

BENCORE, THE BELGIAN NETWORK FOR COASTAL RESEARCH

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The Belgian Continental Shelf covers an area of 3600 km², has a coastline of 65 kilometers, represents less than 1 percent of the whole North Sea and about 0.002 percent of 'Old Europe's' coastline. An inventory shows that despite this small area more than 100 research institutes, 40 companies and NGO's and about 16 administrations are involved or have responsibilities for coastal and marine management and research. However the links existing at present between and within the communities of coastal science, policy and practice are weak and suffer from fragmentation. Additionally the responsibilities for integrated coastal zone management are shared between the Federal Ministry and the Flemish Region and there is an extra gap between institutes from both Flemish and Walloon Regions.

Recently launched, BeNCoRe, the Belgian network for coastal research aims at initiating and facilitating knowledge sharing and cooperation between these Belgian marine institutes. The main task of BeNCoRe is to ensure, stimulate and facilitate the process of knowledge exchange and cooperation between network participants at the national level and European-wide through ENCORA, the European Platform for Coastal Research, Coordination Action.

So far 87 institutes showed interest on becoming BeNCoRe partner of which 67 laboratories or sections at universities, 13 governmental institutes and 6 consultant and private companies. The BeNCoRe network welcomes any new institutes from the coastal community of Belgium and more in particular coastal scientists, coastal engineers, planners and expert consultants and coastal practitioners, managers and policymakers.

Central for the Belgian Network for Coastal Research is the web-directory: <http://www.bencore.be>. The website will become the most important tool for disseminating information and should become the virtual link within the network. Furthermore the networking activities of BeNCoRe are facilitated through a National Coordination Office and will be managed by the BeNCoRe bureau with scientific representatives and policymakers from both regions.