

Third National Report of Belgium to the Convention on Biological Diversity

D. THEMATIC AREAS

Marine and coastal biological diversity

General

153. Do your country's strategies and action plans include the following? Please use an "X" to indicate your response. (decisions II/10 and IV/15)	
a) Developing new marine and coastal protected areas	X
b) Improving the management of existing marine and coastal protected areas	X
c) Building capacity within the country for management of marine and coastal resources, including through educational programmes and targeted research initiatives (if yes, please elaborate on types of initiatives in the box below)	X
d) Instituting improved integrated marine and coastal area management (including catchments management) in order to reduce sediment and nutrient loads into the marine environment	X
e) Protection of areas important for reproduction, such as spawning and nursery areas	X
f) Improving sewage and other waste treatment	X
g) Controlling excessive fishing and destructive fishing practices	
h) Developing a comprehensive oceans policy (if yes, please indicate current stage of development in the box below)	X
i) Incorporation of local and traditional knowledge into management of marine and coastal resources (if yes, please elaborate on types of management arrangements in the box below)	
j) Others (please specify below)	
k) Not applicable	
Please elaborate on the above activities and list any other priority actions relating to conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity.	
<p>North Sea: the Marine Ecosystem Management Department of the RBINS coordinates the research of sea birds and sea mammals that end up on our beaches or are found at sea or caught by mistake. The Department makes sure that the carcasses of stranded marine mammals are made available for scientific research aiming to develop mechanisms to measure the quality of the marine environment. Since 1992, the Institute of Nature Conservation performs monitoring programmes concerning oil pollution at sea (through 'beached bird surveys') and the distribution and breeding biology of seabirds.</p> <p>Flemish Region: in the framework of LIFE Nature projects in Natura 2000 areas in the coastal region site-specific research and nature development and rehabilitation actions of dune and grass land are ongoing, as well as sensibilisation and education programmes through the visitor centres of the nature reserves at the coast.</p> <p>Management of Natura 2000 sites (SACs & SPAs) is still being established in some sites but methods continue to be refined. The Flemish Region is contributing to an EU expert group which is developing generic guidance for the management of marine Natura 2000 sites. Protected sites designated in the coastal zone extend generally to the low mean watermark. Management plans are already in place</p>	

on many of these sites, for other sites the plans and conservation objectives are in preparation. The Flemish Region also participates in an EU Integrated Coastal Zone management project.

Since 2004, the **Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Security and Environment**, DG Environment is part of the coordination centre for Integrated Coastal Zone Management.

Implementation of Integrated Marine and Coastal Area Management

154. Has your country established and/or strengthened institutional, administrative and legislative arrangements for the development of integrated management of marine and coastal ecosystems?

a) No	
b) Early stages of development	X
c) Advanced stages of development	
d) Arrangements in place (please provide details below)	
e) Not applicable	

Further comments on the current status of implementation of integrated marine and coastal area management.

In 2001, a coordination center for Integrated Coastal Zone Management has been established. It acts as a point of contact in the coastal zone where cross-sectoral themes are discussed on a local basis. The links between these local discussions and the more 'central' decision making process are ensured through a double system: first, a representative from this coordination center is invited to the higher level (and international) discussions and meetings; secondly, the Federal Government subsidises the work of the coordination center and takes part to its discussions including with the local representatives. By doing so, a win-win situation is created. Under these arrangements, an inventory of the sea-land interactions (and vice versa) is underway. This was made possible through the European Recommendation on ICZM. This work will include the identification of areas in need of further integration.

155. Has your country implemented ecosystem-based management of marine and coastal resources, for example through integration of coastal management and watershed management, or through integrated multidisciplinary coastal and ocean management?

a) No	
b) Early stages of development	X
c) Advanced stages of development	X
d) Arrangements in place (please provide details below)	
e) Not applicable	

Further comments on the current status of application of the ecosystem to management of marine and coastal resources.

b) for the marine resources.

c) for the coastal resources: through implementation of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management and through the review process of the spatial and land use planning (**Flemish Region**).

Marine and Coastal Living Resources

156. Has your country identified components of your marine and coastal ecosystems, which are critical for their functioning, as well as key threats to those ecosystems?

a) No	
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b) Plans for a comprehensive assessment of marine and coastal ecosystems are in place (please provide details below)	
c) A comprehensive assessment is currently in progress	
d) Critical ecosystem components have been identified, and management plans for them are being developed (please provide details below)	X
e) Management plans for important components of marine and coastal ecosystems are in place (please provide details below)	
f) Not applicable	
Further comments on the current status of assessment, monitoring and research relating to marine and coastal ecosystems, as well as key threats to them	
<p>North Sea: two Habitats Directive and three Birds Directive areas are under designation. This designation takes place within the framework of the Law on the Marine Environment.</p> <p>Flemish Region: for the nature reserves and Natura 2000 areas in the coastal area, conservation objectives and management plans are being developed. Reporting on monitoring and research data is included in the bi-annual Nature Reports of the Institute of Nature Conservation.</p> <p>Specific chapters of the publication Biodiversity in Belgium deal with the marine and coastal ecosystems.</p>	

157. Is your country undertaking the following activities to implement the Convention's work plan on coral reefs? Please use an "X" to indicate your response.				
Activities	Not implemented nor a priority	Not implemented but a priority	Currently implemented	Not applicable
a) Ecological assessment and monitoring of reefs				X
b) Socio-economic assessment and monitoring of communities and stakeholders			X	X
c) Management, particularly through application of integrated coastal management and marine and coastal protected areas in coral reef environments			X	X
d) Identification and implementation of additional and alternative measures for securing livelihoods of people who directly depend on coral reef services				X
e) Stakeholder partnerships, community participation programmes and public education campaigns			X	X

f) Provision of training and career opportunities for marine taxonomists and ecologists			X	X
g) Development of early warning systems of coral bleaching				X
h) Development of a rapid response capability to document coral bleaching and mortality				X
i) Restoration and rehabilitation of degraded coral reef habitats				X
j) Others (please specify below)				X
Please elaborate on ongoing activities.				
The Belgian part of the North Sea contains no coral reefs. Therefore, 'not applicable' has been ticked in relation to the Belgian marine waters.				
b, c, e, f) activities ticked as 'currently implemented' are undertaken through cooperation activities by the Flemish Region . A specific post-graduate training programme for foreign students from tropical countries include aspects on coral reefs, mangrove and lagoon ecosystems.				

Marine and Coastal Protected Areas

158. Which of the following statements can best describe the current status of marine and coastal protected areas in your country? Please use an "X" to indicate your response.	
a) Marine and coastal protected areas have been declared and gazetted (please indicate below how many)	X
b) Management plans for these marine and coastal protected areas have been developed with involvement of all stakeholders	X
c) Effective management with enforcement and monitoring has been put in place	X
d) A national system or network of marine and coastal protected areas is under development	X
e) A national system or network of marine and coastal protected areas has been put in place	
f) The national system of marine and coastal protected areas includes areas managed for purpose of sustainable use, which may allow extractive activities	X
g) The national system of marine and coastal protected areas includes areas which exclude extractive uses	X
h) The national system of marine and coastal protected areas is surrounded by sustainable management practices over the wider marine and coastal environment.	
i) Other (please describe below)	
j) Not applicable	
Further comments on the current status of marine and coastal protected areas.	

a) **Flemish Region:** dunes in the coastal area are protected by Law. The two main Natura 2000 site complexes that have been designated, one SPA and one SAC for small parts overlapping, cover most of the natural areas in the coastal zone.

Three main sites are recognised as NGO nature reserve, for a total surface of about 74 ha. Eleven sites are recognised as nature reserves of the Flemish administration (Nature Division) with a total surface of 1,032 ha. There is of course also an overlap between the reserves and Natura 2000 sites.

b, c) **Flemish Region:** for the Natura 2000 sites, conservation objectives and management plans are being developed. Inventory and consultation of and communication with stakeholders is a key part of these plans. For recognised nature reserves, a management plan exists and is implemented, monitoring actions and reporting are included in these plans.

d) **North Sea:** the establishment of Marine Protected Areas is foreseen in the Law on the Marine Environment (so-called MMM law). A Royal Decree is in preparation.

f) **Flemish Region:** Natura 2000 sites are areas which aim to contribute to the maintenance of biodiversity in Europe but do not require the exclusion of natural resource use so long as it does not have a significant effect on the site's management. New extractive activities or developments within a site likely to have a significant effect on the site's management are subject to an appropriate assessment.

g) **North Sea:** the extraction of non-living resources is not allowed within MPA's. Fishery activities are not yet regulated within MPA's.

Mariculture

159. Is your country applying the following techniques aimed at minimising adverse impacts of mariculture on marine and coastal biodiversity? Please check all that apply.

a)	Application of environmental impact assessments for mariculture developments	
b)	Development and application of effective site selection methods in the framework of integrated marine and coastal area management	
c)	Development of effective methods for effluent and waste control	
d)	Development of appropriate genetic resource management plans at the hatchery level	
e)	Development of controlled hatchery and genetically sound reproduction methods in order to avoid seed collection from nature.	
f)	If seed collection from nature cannot be avoided, development of environmentally sound practices for spat collecting operations, including use of selective fishing gear to avoid by-catch	
g)	Use of native species and subspecies in mariculture	
h)	Implementation of effective measures to prevent the inadvertent release of mariculture species and fertile polypoids.	
i)	Use of proper methods of breeding and proper places of releasing in order to protect genetic diversity	
j)	Minimising the use of antibiotics through better husbandry techniques	

k) Use of selective methods in commercial fishing to avoid or minimise by-catch	
l) Considering traditional knowledge, where applicable, as a source to develop sustainable mariculture techniques	
m) Not applicable	X
Further comments on techniques that aim at minimising adverse impacts of mariculture on marine and coastal biodiversity.	
North Sea: there is currently no mariculture in Belgian waters.	
The laboratory of Aquaculture (Ghent University) is involved in overseas projects to minimise environmental impacts of fish and shellfish hatchery activities (EU-INCO and Belgian cooperation projects).	

Alien Species and Genotypes

160. Has your country put in place mechanisms to control pathways of introduction of alien species in the marine and coastal environment? Please check all that apply and elaborate on types of measures in the space below.	
a) No	X
b) Mechanisms to control potential invasions from ballast water have been put in place (please provide details below)	
c) Mechanisms to control potential invasions from hull fouling have been put in place (please provide details below)	
d) Mechanisms to control potential invasions from aquaculture have been put in place (please provide details below)	
e) Mechanisms to control potential invasions from accidental releases, such as aquarium releases, have been put in place	
f) Not applicable	
Further comments on the current status of activities relating to prevention of introductions of alien species in the marine and coastal environment, as well as any eradication activities.	
Belgium takes part in IMO and its related instruments such as the Convention on ballast water.	

Box LXIV.

<p>Please elaborate below on the implementation of this programme of work and associated decisions specifically focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) outcomes and impacts of actions taken; b) contribution to the achievement of the goals of the Strategic Plan of the Convention; c) contribution to progress towards the 2010 target; d) progress in implementing national biodiversity strategies and action plans; e) contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals; f) constraints encountered in implementation.
<p>Federal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FPSD I (2000-2004): in order to fulfil the international commitments related to the marine environment, an action programme integrated at Federal level will be set up to round off the measures already taken by the Regions and those they are still to take within their own areas of

competence. The objectives of this action programme will include those determined at international level. This programme will cover, among other things, the implementation of the OSPAR strategies for (1) hazardous substances, (2) radioactive substances, (3) eutrophication, (4) the protection of ecosystems and biodiversity, and (5) offshore activities;

- FPSD II (2004-2008): action 20 (task force North Sea, coast guard).