¹ Here the term “district” designates the “hydrological districts”, a label selected in the framework directive on water to name “basins”.

Part 1. Quantitative analysis

1. An exceptional audience

National data

The consultation reached an exceptional level: nearly 28 million paper questionnaires were sent out in metropolitan France.

On a national level, nearly 360,000 questionnaires were returned, that is 1.3% of the total sent, a rate that is absolutely satisfactory for this type of process.

In parallel, nearly 28,000 questionnaires were completed on the Internet.

All supports combined, a total of 386,505 questionnaires were completed.

Consultation audience	
Number of paper questionnaires sent	27,771,000
Number of paper responses	358,748
Number of electronic responses	27,757
Total number of responses	386,505
Rate of return of paper questionnaires	1.3%
% of paper questionnaires in the total responses	93%
% of electronic questionnaires in the total responses	7%

Figure 1 – General data

Use of the Internet (7% of all the responses) was not very high on the national level compared to the rate of equipping, since in 2008, 62% of households had a connection at home (Eurostat source). As the paper questionnaire was sent out to a large number of people, this certainly encouraged a large part of the population to use this support for reasons of simplicity. However, using the electronic support had the advantage of being able to formulate a free opinion, which not all the

questionnaires allowed for. Moreover, some consulted the website dedicated to the consultation in order to be able to give a more personal opinion.

As a comparison, in 2005 the Rhine-Meuse Water Agency organised a consultation using the same methods about the *inventory(?)*. For an equivalent volume of questionnaires sent out (+3%), the rate of return has increased by 13%. The number of questionnaires completed on-line has doubled (3660). The number of actions organised by associations (public meetings, etc.) has increased from 60 to 150; the public reached has increased from 4750 to 7700 people.

Data by district

The return rates vary considerably from one district to another, in a maximum range of 1 to 7 (from 0.6% in Seine-Normandy to 4.1% in Rhine-Meuse).

As regards this point, it is interesting to compare the weighting of each district in the national population with its weighting in the total responses received. An extreme situation can be seen between the districts Seine-Normandy and Rhine-Meuse: the first represents 27% of the metropolitan population for 13% of responses while the second “weighs” 7% of the population but 21% of responses.

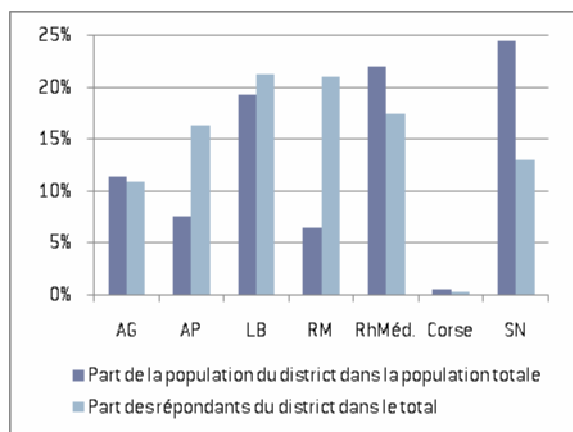


Figure 2 – Representation of districts

Likewise, Artois-Picardy is twice as represented as the total population (16%/8%), as opposed to Rhône-Mediterranean (17% / 24%).

Moreover, we can see a very high variation in the rate of electronic contributions, which vary from 2% in Artois-Picardy to 13% in Adour-Garonne. Seine-Normandy, a district with a high urban population and where executives and intellectual professions are over-represented, therefore, all the more rather favourable factors for using Internet, is in the average (8%). Finally, the rate of electronic response is higher due to the lack of space for free opinions in the questionnaire. The Internet, therefore, for some people meets a need to express themselves that goes beyond the framework imposed by the questionnaire.

2. The profile of respondents

National data

As is generally the case with a so-called “self-administered” consultation, the respondents are not a true sample of the population. Thus, generally, men, over 60s and retired people are over-represented.

Men, who are the minority in the general French population (48%), represent 53% of respondents. As the paper questionnaires were sent to households, they were certainly completed most often by the head of the family, a man.

In addition, for six districts (Adour-Garonne, Loire-Brittany, Rhine-Meuse, Rhône-Mediterranean, Corsica and Seine-Normandy), the comparative data between the general population and the respondent population are available. More detailed analyses are thus possible.

The age of respondents

The population of respondents was broken down, all districts combined, in the following way.

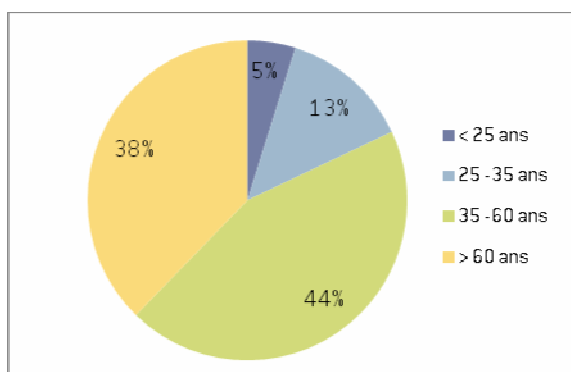


Figure 3 – Age of respondents

Analysing the data by district highlights a “split” between over and under 35 year olds.

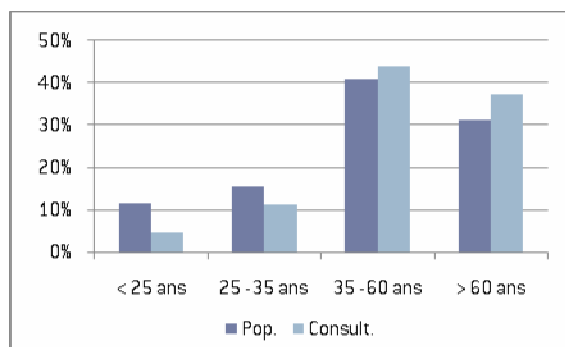


Figure 4 – Breakdown by age of the population of the 6 districts

Thus, the over 35s are globally over-represented, particularly the oldest people. And vice versa, the under 35s are less represented than in the population of the districts, and especially under 25s. As these were rarely the direct recipients of the questionnaire (addressed to the household), this imbalance is logical. In addition, the over 60s are generally more receptive to self-administered consultations.

Likewise, the over 60s represent nearly 40% of the sample as opposed to only about a third of the population of these 6 districts.

The socio-professional category of the respondents

The analysis of the socio-professional categories of the respondents highlights a combination of all profiles. Thus, working and non-working (school children, students, pensioners, unemployed) are practically broken down equally.

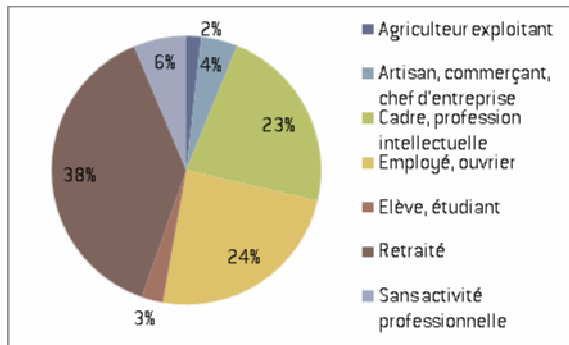


Figure 5 – Socio-professional categories

We can also see such a balance between the executives and intellectual professions on the one hand and workers and employees on the other hand.

However, the examination of detailed data in 3 districts (Adour-Garonne, Rhine-Meuse, Seine-Normandy) highlights the over-representation of retired people and executives.

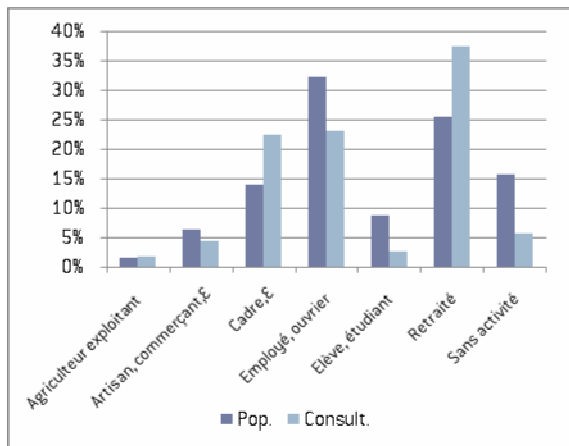


Figure 6 – Breakdown by socio-professional category of the population of 3 districts

If this breakdown certainly does not correspond to that of the general population of these districts, it is interesting to note that all the categories are represented, albeit not at their real weighting in the population but at the very least in significant proportions. The self-administered consultation actually gives everyone the opportunity to participate. It therefore ensures diversity of profiles that

is particularly interesting as regards the objectives of the framework directive in terms of participation and involvement of the public.

The choice of response support depending on age and socio-professional category

As a complement, it is interesting to consider the data on age and socio-professional categories with the support chosen by the respondents, as the data from Adour-Garonne and Seine-Normandy allow.

We can actually note that the populations are not quite the same in both cases, beyond the simple question of the audience of each of the two supports.

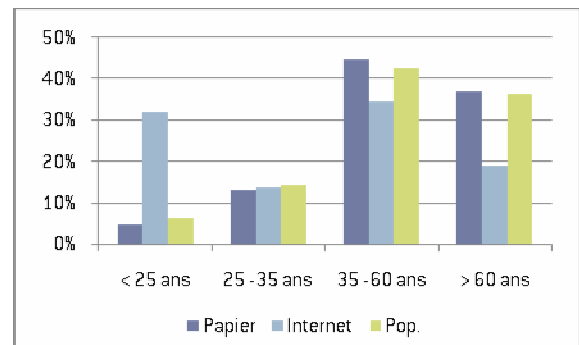


Figure 7 – Use of Internet depending on the age of the respondents in 2 districts

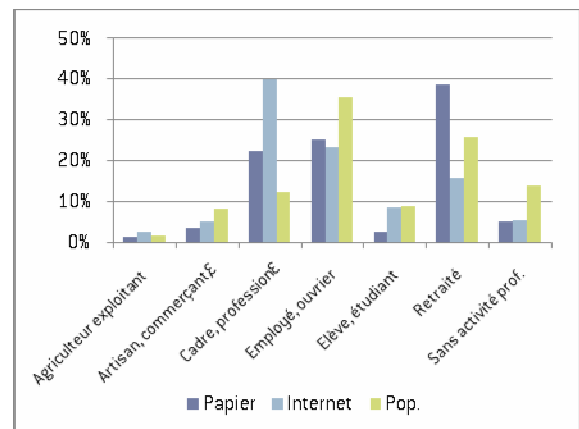


Figure 8 – Use of Internet depending on the socio-professional category of the respondents in 2 districts

We thus note that the “Internet population” is more typical, with a very clear over-representation in young people and executives and intellectual professions and a clear under-representation in over 60s and retired people. Concerning the participation of the youngest people, the large-scale use of Internet is certainly explained, apart from more natural use of this support, by the fact that the questionnaires were sent to French households and were therefore certainly completed by heads of family. Expressing a personal opinion by the youngest people was therefore logically made by using Internet.

The other age groups or SPC are represented in proportions that are generally equivalent to those observed for the paper questionnaire. We note, however, that the low rate of use of Internet in the oldest mechanically results in an increase in the rates in the other groups.

Data by district

The age and socio-professional category of respondents

The over-representation of men is the most marked in the Adour-Garonne district (58%). On the other hand, the respective participation of men and women in the Rhône-Mediterranean and Corsica districts was balanced (50%).

The break-down by age of the respondents in the Artois-Picardy and Rhône-Mediterranean districts is identical to that of the national average.

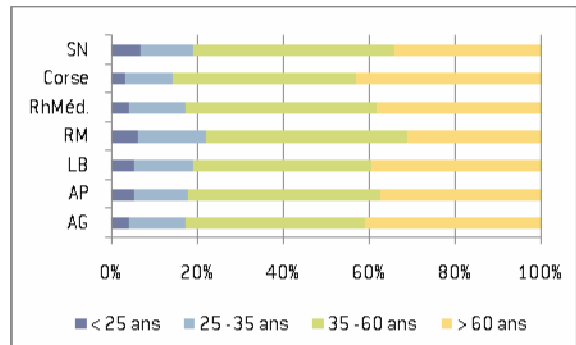


Figure 9 – Age of the respondents by district

The respondents of the Rhine-Meuse district are younger than those in the sample (22% are under 35) and the opposite was the case in the Corsica district (14%). Vice versa, the over 60s represent 43% of respondents in Corsica as opposed to 31% of those in Artois-Picardy.

The break-downs between working and non-working people are very diverse, the biggest proportion of working people amongst the respondents being reached in Rhine-Meuse (59%), Seine-Normandy (55%) and Rhône-Mediterranean (54%). They are 48% in the other districts.

In terms of break-down by socio-professional category, we can see a very high level of participation by farmers in Loire-Brittany: they represent 4% of the respondents, that is the double of their “weighting” in the population of the district and also the double of their participation in the other districts.

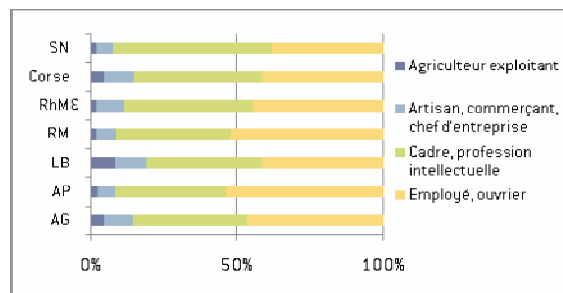


Figure 10 – Breakdown of working people by district

Executives and intellectual professions are over-represented in Seine-Normandy (30% against 22% amongst French respondents and 14% in the district), whilst the opposite was seen in Artois-Picardy (18%).

It is amongst the respondents of Rhine-Meuse that we can find the largest share of employees and workers (31% as opposed to 24% on average for all the districts).

Handicraft workers, shop owners and company directors are equally broken down in all the districts (4 to 5%), at a level close to their weighting in the population.

Finally, we observe that only 6% of respondents in Seine-Normandy are members of an environmental protection association. Furthermore, an identical proportion is made up of councillors.

These data, which are of course limited to just one district, support the observation that the consultation has been able to reach “Mr and Mrs Everyday”, who are non-specialists in the issues covered.

The choice of response support

Detailed data by age and socio-professional category according to the response method (paper or electronic) are only available in Adour-Garonne and Seine-Normandy.

The general results are found in both districts with, however, some specific points.

Thus, in Seine-Normandy, the youngest population weighs a lot more amongst Internet respondents than amongst the population of the district. This discrepancy is clearly less marked in Adour-Garonne.

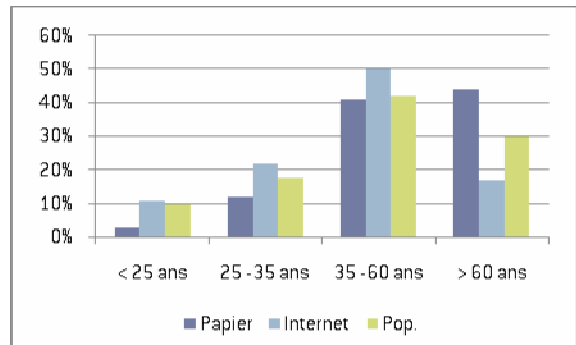


Figure 11 – Use of Internet depending on the age of the respondents in Adour-Garonne

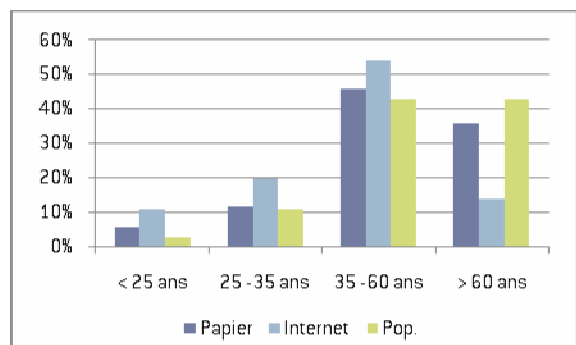


Figure 12 – Use of Internet depending on the age of the respondents in Seine-Normandy

Concerning the socio-professional categories, the use of paper amongst retired people in Adour-Garonne is huge: their responses represent 47% of all the paper responses in this district. However, the break-down there is more balanced between the categories for the electronic responses.

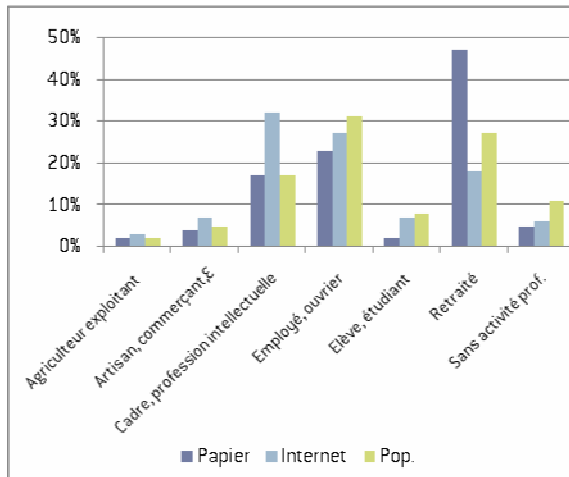


Figure 13 – Use of Internet depending on the socio-professional category of the respondents in Adour-Garonne

Vice versa, such an “overwhelming level” appears in Seine-Normandie concerning the electronic questionnaire: executives actually represent 49% of respondents for this support.

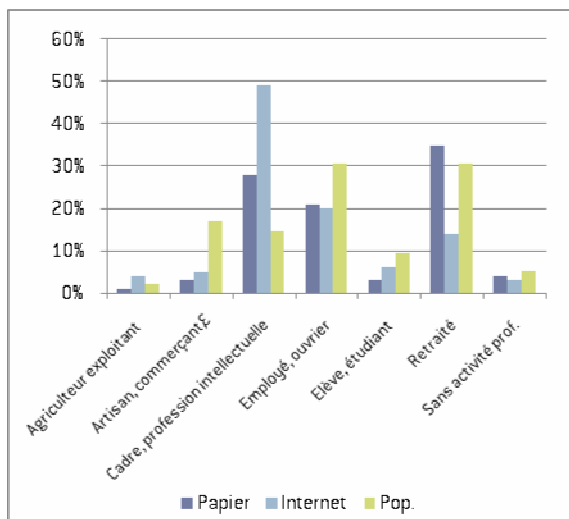


Figure 14 – Use of Internet depending on the socio-professional category of the respondents in Seine-Normandie

Moreover, in Adour-Garonne, there are more farmers, shop owners, handicraft workers and executives in the electronic respondents than there are in the general population, which is not the case on paper.

Part 2. Qualitative analysis

1. Framing items

The first objective of the consultation was to gather the public opinion on the objectives suggested by the basin committees with the aim of achieving a good water status. This mainly covers:

- establishment of the initial diagnosis;
- setting of the objectives to be reached: the degree of ambition as regards the proportion of areas achieving the good water status by 2015;
- the means to be implemented for this: support of suggested actions, financial commitment of each person, involvement on a daily basis.

On this common basis, each agency undertook its own approach:

- use of its own questionnaire containing a specific presentation of the proposals for the district and made up of 4 to 15 questions;
- gathering totally free or directed personal opinions in the paper questionnaire and/or on an Internet website dedicated to the consultation;
- organisation of group meetings for qualitative exchanges in certain districts.

To create its questionnaire, each Agency referred, in a more or less explicit way, to the structuring themes of “its” MDMWR by focusing, if needed, on certain aspects. Some questions were also asked by all of them.

In order to allow cross-checking and a summary, the analysis suggested in the present document selects a transversal approach, by type of questions asked. This

also allows one to be fully part of the general logic of the approach: do the French validate the objectives and support the planned actions in order to achieve a good water status. With this in mind, six sections have been distinguished.

The validity of the results and the actions suggested

- Have the results reached been validated? Are they realistic or utopia?
- As regards the stakes, are the objectives reasonable, ambitious or disappointing?
- Will the costs mentioned be respected?
- Are the action proposals sufficient and complete?
- To what extent do they respond to the public's concerns?

Action priorities

- What actions should be taken immediately to achieve a good water status?
- What actions should be taken as a priority if all the planned actions could not be financed?

The agreed efforts for oneself and for others

- What habits is the public willing to change to contribute to achieving a good water status: daily life, "good gestures", etc.?
- What constraints concerning other stakeholders would be desirable?
- Are the constraints concerning the management of areas acceptable for improving the quality of water or reducing natural risks?

Agreement to pay to achieve the objective

- Is the principle of financial efforts to contribute to achieving objectives recognised?
- What contribution would be acceptable?
- Is the public prepared to meet other costs for natural areas or spaces?

General concerns about water

- What are the major concerns in the water area?

The desired methods of information

- What supports should be used to transmit information about water or consult the public?

2. The validity of the results and the actions suggested

The main result of the consultation was to gather, in each district, the public's opinion on the level of ambition, expressed in share of bodies of water achieving a good status by 2015, and about the planned measures to reach this objective.

However, in certain questionnaires, it is rather the entire validation of the description of the situation of the district, as was suggested in parallel to the questionnaire, which was sought.

The initial diagnosis offers an incomplete vision of the situation

Overall, nearly half of the people adhere to the description of the stakes and consider that they cover in an exhaustive way, the important issues. It is however, interesting to note that in these districts, a proportion of people often at least equivalent consider that the description only partially corresponds to the reality.

Opinion on the diagnosis	
AG	35% find that the stakes are described in full 51% consider that the description only partially illustrates the problems
AP	48% “ <i>totally</i> ” adhere to the description of the stakes. 36% “ <i>fairly</i> ” adhere to it
LB	44% “ <i>completely</i> ” find the water problems 42% “ <i>quite</i> ” find them
SN	44% find that the proposals of MDMWR correspond to their concerns. 40% find that they should be more developed

Figure 15 – Opinion on the initial diagnosis in 4 districts

Moreover, we can see that in Adour-Garonne, only a third of respondents fully validate the suggested description.

The objective is not ambitious enough

When the question of objectives was asked, it was approached in various, more or less direct, ways, ranging from the validation of the general objective to the appropriateness of the proposals presented passing by the evaluation of their correspondence with the personal concerns of the people consulted.

Opinion about the objective	
LB	59% consider that it is necessary “ <i>to go further and obtain better results by 2015</i> ”
RM	26% “ <i>totally agree</i> ” with the objective requiring an increase of 2 to 3% of the water bill; 31% “ <i>quite agree</i> ”. 40% consider the objectives “ <i>can be reached</i> ”. 50% find them to be “ <i>utopia</i> ”
RhMe d.	48% find the objective “ <i>reasonable</i> ”. 45% find that it is necessary “ <i>to go more quickly, even if this means extra constraints</i> ”.
Corsica	71% find the objective “ <i>reasonable</i> ”. 13% find that it is “ <i>not ambitious</i> ”; 10 % that it is too ambitious

Figure 16 – Opinion on the objective suggested in 4 districts

The responses are very varied depending on the district, it being understood that the questions were asked in different terms.

Thus, in Rhine-Meuse, if half of the respondents adhere to the objectives, only 26% do so without reservation. In addition, half consider them even utopia which shows considerable scepticism transmitted to some extent in the free opinions, 10% of the people mentioning their wishes less of opposition to change and a real desire to change but being sceptical about the means that will really be implemented. We can also see a very divided response in Rhône-Mediterranean. Only the response in Corsica is marked.

Globally, the objective set (in terms of date and/or proportion of achieving the good state of water) is however not very questioned in itself: the people that find it too ambitious are very much in the minority, and the same can be said for those that reject it (less than 5%).

However, the telephone survey carried out in the Rhône-Mediterranean district had more mitigated results.

Thus we can spontaneously see a higher rate of validation of the official proposal and more reticence as regards a more ambitious objective, especially as it generates additional costs.

However, we can state that the paper support, which was accompanied by a presentation of the stakes and the proposals of the Basin Committee, allowed the subject to be better understood. The responses given on the basis of this certainly give a more reliable vision of the opinions.

The actions suggested: “can do better”

A subdued assessment

An equivalent trend is observed concerning the proposals: the rates of rejection are certainly moderate (5 and 10%) but the public does however not “blindly” agree:

- most often, the proposals are validated as they are by only about a third of people;
- very many people are not really satisfied with the proposals: very high proportions (50 to 60%) find them only “moderately sufficient” or “quite adapted” and consider that certain proposals should have been developed more to better correspond to their own concerns.

A high level of scepticism also appears as regards adherence to the budgets announced in Rhine-Meuse (69%).

A appeal to public authorities

In echo to these mitigated opinions on the objectives and on the priorities, we can note that many free opinions called on actions related to the involvement of public authorities, other than the MDMWR:

- wish for full exercising by public stakeholder of their powers: reinforcement of the legal possibilities and/or correct application of the existing devices, reinforcement of the controls and sanctions, resistance to lobbies, etc.;
- regret of a lack of ambition by “decision makers” judged to the late in relation to the public as regards becoming aware of environmental problems.

In Rhône-Mediterranean for example, these themes are mentioned in 30% of the

free opinions. They are mentioned in 12% of opinions in Loire-Brittany, 11% of opinions in Rhine-Meuse and 50% of opinions in Corsica.

These comments are globally aimed at all public authorities: “managers”, “governors”, legislators, holders of control and sanction powers, etc.

Sceptical farmers

The farmers are generally the most mitigated indeed in disagreement with the diagnosis and the suggested actions as well as often, but to a lesser extent, handicraft workers, shop owners and workers, employees.

Public/farmers opinions	
AG	“The measures are not adapted”: public 8% / farmers 13%
AP	“totally disagree” with the results about the water: public 5% / farmers 9%
LB	“Completely” or “quite” find their concerns in the suggested description: public 86% / farmers 74%. Reject the proposal: public 7% / farmers 25%
RM	The objectives for 2015 are “utopia”: public 50% / farmers 55%

Figure 17 – Comparison of the opinions of farmers and the public overall on some questions

Conversely, it is most often amongst the over 60s that we find the highest rates of validation.

3. Action priorities

Most of the questionnaires ask for the public’s opinion on precise actions and/or try to identify things that may have been missed (see appendix).

The rankings obtained are considerably marked by the individual problems of each district: drinking water (qualitative and quantitative aspects) and the risk of shortage are for 65 to 70% of respondents

one of the two priority problems in Adour-Garonne, whilst the public of Loire-Brittany considers farming pollution (47%) to be at the top of the list or in Artois-Picardy the pollution of natural environments (61%).

Actions linked to environments (protection, destruction of wet lands, preservation of bio-diversity, etc.) are only priorities for less than a third of the people.

However, we note in Adour-Garonne that a quarter of the people consider that all the actions are linked with an aim of reaching the objective and that it is therefore impossible to isolate priority actions.

Sensitivity to the environment is generally higher amongst young people, women and executives.

4 . The agreed efforts for oneself and for others

High-level of desire to act on an individual basis...

Individual efforts are largely accepted, particularly actions relating to saving water, sorting waste and limiting the use of weed-killers: the rates of acceptance generally exceed 90%. The abundance of references to waste and water saving in the free opinions confirms the unanimous validation of these action proposals.

The consumption of organic products, even if it does not reach such an action level, is in spite of everything, largely supported: 76% to 78% of people are “completely” or “quite” in agreement in Rhine-Meuse, Rhône-Mediterranean and Corsica. The most marked reticence in the least well-off categories (employees, workers, young people) highlights the weighting of the price factor in this behaviour. This aspect is

moreover, mentioned many times in the free opinions. The wish to see the development of organic farming supported is also expressed in Loire-Brittany, Rhine-Meuse and Rhône-Mediterranean (4 to 5%).

... but everyone should do likewise

If changes in individual behaviour are clearly admitted, the public is also expecting each group of stakeholders to act at its level.

Thus, we can see a broad validation (often over 90%, the opinion “totally agree”, generally exceeding 70%) of the action proposals that have an impact on other stakeholders (restrictions of use, extra costs): conservation of non-built land to have flood expansion areas, limitation of urbanisation, modification of the methods of industrial production, reduction in the use of pesticides in agriculture, maintenance and re-introduction of natural spaces in an urban environment, etc.

On the individual or collective scale, the acceptance of potentially restrictive actions is therefore very high, which is obviously encouraging for the implementation of programmes of measures.

However, it is necessary to note that the highest rates of reticence are generally found amongst farmers. It is probable that this is at least for part of them due to a sector concern; in any case, this aspect will have to be taken into account when defining definite actions in order to end this mistrust.

If the questionnaires referred to actions based on individual or group behaviours of stakeholders, a large number of free opinions also include public authorities in taking responsibility as regards reaching

objectives: better application of texts, more controls, application of sanctions, etc.

5. Agreement to pay to achieve the objective

In the questionnaires

This question is obviously very delicate and it is extremely rare that it can be asked on such a scale.

First of all, it should be noted that this subject was broached in various ways depending on the questionnaires, which is important to appreciate the range of responses.

An agreement in principle on an increase in financial means ...

We thus observe that the questionnaires that deliberately did not mention the financing of measures by increasing water bills of households generate high levels of agreement regarding the question of mobilising extra financial means.

Thus, in Loire-Brittany, 59% of people consider that it is necessary to go further than the 500 M€ mentioned to obtain better results by 2015 and 25% find that this increase in expenses is a good compromise. Only 8% are opposed to any extra expense.

In Rhône-Mediterranean, 72% of people “*completely agree*” and 24% “*quite agree*” with the idea of “*devoting more means to preserving biodiversity*”.

In Corsica, questioned about the idea that “*securing provisions of water remains a priority whatever the price*”, 60% “*completely agree*” and 28% “*quite agree*”.

The same observations can be made in Seine-Normandy: 50% of people consider

that 25€ extra a year is “*acceptable*” and 17% indicate that 100€ extra, needed to achieve a good condition of all water by 2015, is “*desirable*” (whilst it was indicated that 75€/person/year are already spent). These amounts were presented in the questionnaire as “*the cost of water protection*” and the link with the domestic invoice was not necessarily made by the people consulted.

... but reticence to making a personal contribution

In parallel, three questionnaires explicitly made a link with the household water bill (Adour-Garonne, Artois-Picardy and Rhine-Meuse). Each person was therefore questioned in relation to his/her own budget. In the three cases, the responses are mitigated, the majority of people strongly limiting their level of consent to paying.

In Adour-Garonne, a third position the threshold of acceptability at less than 10€/family/year and another third put it between 10 and 20€. It is interesting in parallel to observe that if 17% would accept an extra expense of over 20€ these are mainly farmers, who are, however, amongst the most reticent as regards other aspects dealt with by the consultation.

Likewise, in Artois-Picardy, 52% of people consider that an increase of 30€/family/year is “*unjustified*”, but amongst them 44% would however accept an increase between 10 and 30€. In spite of everything, a third of these people reject any idea of increase, in a basin where the price of water is already amongst the highest in France. On the other hand, 39% however consider an expense of 30€ extra to be “*justified*”. Amongst these, 13% even

accept a high increase if this allows a more ambitious objective to be reached.

In Rhine-Meuse, the prospect of an increase of 2 to 3% of the bill to reach the objective of 2015 is only fully accepted by a quarter of people but 31% in spite of everything “*quite agree*”. However, 22% do not “*really agree*” and 19% do not at all agree. Similar proportions are found regarding the issue of consent to “*pay more to protect water*”.

The responses in Rhine-Meuse highlight moreover, this paradox as regards consent to pay more since both types of approach were used in the questionnaire. We note thus that, if increasing the bill is considered with reticence, there are large majorities (80% “completely” or “quite” agree) in support of the measures for which it is however stipulated that they would generate new expenses, such as limiting urban waterproofing, but for which the financing method is not stipulated. It is probable that the people did not imagine that these actions could be financed by their own contribution via the water bill.

In free opinions, more divided positions

More or less explicitly, the theme of consenting to pay is abundantly mentioned in the free opinions.

Thus, for example, 43% of free opinions gathered in Rhine-Meuse (that is nearly 13,000) mention the various aspects of this theme: price level, financing break-down, payment by those that pollute, etc. This rate is 30% in Adour-Garonne.

Overall, two major aspects are mentioned: the price itself (too high, refusal to see it increase, etc.) and the contributions of the various stakeholders in the financing of the

water policy (very frequent referral to the polluter pays principle).

The price and the development of it, still a sensitive subject

Apart from comments on the current price level, the refusal of any increase is mentioned in many opinions but remains difficult to quantify as it is, all the more because this option was not suggested in the questionnaires. For the rest, generally and constantly over the years, all the surveys ascertain that the majority of French people consider the price of water to be too high.

The present consultation is therefore situated in line with these other studies.

Logically, reticence concerning the development of the price is the most marked amongst people that answered elsewhere negatively to questions on agreement to pay.

The financing of the water policy should be fairly split between all users

The application of the polluter pays principle is overwhelmingly desired by the public, which has a double reason:

- on the one hand have those that damage the resource pay, in other terms farmers and industrialists;
- on the other hand, reduce the contribution of households.

This desire to develop the balance between the three large groups of water users is coherent with the classification of the two main concerns (see below), since pollution “by others”, farmers and industrialists comes clearly before that of households (urban pollution).

The results in Rhine-Meuse illustrate this reasoning well:

- on the one hand 12% of free opinions expressly request the application of this principle, 5 and 6% would like farmers or industries to pay more;
- on the other hand, 12% would not like the tax payer or the citizen to pay and 8% would not like to pay personally.

Although with values a little lower, the same result is seen in Loire-Brittany, where the application of the polluter pays principle is in addition spontaneously considered as a priority by 17% of people.

6. General concerns about water

Apart from questions directly linked to achieving a good water status, six questionnaires broadened the survey to identifying the two main concerns of the public (apart from the quality of the drinking water).

In addition, as a complement to the 7 common questions, some more contextual questions were asked in certain districts (see appended details).

Farming and industrial pollutions top priority

In each questionnaire, various themes were suggested, the majority were common to all the districts. This therefore allowed for a direct comparison of the levels of concern on a national level on these subjects.

The two main concerns can clearly be seen, these are farming and industrial pollution (53% and 47% respectively). Urban pollution is hardly of more concern than information on financial channels.

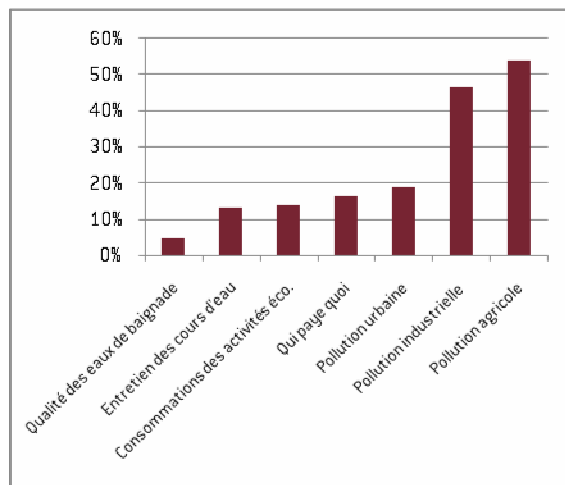


Figure 18 – Ranking of the main concerns

In addition, it is necessary to mention that the Artois-Picardy questionnaire also integrated two extra items which, by favouring a combination, reduced the rates of all the items and therefore the national averages on several points. Thus, if we disregard the results of this district, the two main concerns do not change but respectively cover 57% and 52%.

Environments, a secondary concern

Two concerns amongst the seven suggested concern environments: this concerns the maintenance of rivers and banks on the one hand and the quality of bathing water on the other hand.

Overall, these two subjects appear to be secondary concerns, far behind the two main ones which are farming and industrial pollution.

These themes incite the most interest in the Corsica district: with 31% in total, they are in third place, just in front of urban pollution (30%).

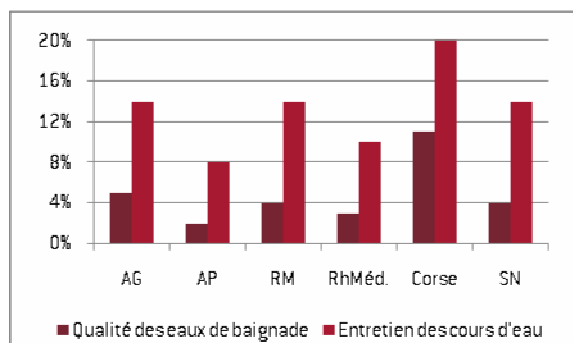


Figure 19 – Opinion on concerns relating to environments

The environmental richness of this district is certainly a factor in the attention its population gives to it.

In the other districts, we note a higher concern for bathing water in coastal departments, which is however smoothed out in assessments on the district level.

The free opinions do not contradict this result: even if many comments focus on “environments” this never reaches a notable proportion. A good many of the observations on this subject concern are moreover, general observations.

Pressure on the resource, a local issue

The problem of the resource is thus covered in two questions in Adour-Garonne, Rhône-Mediterranean and Corsica: the lack of water in the rivers and water tables on the one hand and the drinking water needs for the population on the other hand.

The population of these three districts is unsurprisingly very aware of these subjects.

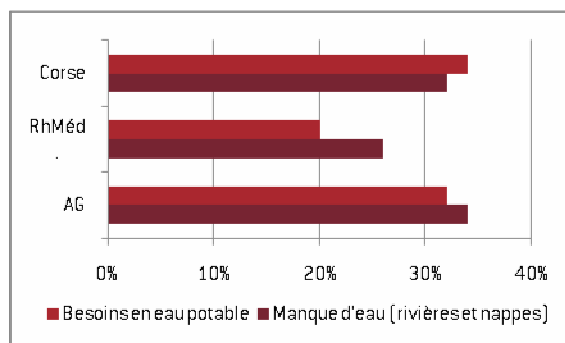


Figure 20 – Opinion about the concerns relating to the water resource

This situates them in third and fourth position of concerns, quite clearly in front of urban pollution which respectively gathers 22%, 18% and 30% of the opinions in these districts.

In the other districts, this theme is not notably mentioned in free opinions.

Water prices and saving, two major concerns

In Artois-Picardy and Seine-Normandy, the two extra questions cover “the price of water” and “the wasting of water in domestic use”. This subject has also been suggested amongst the list of concerns submitted in Rhine-Meuse.

However, it should be noted that these two subjects are very rallying topics. The analysis of the free opinions all districts combined clearly highlights this: whether covered in the questionnaire or not, they are largely broached in the free opinions.

The price

The price is mentioned in both districts by 21% of people, which, in Artois-Picardy, is near to the level of concern granted to industrial pollution (26%) which constitutes the second concern in the district.

Waste

“Waste during domestic use” also attracts a very high level of interest: it gathers 19%, 21% and 29% of responses respectively in Rhine-Meuse, Artois-Picardy and Seine-Normandy. This places this item in third place of the concerns in these districts.

In addition, questioned about a proposal to add to the 10 contained in the MDMWR, the inhabitants of Seine-Normandy moreover placed this problem at the top, which gathered 28% of the answers. This is all the more worthy of note as it concerned spontaneous responses, whilst the question about the two main concerns suggested a closed list.

In Rhine-Meuse, the level reached by this subject is equivalent to the one obtained by urban pollution and by the knowledge of financial flows (20%).

As a complement to the mentioning of this subject amongst the main concerns, there are many free opinions on this subject.

Thus, we can see a high level of awareness about waste whatever the sector (inhabitant, local authorities, agriculture, industry), a wish to see more high performance irrigation developed, crops that consume less water, water-saving devices, the recuperation of rain water, etc. Some consumer uses are also often pointed out: swimming pools, golf courses, green spaces, artificial snow, etc.

The increase in communication actions about water consumption for a few years obviously therefore is bearing fruit.

7 . The desired methods of information

Following the example of the main concerns, the question of information and consultation supports for the public was present in all the questionnaires except the one in Loire-Brittany which asked about the support which was used to inform the public about the consultation.

Overwhelming favour for paper ...

Mailings are overwhelmingly favoured as the support preferred by the public (70%), followed (by far) by Internet (25%).

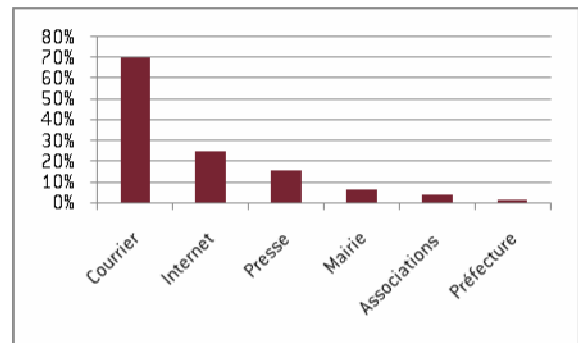


Figure 21 – Opinion on water information supports

The other supports are not mentioned a lot and only the press makes a small impact (16%). The town hall, associations and prefectures respectively obtain 7%, 5% and 1%.

The principle of very large scale communication campaigns in letter boxes must therefore be upheld.

The example of the telephone survey carried out in the Rhône-Mediterranean district is interesting in this respect.

	Consultation	Tel. survey
Objective for 2015		
Reasonable	48%	53%
Too ambitious	4%	16%
Not ambitious enough	45%	27%
Choice of organic products, even if more expensive		
Agree	77%	68%
Disagree	19%	32%
Reduce weed-killers in the garden		
Agree	96%	94%
Disagree	2%	6%
Maintain flood expansion areas to the detriment of urbanisation		
Agree	98%	91%
Disagree	1%	8%

Figure 22 – Comparison of the responses to the consultation and the telephone survey (Rhône-Mediterranean)

The result is actually that as regards complex issues (opinions about the proposals of the Basin Committee), or those that have a direct impact on daily life (consumption of organic products, use of weed killers, limitation of urbanisation), the spontaneous responses lead to a certain “legitimation” by validation of the “official” proposals as well as the reticence to change.

On the other hand, the fact of having, as was the case in the scope of the consultation, targeted documentation and a minimum time for thinking is certainly better adapted.

... except in Rhine-Meuse

A specific point should be mentioned about this question of desired information supports: the results observed in Rhine-Meuse stand out quite a lot compared to the national averages.

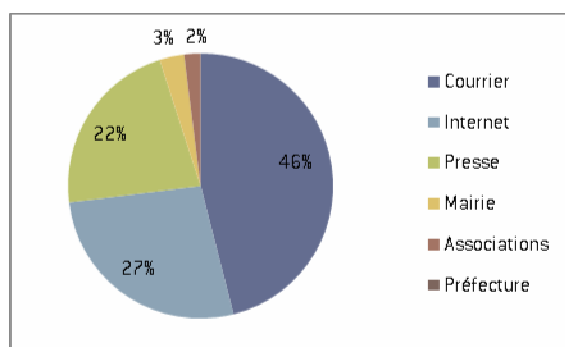


Figure 23 – Opinion on water information supports in Rhine-Meuse

The mail, Internet and press obtain much more balanced results. We can also observe that, if the share of responses to the questionnaire in the electronic form was, in this district, lower than the national average (5% against 7%), this support is selected by 27% of the respondents for future consultations. The public of Adour-Garonne, the main user of the Internet for the consultation (13% of responses), does not prefer it more than in other districts (25%) for the future.

Conclusion

The national consultation is, in terms of audience, a success:

- the very size of the undertaking: nearly 400,000 responses, that is without doubt two to three times more people contacted;
- adequate rate of return for such a subject and such a type of transmission;
- targeting “Mr and Mrs Everyday”, non-experts on water issues;
- number of free opinions, which attests to a major wish of the public to have its say.

As regards the principle, several salient points can be noted:

- Concerning the object of the consultation, (opinion of the public on the objectives proposed by the Basin Committees in terms of the good state of the water), the answer is mitigated: if the diagnostics, the objectives and the action proposals are globally validated, about half of the people consider that only one part of the problems is taken into account and indeed regret a lack of ambition;
- many actions generating extra costs are supported, sometimes practically unanimously, but the reticence is at the same time very high faced with the prospect of an increase in household water bills. This can be put down to the very broad application of the polluter pays

principle and the re-balancing of contributions between groups of users that this would bring about;

- The willingness to act on the other hand is very high: the development of individual behaviour (water saving, waste sorting, etc.) is thus broadly validated and indeed already in place (more delicate however when it generates extra costs). However, the public wishes other groups of stakeholders to also become involved and to also accept their responsibilities. This is mainly aimed at farmers and industrialists;
- There is a high expectation of more severity as regards “polluters”: reinforcement and full application of the law, ambition in objectives, implementation of the polluter pays principle, controls, sanctions, etc.;
- The two main concerns are very clearly farming and industrial pollution. However, the public is very sensitive, albeit to a lesser extent, to water saving and the “price of water” theme (price, financing, etc.).
- Interest for environments (maintenance of rivers, quality of bathing water) which is, on the other hand, in the minority seems closely linked to the personal relation that may exist with these environments: it is

actually a lot more pronounced
in Corsica and on the coast.

- there is a lot of demand in terms
of governance: transparency,
participation, information, etc.

Finally, the free opinions also highlight a
very high demand in terms of management:
severity, reinforcement and full application
of legal texts, ambition in objectives,
implementation of the polluter pays
principle, etc.

By the response to it and by what we learn,
this consultation consequently offers very
interesting prospects for the future.

Appendix 1 – Additional Consultation Actions

District	Details of the actions
Adour-Garonne	<p>Circulation of the water bus with stops in over 60 towns in the district. 30,000 visitors received in the bus</p> <p>Over 50 awareness-raising days in higher education</p> <p>Six local water forums; over 12,000 participants</p> <p>6000 posters sent out</p>
Artois-Picardy	<p>Organisation of 2 series of 6 discussion groups (6 x 10 representative people from the population of the district)</p> <p>Sending out of a “Special Young People” questionnaire to the 530 schools of the Artois-Picardy basin, nearly 1000 responses.</p>
Loire-Brittany	<p>6 public debates; 600 participants</p> <p>600 events organised by associations (84%), local authorities (15%) and other consular and socio-professional bodies (1%). At least 100,000 people directly reached by the actions of the UNCPIE and the FNE</p> <p>54 requests for financial aid to run actions during the consultation</p> <p>70,000 posters sent out, including 40,000 on request</p>

	<p>Over 500 articles in the daily regional press; 120 press articles or files published by 106 partners</p>
Rhine-Meuse	<p>152 actions carried out locally by associations (public meetings, etc.); 7700 participants</p> <p>170 press articles</p>
Rhône-Mediterranean	<p>40 debates; 2000 participants</p> <p>Other events (visits, plays, workshops, excursions, etc.); 4000 participants including 2000 children and adolescents</p> <p>Telephone survey of 501 residents in the district</p>
Seine-Normandy	<p>Presence of the agency at about 100 public events: Armada, Festival aux Zarbs in Auxerre, Biennial of the environment in Bobigny, etc.</p> <p>27 public debates in partnership with local authorities. Over 2500 participants</p> <p>Telephone survey of 1427 residents in the district</p>

Appendix 2 – Summary of opinions on the priorities and actions suggested in the questionnaires

Depending on the questionnaires, the opinions on the priorities and actions suggested were requested in various forms:

- multiple choice list, by selecting 2 or 3 priorities (Adour-Garonne, Artois-Picardy)
- request for opinion on specific actions, described in more or less detail, giving rise to answers such as “absolutely” or “quite” agree, “perfectly” or “quite” suitable proposal, etc. (Rhine-Meuse, Rhône-Mediterranean and Corsica, Seine-Normandy). Only the positive “frank” responses are counted in the table below
- request to identify 2 priorities, in the form of a free opinion (Loire-Brittany).

PRIORITIES		AG	AP	LB	RM	RMéd	Corse	SN
Drinking water	Distribute quality drinking water in sufficient quantity	70%						
	Reduce the risks of shortage by saving water and by creating reserves	65%						
	Drinking water more and more scarce		32%					
	Ensure the provisioning of water, whatever the price						60%	
	Drinking water (proposal 1)							52%
Financing	Apply the polluter pays principle			17%				
	Price and quality of water, management method			8%				
Governing	Information about water still insufficient		22%					
	Reconciling the number of water users is sometimes difficult		18%					
	Conflicts in the use of water			27%				
	Make all stakeholders adhere			17%				
	Other governing actions			12%				
	Reinforce the mobilisation of water stakeholders and local water management							54%
Environments	Preserve the aquatic flora and fauna	37%						
	Improve the maintenance of rivers and banks	17%						
	Improve the quality of bathing water	5%						
	Threatened biodiversity		29%					
	The quality of bathing water is fragile		9%					
	Destruction of wet lands			8%				
	Artificialisation of rivers			5%				
	Coast			5%				
	Recreate wet lands				73%			
	Facilitate the circulation of fish in the rivers				45%			

	Share the resource to preserve aquatic environments					72%	64%	
	Devote more means to preserving biodiversity					72%	69%	
	Take the preservation of environments into account more in development						80%	
	Preservation of environments (proposals 4, 5, 6)							50%
Pollution	Polluted natural environments		61%					
	The accumulation of past pollution		39%					
	Farming pollution			47%				
	Urban and industrial pollution			32%				
	Develop our method of economic production					75%	70%	
	Adopt farming practices that use less pesticides					91%		
	Improve the processing of waste water					84%	87%	
	Adopt industrial techniques and farming practices that respect the environment more							86%
	Manage wine making and food industry waste better							81%
	Combat the impact of breeding on rivers							77%
	Combat pollution (proposals 2, 3, 6)							
Risks	Reduce the risks of flooding	11%						
	More and more serious flooding		35%					
	Floods and flooding			10%				
	Keep land that is not built on for the expansion of floods				79%			
	Limit the impermeabilisation of the land in cities				82%			
	Regulate urban development better					75%		
	Define and keep areas that are not built on for the expansion of floods					86%		
	Crisis situation: drought, flooding (proposals 7, 8)							54%
Various	General ideas about water			7%				

(1) AG: ranking rate for the two priority actions in No. 1 or in No. 2

(2) SN: Opinions gathered about the summarised proposals in the questionnaire accompaniment document

Appendix 3 – The main concerns

All the questionnaires asked the French people about their main concerns about water, on the basis of an identical question:

“Apart from the quality of drinking water, which interests most French people, what are your two main concerns as regards water?”

Most of the proposals were common to all the questionnaires; some extra questions were inserted in some districts.

MAIN CONCERNS	AG	AP	RM	RMéd	Corse	SN	Total
Common Proposals							
Quality of bathing water	5%	2%	4%	3%	11%	4%	5%
Maintenance of rivers	14%	8%	14%	10%	20%	14%	13%
Consumption of eco. activities	15%	12%	10%	11%	13%	23%	14%
Who pays what	18%	7%	20%	15%	24%	16%	17%
Urban pollution	22%	8%	20%	18%	30%	16%	19%
Industrial pollution	49%	26%	59%	56%	43%	46%	47%
Farming pollution	57%	37%	61%	60%	51%	59%	54%
Specific proposals for certain districts							
Wasting of water during domestic use	-	21%	19%	-	-	29%	
Water prices	-	21%	-	-	-	21%	
Lack of water (rivers and water tables)	34%	-	-	26%	32%	-	30%
Drinking water needs	32%	-	-	20%	34%	-	26%