

The Coastal Portal – A one stop shop for spatial data of the Belgian North Sea and coast

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Nowadays there are geo- and data portals on the web for all kinds of themes with a Belgian focus. This overwhelming variety of portals makes it difficult for potential users looking for maps to find their way. In order to guide interested persons through the multitude of applications and sources, there is a need for a central referral portal. This need is met by the Coastal Portal, which can be seen as the successor of the Coastal Atlas (Province of West Flanders). The Coastal Portal aims to provide user-friendly and thematic access to information and data products on user functions and monitoring activities in the Belgian part of the North Sea and the coastal zone, including beaches, dunes and polders. To this end, both in-house and a selection of external interactive data products and maps (WMS and others) are visualised in the form of GIS layers with the aim of referring the user to the original portal in question for more information. This way, the aim is to give more visibility to the original portals or data suppliers.

In addition to interactive maps, much attention is also paid to the layout of pre-prepared static maps in function of the needs of the professional user. The portal will be systematically updated and expanded, both in terms of relevant information products and functionalities, and tries as much as possible to respond to the needs of the professional user.

The integrated character of this portal contributes to the European efforts towards a sustainable integrated maritime policy and coastal zone management. Furthermore, the Coastal Portal provides a close connection with the Compendium for Coast and Sea, which aims at combining disperse information and data from Flemish and Belgian marine and maritime research.

Keywords: Spatial data; GIS; Belgian part of the North Sea; Belgian coast; Monitoring; User functions; Marine life; Environment