

A year filled with challenges and opportunities

The pandemic turned 2020 into an extraordinary year. Furthermore, the extreme dry and hot start to the year added further challenges to the provision of drinking water. It was essential to evaluate quickly and act fast. The digitisation we had implemented some years ago was a great help: it made us **more agile and more resilient**.

And resilience is exactly what we will need in the coming years. Climate change has a major impact on the water supply. The way in which we treat water has changed too: we use less water as a whole, but use it more when it's dry and hot. This demonstrates the importance of a **climate-proof water supply with a high peak capacity**. In our effort to achieve this we invested record amounts in renewing the pipework and renovating and expanding our water production centres over the last couple of years. At the same time, we also invested in protecting our water sources, tapping into alternative water sources, developing decentralised water production and, last but not least, in tracking down and tackling loss due to leaks. These efforts will continue in the coming years.

Innovation and collaboration both play a key role in every domain. Smart partnerships within the wider water sector reinforce the activities of every partner and allow us to extend our boundaries. We are therefore keen to team up with domestic and foreign partners and water companies, and we are actively involved in different workgroups, consultative bodies and sector associations. Therefore, our partnerships deserve an important place in our activities report ([jaarverslag2020.dewatergroep.be](#)).

So, behind the scenes, there are many activities which are invisible to our customers. They think it is quite normal that clean water flows out of the tap whenever they want it. And quite right too. Still, we must become even more aware of **water's true value**. In the past year, we noticed a change of mind, there is more awareness regarding water, water shortage, climate change, and so on. And that is a good thing, because awareness is an important component in the changes we foresee in the way in which we provide water.



Hans Goossens
Director-General De Watergroep



Brecht Vermeulen
Chairman De Watergroep

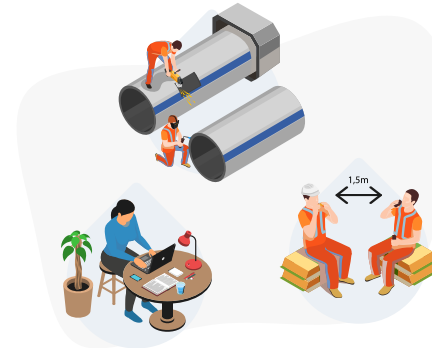
Focus on the customer



In 2020, we continued to build an enterprise with customers as its core focus. Via 'customer journeys' we examined our service through the eyes of the customer. We used surveys to delve deeper into their experiences. And with digital invoices and forms we make their life even easier. We gave this digitisation a boost with our very first discount activity.

Water makers

We currently employ more than 1,600 water makers to ensure that water comes out of the tap now and in the future. With the outbreak of the corona crisis, their safety and well-being became more important than ever to us. We turned to digital means as much as possible for work, training and social interaction.



Find out more about our activities in 2020 on
[jaarverslag2020.dewatergroep.be](#)



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An agile and resilient water company

Activity report 2020



[jaarverslag2020.dewatergroep.be](#)



Drinking water

De Watergroep supplies drinking water to more than 3.2 million customers, which makes it the largest drinking water company in Flanders. We provide a sustainable and safe drinking water infrastructure, allowing our customers to enjoy a permanent supply of high-quality water. We are also intent on tackling water loss and continuously invest in new technology enabling us to monitor the quality and safety of our drinking water even more carefully.



+ 21 207
connections
in 2020



34 367 km
pipework



3 277 704
residents in
catchment area



177
districts

Collaboration between
the departments



Quality system &
correct behaviour



Continuous
improvement



Customer-oriented
philosophy and approach

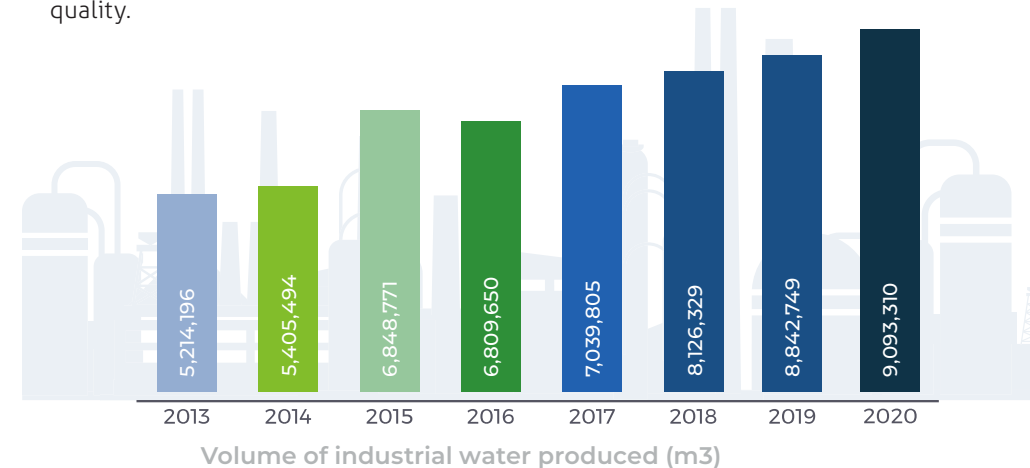


With enthusiastic &
talented employees



Industrial water

In 2020, De Watergroep addressed the specific needs of industrial customers, supplying over 9.1 million m³ of water. In doing so, De Watergroep selects a sustainable and suitable source of water on the premises of its industrial customers (such as river water, rain water or effluent from industrial water purification) and converts this into the required end quality.



Innovative company

The increasing water shortage, digital evolution ... these all bring incredible challenges, but at the same time opportunities. In 2020, De Watergroep joined others in searching for futureproof solutions. We do this in collaboration with partners from the private and public sector.



Decentralised &
circular water



Energy from
water



Smart water
company
(Industry 4.0)

Waste water



- Number of new drain connections +
- Metres of drain investigated by camera
- Advice given to cities and districts
- Interventions in the network of drains
- New Riopact associates

2019

↑ 1,948

↑ 109,292

↑ 787

↑ 2,271

↑ 2

2020

↑ 2,481

↑ 144,379

↑ 966

↑ 2,433

↑ 3

Climate and sustainable enterprise

Climate change is exerting pressure on our drinking water supplies. Once again, in 2020, we worked on measures to cope with the increasing water scarcity. The focus lies on the protection and diversification of our water sources. Our 'SDG Pioneer' award is the icing on the cake, and wonderful demonstration of the fact that De Watergroep is a sustainable and climate-friendly company.

