



Press release

Lille (France), August 28, 2025

The Métropole Européenne de Lille lays the first Stone of the Future Wastewater Treatment Plant in Wattrelos – Leers

The Métropole Européenne de Lille (MEL, Metropolitan Council of Lille) hosted the official groundbreaking ceremony for the future wastewater treatment plant in Wattrelos – Leers on Thursday, on August 28, 2025.

The event brought together Damien Castelain, President of MEL, Dominique Baert, Mayor of Wattrelos, Jean-Philippe Andries, Mayor of Leers, Isabelle Matykowski, General Director of the Artois-Picardie Water Agency, as well as representatives from the Saur group and its subsidiaries, including Élise Le Vaillant, Vice-President of Saur France North-East, and Hugo Bardi, President of Saur Water Engineering and Stereau, alongside companies involved in the project, such as the NGE Group, top 4 construction Group in France, leading the civil engineering works on the project.

This milestone marks the start of a strategic construction project for the region, one of the largest wastewater treatment plant modernization projects in France over the next decade.

A Major Project for the ecological and climate transition of the MEL

The Wattrelos wastewater treatment plant, which began operation in 1986 and was renovated in the early 2000s, currently processes wastewater for nearly 417,000 equivalent inhabitants across 15 municipalities of MEL and the town of Mouscron (Belgium). With this extension and reconstruction project, the plant's capacity will increase to 511,500 equivalent inhabitants by 2031, representing a more than 20% increase.

The future plant will provide enhanced performance:

- *Treatment capacity will increase from 3.3 m³/s to 10.3 m³/s with the creation of a new rainfall management system (7 m³/s).*
- *A storage basin of 30,000 m³, equivalent to 10 Olympic swimming pools, will allow better management of heavy rainfalls.*
- *Potential integration of treated wastewater reuse (REUT) for local use.*
- *Exemplary landscaping, including the creation of 4 hectares of flower meadows and the enhancement of hedgerow networks to promote biodiversity.*

The construction schedule will be designed to minimize environmental and residential impacts. A group of 20 to 40 local residents will be involved to provide regular updates and feedback.

An exemplary, energy-positive plant

The new Wattrelos – Leers plant will be designed as a model of efficiency, performance, and circular economy.

It will generate more energy than it consumes, thanks to a unique technological setup:

- *Methanization of sludge from treatment will produce 11 GWh/year of biomethane, equivalent to the annual consumption of 2,800 residents.*
- *The energy potential of dried sludge will generate 14 GWh/year.*

- Recovery of waste heat (2.2 GWh/year), covering the plant's needs, equivalent to heating 1,500 homes.
- 6,000 m² of photovoltaic panels and hydroelectric turbines will cover over 10% of electricity needs.

The station will be powered 100% by green electricity.

Thus, it will become one of the largest energy-positive treatment plants in France, fully aligned with MEL's Climate Plan and the decarbonization of essential services.

Environmental respect and quality of life

The wastewater treatment plant will incorporate innovative features to enhance the comfort and quality of life for residents:

- Odor capture and treatment at the source.
- Enclosure of noisy equipment.
- Use of recycled water for all processes.
- Optimized sludge drying, reducing the volume of transport by over 1,000 trucks annually.

These measures will reduce nuisances, preserve resources, and strengthen the metropolitan policy for sustainable rainwater management, aligned with the Local Urbanism Plan and efforts to combat heat islands.

A major construction project

The total project cost is nearly 293 million euros:

- 200 million euros for the construction work.
- 93 million euros for operation over 12 years, entrusted to Saur France.

Financing includes subsidies from the Artois-Picardie Water Agency (€45 million in subsidies and €30 million in repayable advances) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) (€6 million for the energy component).

The construction will be carried out in phases to ensure continuity of public service:

- 2025: Launch and preparatory work.
- 2026-2028: Construction of new facilities.
- 2029-2030: Progressive commissioning.
- 2031: Operation of the modernized station.



Statements

Damien Castelain, President of the Métropole Européenne de Lille

"With this 200-million-euro project, the Métropole Européenne de Lille is undertaking one of the largest wastewater treatment plant modernizations in France. It's a transformative project that will increase processing capacity by 20% and ensure a modern and efficient sanitation service for hundreds of thousands of residents. Beyond the technical aspect, this project represents our commitment to investing in the future, enhancing the attractiveness of our region, and improving the daily lives of our citizens. MEL is setting an example by placing investment and innovation at the service of the public good."

Elise Le Vaillant, Vice-President of Saur France, North-East Region

"Together with the Métropole Européenne de Lille, we are embarking on a project that demonstrates the tangible reality of water transition: a plant capable of treating wastewater for nearly half of the region's population, while producing more energy than it consumes. It's a forward-thinking project, designed to adapt to regulatory changes, climate uncertainties, and the needs of future generations."

Hugo Bardi, President of Saur Water Engineering and Stereau

"The laying of this first stone marks the start of a large-scale project. Engineering, innovation, and consultation come together to create one of the most advanced and exemplary wastewater treatment plants in France. This project showcases the expertise of our teams and the commitment of the consortium alongside MEL."

Bruno Parent, Deputy Managing Director of the NGE Group

"This groundbreaking ceremony symbolizes the launch of a major construction project where the NGE Group is applying its expertise in large civil engineering works, with numerous references in France and abroad. Alongside MEL, elected officials, and our partners, we are contributing to the long-term protection of water resources and supporting the ecological transition in the Métropole Européenne de Lille."

Group Consortium

Lead and Operator: Saur France

Wastewater Engineering: Stereau

Civil Engineering Lead: NGE

Architects: HB Architectes associés and Atelier 9.81

Project Management: Artelia

Total contract value: nearly 300 million euros, including 200 million euros for construction and 93 million euros for plant operation over 12 years by Saur France.



About the Métropole Européenne de Lille (MEL)

The Métropole Européenne de Lille brings together 95 municipalities and serves 1.2 million residents daily. It is responsible for key competencies impacting everyday life and the future of the region, including mobility, housing, the economy, urban planning, city policy, water and wastewater management, waste management, public spaces and roads, accessibility, nature, and quality of life, culture, sports, tourism, and crematoriums. The Metropolitan Council, composed of 184 elected officials, has been led by Damien Castelain since April 18, 2014.

About Saur

As the first water company to issue blue bonds in 2024, Saur is leading the way in integrating environmental responsibility and financial innovation. The group provides high-quality services and intelligent solutions for water management, serving everyone from small towns to large cities and industrial clients, while protecting the environment. With its mission to "advocate for giving water the value it deserves," Saur serves 20 million consumers and works with 9,200 local authorities and industrial clients. In 2024, the group generated over 2.3 billion euros in revenue and employed 12,000 people worldwide. Present in over 25 countries, including Cyprus, Finland, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Spain, the UK, and the US, Saur is responsible for essential tasks like drinking water treatment and distribution, wastewater treatment, and smart water management for local authorities and industries.

About Stereau

Stereau, a subsidiary of the Saur group, designs, builds, and commissions drinking water production and wastewater treatment plants for local authority clients. Committed to the highest standards of quality, performance, operability, and environmental respect, Stereau continually innovates to tackle new forms of pollution, conserve water and energy resources, and recycle effluents. With nearly 2,500 water treatment plants completed in France and abroad, Stereau is recognized for its innovative technological choices and exemplary project execution.

About the NGE Group www.nge.fr/en/

NGE – New Generations of Entrepreneurs – the fourth largest construction group in France, builds major infrastructures and urban or local projects. With its expertise in financing, design, construction, and maintenance, the Group is a key player in delivering infrastructures that address the economic and ecological challenges of the territories. Its entrepreneurial drive is supported by a strong employee ownership structure (the founders, management, and employees hold 72% of the Group's capital) reinforced by Montefiore Investment, a leading French investment first (28% of the capital). With a turnover of 4.6 billion euros, NGE operates in 20 countries, supporting private and public clients in financing, designing, and building their transition projects in water, mobility, urban renovation, energy, and telecommunications. NGE's 24,000 employees are proud to contribute to building infrastructures that change the world.

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