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Conference Abstract

Six Years, Three Regions, One Shared Challenge: The LIFE RIPARIAS story

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Abstract

Invasive alien species do not recognise administrative borders - and neither should their management.

For six years, the LIFE RIPARIAS project has brought together Belgium's three regions, scientists, public authorities, and field managers to tackle one of the most pressing threats to biodiversity: biological invasions. Supported by a €7 million budget, the project focused on invasive plants and crayfish species affecting rivers, wetlands, and ponds, while developing innovative approaches to guide management decisions across jurisdictions.

From pilot actions in the Dyle, Senne, and Marcq river basins to the development of evidence-based decision-support tools, LIFE RIPARIAS has sought to transform fragmented responses into a coordinated national strategy. The project combined scientific expertise, field experience, stakeholder engagement, and public awareness to improve surveillance, prioritisation, and management of both widespread and emerging invasive alien species.

As LIFE RIPARIAS comes to an end in 2026, this presentation will look back on six years of collaboration, innovation, successes, and challenges. We will present the project's major achievements, focus on practical lessons learned during management actions, and

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reflect on how science-driven management maximises the effectiveness of investments in nature conservation.

Beyond its Belgian context, LIFE RIPARIAS offers valuable insights for any region seeking to address biological invasions through cooperation, adaptive management, and evidence-based decision-making.

Keywords

Cross-border collaboration; Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR); Data-driven prioritization; Evidence-based action; Adaptive management; Stakeholder engagement; LIFE RIPARIAS

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Author contributions

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Conflicts of interest

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.