

# PRESS RELEASE



The RIPARIAS project has received funding from the LIFE Programme of the European Union



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Launch of LIFE RIPARIAS: 7 million euros against invasive alien species in Belgium**

### **Regions join forces to take up this cross-border challenge**

Invasive Alien Species (IAS) have been recognised worldwide as a major threat to biodiversity. LIFE RIPARIAS has been launched to tackle this challenge across Belgium.

The project aims at optimising the management of IAS over the next 6 years. It focuses on several invasive plant and crayfish species in river areas and ponds. It is piloted in the Dyle, Senne, and Marcq river basins.

There are currently 66 species on the list of IAS of concern at European level, out of which 12 plants and 3 crayfish species which are already widespread or may emerge in Belgium. The latter are targeted by the project, together with further species listed on an upcoming Belgian alert list. To name just a few: giant hogweeds strongly compete with native vegetation and can result in serious burns in case of skin contact. The red swamp crayfish has been detected in several areas, with problematic effects not only on our only native crayfish but more broadly on aquatic plants, amphibians and fish. The water primrose grows very rapidly and can cover the entire water surface, to the detriment of native water plants and animals.

It is therefore crucial to take cost efficient decisions, building on best available evidence and management practices for both widespread and emerging species.

Strong collaboration between the three regions of Belgium is key to this project, as IAS spread beyond geographical borders. Partners range from public bodies, academia and associations, all committed to work together. Surveillance and management activities will be coordinated, so as to maximise efficiency.

Active participation and cooperation between decision-makers, field managers and the general public are essential to ensure the success of this project. Informative booklets and best practice management guides will be developed to facilitate the identification and management on the ground. Information and training sessions are also planned to share knowledge as widely as possible. There will also be volunteering opportunities: all hands are welcome!

This innovative project is co-funded by the European Union and the three Belgian regional authorities for a total estimated budget of about 7 million euros. LIFE RIPARIAS is made possible through funding from the EU LIFE programme<sup>1</sup> Nature and Biodiversity.

<sup>1</sup> [https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/life\\_en](https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/life_en)

With the LIFE RIPARIAS project (Reaching Integrated and Prompt Action in Response to Invasive Alien Species), Belgian authorities pool their resources together to optimise the management of invasive alien species in river areas and ponds across regional borders. This project is made possible with co-funding from the European Union as part of the LIFE Programme. For more information, please refer to the LIFE RIPARIAS' website: [www.riparias.be](http://www.riparias.be)

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#### For more information:

- Marie Patinet: LIFE RIPARIAS Communication Officer  
Email : [info@riparias.be](mailto:info@riparias.be)  
Phone : 081 62 25 47
- LIFE RIPARIAS' website: <http://www.riparias.be>

#### Coordinating beneficiary



#### Associated beneficiaries



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