

## **TISBE & APHIA: ON-LINE BIOLOGICAL DATABASES FOR MARINE SPECIES IN BELGIUM AND ADJACENT AREAS**

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TISBE & APHIA are some of the databases maintained by the Flanders Marine Data- and Information Centre (VMDC) of the Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ). TISBE stands for Taxonomical Information System for the BELgian continental shelf and aims at becoming a biogeographic register for Belgian marine species and APHIA is VLIZ's North Sea species register. In TISBE, species absent/present are stored as detailed as possible for the Belgian continental shelf, the Schelde Estuary and Northern France, with diminishing resolution for areas further away. Distribution records outside our focal area certainly are valuable in terms of giving an important view on the relative geographic extension of these species. Besides biogeographical information stored in TISBE, APHIA is provided with all the taxonomical information stored in a hierarchical structure. We tried as much as possible to include the original author and date of publication and to refer to original publications. We attended to include the type taxon of the genera, to provide a complete synonymy list, and each time a reference to the source is made (which could be either a publication or a specialist in the field). Apart from the 'hard' taxonomic information, we will continue to store also extra information related to the species: like vernacular names, arguments for certain systematic decisions, their validity, information on type material, spelling variations, pictures, original descriptions in full text (in a downloadable format) for older publications that often are very expensive and hard to find.

Till now, there are about 13700 taxa in our databases and about 3200 distribution records related to them. We realise that TISBE/APHIA are far from complete, but we believe that, except for a few groups, a large part and certainly for the larger animals and plants, our overview becomes reasonably complete. As such, we decided not to wait any longer in providing a web application for both TISBE and APHIA (on-line at <http://www.vliz.be/vmdcdata/tisbe> and <http://www.vliz.be/vmdcdata/aphia>). We hope that in a second step, the online interface of TISBE/APHIA will further lead in a firm continuation of the existing collaboration between the datamanagers (we) and the specialists in the field. Whereas we do not feel competent and do not have the staff time to follow up the latest taxonomic developments in all groups that TISBE/APHIA covers, we are to rely on the will of the specialist to provide us with accurate references and to assist in interpreting the taxonomy. Once we have extracted the information from these literatures, the specialist is to play a key role within the quality control. For the moment, et encore plus in the future, TISBE/APHIA will be a major source of information on Belgium's marine biodiversity.