




AUDIT GROUNDWATER SUPPLIES

AN EFFORT TO REACH THE STAKEHOLDERS

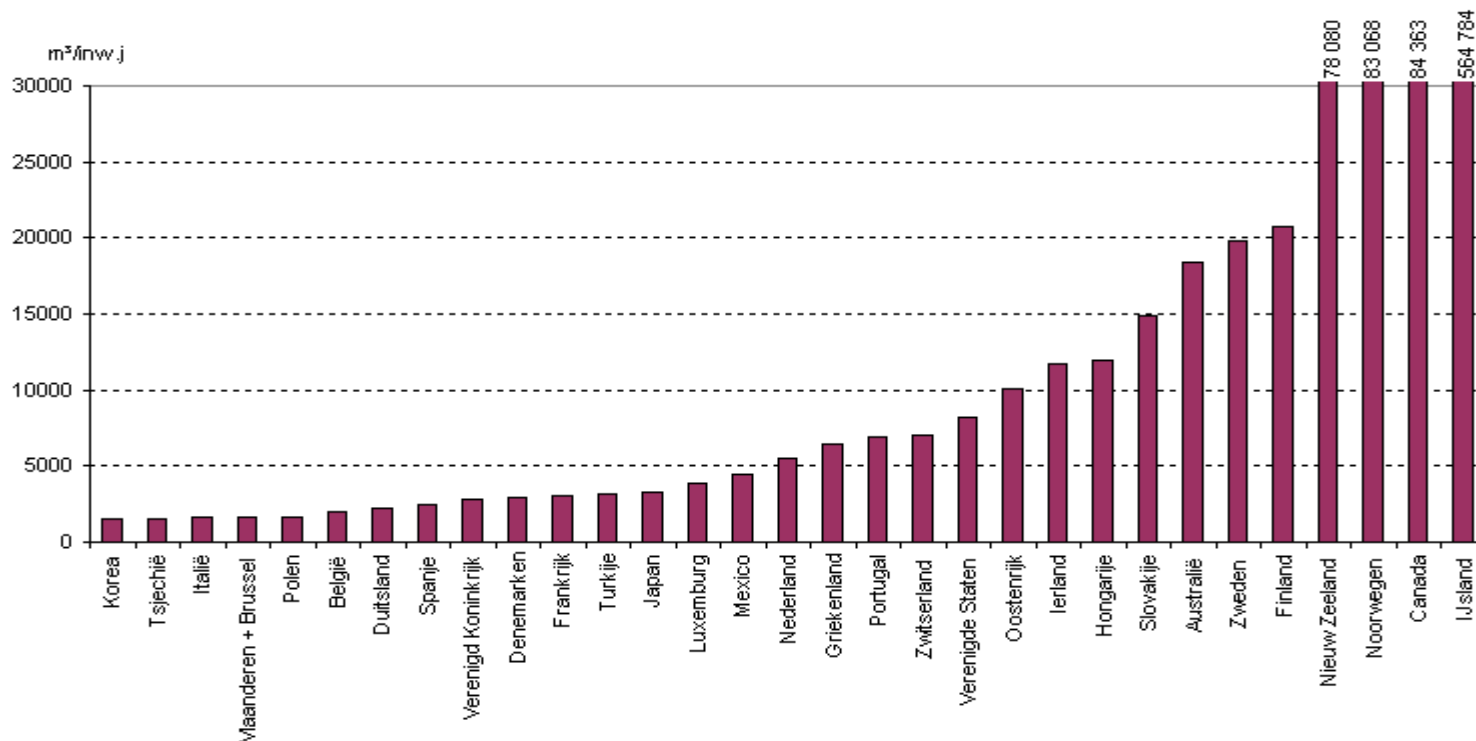
EUROSAI WGEA-meeting

7 October 2015

- 
1. Audit groundwater supplies in Flanders
 2. Stakeholders groundwater policy
 3. Traditional ways of communication
 4. New communication channel: working with the Environment and Nature advisory Council of Flanders

1. Audit Groundwater Supplies in Flanders

Flanders is a region with scarce groundwater resources



Water availability 2010 – Source: OECD & Flanders Environment Agency



1. Audit Groundwater Supplies

Status of the groundwater bodies

- European Water Framework Directive (2000): achieve good groundwater status by 2015 (extension of the deadline possible until 2021 or 2027 in specific cases)
- Status of the groundwater bodies in the river basin management plans 2010-2015: 14 of the 42 groundwater bodies are not in good quantitative status (6 of them in the Sokkel groundwater system)
- Status of the groundwater bodies in the Draft River Basin Management Plans 2016-2021: 8 of the 42 groundwater bodies are not in a good quantitative status (4 of them in the Sokkel groundwater system)

Scope of the audit

Examine how the Flemish authorities used the legal instruments such as permits, taxation and grey water subsidies in order to improve the groundwater status .



1. Audit Groundwater Supplies – Findings

- Slow implementation of the measures of the Program of measures 2010-2015 concerning the 3 instruments → postponement until 2021 (2027)
- Permit policy seems to be successful but not for all the endangered groundwater bodies and the policy is inadequately enacted
- Selective tax rises since 2010 have resulted in a better attuning of taxation to groundwater body quantity
- The grey water policy was not successful: only 2 projects achieved
- All 3 instruments decreased the use of groundwater, especially in the most vulnerable Sokkel system



1. Audit Groundwater Supplies - Recommendations

General recommendations

- Follow up the implementation of the measures, correctly determinate the status of the groundwater bodies and report periodically about the status monitoring results
- Take care of the interconnection of the databases

Permits and taxation

- Differentiate more as a function of the status of the groundwater bodies in all groundwater systems
- Anchor the permit policy in the regulation and make clear guidelines
- Consider the calculation of the tax starting from the location and the volume of consumption rather than by the consumer group

Grey water subsidies

- Evaluate the added value of the subsidies compared to other instruments



2. Stakeholders Groundwater Policy

Authorities: ministers responsible for environment and nature, economy and agriculture; agencies active in the sector of water, nature, economy and agriculture.

Universities, knowledge centres and engineering firms

Consumers of groundwater:

- water companies (63,2% of the groundwater consumption)
- other consumers (36,8%):
 - industry (49,2%)
 - agriculture (42,8%)
 - business and services (8%)



3. Traditional Communication Channels

- Press release and report on the website of the Court of Audit
- Send the paper and digital report to the stakeholders (ministers, administration, water companies, knowledge centres in the water sector, Environment and Nature advisory Council, other control authorities)
- Publication as a parliamentary document (on paper and digital on the website of the Flemish Parliament)
- Systematic discussion of the reports of the Court of Audit in the Commission for environment of the Parliament + live broadcast by streaming
- Annual follow-up of the recommendations in the policy letter of the minister



4. New Communication Channel: Minaraad Flemish Environment and Nature advisory Council

Strategic advisory council for the Environment, Nature and Energy of the Flemish Government

- Mission: study, recommend or advise on all matters concerning the environmental and nature conservation policy in Flanders; upon its own initiative or upon the demand of the Government or the Parliament.
- Organisation of public hearings in preparation for advices
- Configuration of the council: 24 members:
 - environmental associations (8)
 - hunters and landowners associations (2)
 - socio-economic organizations (6)
 - socio-cultural organizations (consumers and families)(2)
 - provinces, cities and municipalities (2)
 - experts (4).



4. New Communication Channel: Presentation in the Minaraad

- 26 March 2015: Hearing on “A groundwater policy for the management and the recovery of de groundwater supplies in Flanders”
- 30 participants: members of the Minaraad, federation of the water companies, federation of the food industry, universities, engineering firms and knowledge centers in the water sector, government agencies, cities, Member of Parliament, strategic advisory council for agriculture.
- Presentations of the Court of Audit and the Flemish Environmental Agency: focus on the recommendations of the report
- Discussion with the participants
- Report of the hearing on the Minaraad website



5. Conclusions – Lessons Learned

- Use of a forum as the Minaraad is an interesting additional way of communicating your message to the stakeholders
- A hearing with the auditor and the auditee makes it possible to have a discussion about the audit and the response of the authorities with experts and representatives of the stakeholders
- The participation of the auditee at a public hearing can be an additional guarantee for the realization of the recommendations of the audit



6. Practical information

- E-copy of the original report in Dutch and the abstract in English is available at:
<https://www.rekenhof.be/EN/Publications/Fiche.html?id=d603d7af-bfao-4780-gdco-dc25d32a8422>
- E-copy of the abstract in French is available at:
<https://www.rekenhof.be/FR/Publications/Fiche.html?id=d603d7af-bfao-4780-gdco-dc25d32a8422>



Any questions?