

[2005-2010]

**Belgian report
on the implementation of the ICZM
Recommendation 2002/413/EG
for the period 2005-2010**





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1. INTRODUCTION

The European Parliament and Council Recommendation on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (2002/413/EC – further referred to as the “ICZM Recommendation”)¹ invited Member States to set up national strategies for integrated coastal zone management. In 2006 the majority of the coastal Member States, including Belgium, reported on the implementation of the Recommendation.

Based on these national reports, the Commission conducted an evaluation and concluded in its Communication of 2007² that further efforts and continued support were needed to advance the implementation of integrated coastal zone management in Europe.

The approach and principles of integrated coastal zone management as expressed in the Recommendation remained valid for this purpose. In the meantime, the Commission has launched a major initiative to support the exchange of practices and tools for ICZM in Europe (“OURCOAST”). Also new strategies and projects for ICZM were launched in some Member States. For the Mediterranean, a Protocol was negotiated in the context of the Barcelona Convention and signed by the EU in 2008.

However, the timeline set out in the ICZM Recommendation came to an end with the national reporting by the Member States in 2006 and the subsequent Commission Communication to the European Parliament and the Council. To ensure a coherent overview of the progress achieved since 2006, it was considered appropriate that coastal Member States provide an update of the progress in implementing ICZM.

This reports will serve as an information source on the current state of implementation, to share experience on the implementation of the ICZM Recommendation but also to inform the directions for a follow-up to the ICZM Recommendation of 2002. The reflections towards a new or different instrument to support ICZM in the long-term have started in 2009 with the report of a Working Group and discussions in the EU ICZM Expert Group. Apart from adaptations based on the experience with the implementation of the 2002 Recommendation, a key aspect of the reflections will be the coherence and complementarity to new EU policies such as the overarching EU Integrated Maritime Policy, Adaptation to Climate Change, and the recent Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

The coastal Member States were therefore invited to draw up a new national report on the progress achieved since 2006 as regards the implementation of integrated coastal zone management, covering the period from 2006 to 2010. To facilitate the exchange of information between member states, it was strongly recommended to produce an English version of the report. Reporting guidance was provided by the European Commission. This report is structured according to this reporting guidance.

The national report will be sent to the Commission, DG Environment, in December 2010.

¹ 2002/413/EC, OJ L148 of 6.6.2002

² COM(2007)308 final, 7.6.2007.

2. SUMMARY ON ICZM IN BELGIUM UP TO 2006

Belgium does not have an ICZM strategy as such. ICZM is implemented by different coastal actors and at different levels. The actors are diverse: the government and their administrations at local, regional and national level, NGO's, private companies, networking organisations, scientific research centres, etc.

Their main focus is not ICZM, but they can influence the management of the coast and develop marine and coastal policies. One coordinating structure specifically for ICZM has been established, who's key task is to stimulate and promote the sustainable and integrated management of the Belgian coastal zone: the Coordination centre on ICZM. In 2007 a protocol was signed between partners at provincial, regional (Flanders) and national level (joined in 2009) agreeing to further support the centre which started as a project.

The ICZM process should be seen in a broad context and in relation to many other processes in the marine and coastal area, for example the Water framework Directive and Marine Spatial Planning. ICZM has at present mainly proven its usefulness dealing with local problems, bringing parties and stakeholders together, harmonising processes, jointly looking for solutions, etc. ICZM is also valuable to stimulate communication and awareness raising on sustainable coastal development.

However, many other problems remain in order to improve the quality of the coastal and marine environment, and ICZM alone cannot and has not been able to solve the problems remaining such as recognised in the Quality Status report 2010 (QSR) of OSPAR. The QSR highlights important challenges for Belgium for example in terms of eutrophication and levels of contamination by hazardous substances.

3. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ICZM

In February 2006, the Belgian National report concerning the Recommendation of the European Commission on Integrated Management of Coastal Zones (2002/413/EC) was submitted. In chapter 6 (trends and recommendations) seven recommendations were formulated to further support ICZM in Belgium (see Annex). The current status of these issues is described below:

1. **Using indicators as scientific basis and policy-supporting instruments:** a set of 21 sustainability indicators for the coast is monitored in Belgium and many of other data sources are available to support policy decisions and monitoring the state of the coast.
2. **Stimulating and setting up concrete projects to illustrate sustainable coastal management:** during the period 2005-2010 several new initiatives and projects started, showing a concrete implementation of ICZM: e.g. Interreg project 120 km of coastal quality, ZENO, SUSCOD (see below). Also, an Award scheme was developed in 2007, within which Awards are given to sustainable coastal projects (www.dekustkijktverder.be). The Awards are granted every two years.
3. **Achieving greater involvement through a coastal forum:** the first coastal forum was organised in 2009 (see below).
4. **Achieving integration between competent bodies:** several initiatives have been taking to increase the cooperation between competent bodies. See below. There is no reporting of "integration" of competent bodies.

5. **Obtaining a higher level of integration in existing instruments:** when developing sectoral strategies or policy plans (see below for examples), there has been an improvement of the use of several existing instruments e.g. use of (strategic) Environmental Impact Assessment, use of participation techniques, use of SWOT-analysis. In the light of ICZM, it would be useful to evaluate the developments against the ICZM principles as described in the EU ICZM recommendation. This method has been applied in the SUSCOD project, screening the Integrated master plan for Flanders future coastal safety for this ICZM qualities. The technique proved valuable.
6. **Perspectives for long-term consultation and “adaptive management”:** new ways and networks for consultations were considered during the last years. For the marine environment an analysis was conducted evaluating the existing socio-economic advisory bodies for the marine environment. From this analysis, the possibilities for a consultation body specific for the marine environment will be studied. Also, the Coastal Forum is intended to develop towards a consultation body for coastal issues. Two specific issues were highlighted in the 2006 report:
 - The temporary status of the Coordination centre on ICZM. Since 2008 a protocol for 5 years is in place, including the possibility for extension, after positive evaluation. There is however no permanent engagement of the partners/administrations to support the Coordination centre.
 - Themes not analysed within the land/sea-interface exercise, such as fisheries. The federal government tries to involve other stakeholders and themes in the debate on the protection of the marine environment, such as fisheries, diving and tourism.
7. **Stimulating further reflection on future developments:** the 2006 report called for clear priorities, choices, responsibilities and instruments, in order to implement real integrated management. Quote “The final results is the integration of existing and future policy orientations, with regard to all relevant policy areas. A suitable framework must be developed for this, involving all departments, whether they are federal or regional”. Such a framework has not been developed, nor have priorities or choices for the coast been clarified in an integrated way. The developments in recent years still originated from a sector perspective, and it proves very difficult to break through the sector-oriented responsibilities, legislation and government structures. However, there is a tendency towards a closer collaboration between responsible authorities, and mostly efforts are made to consult and involve each other when developing new plans. On the other hand, because each authority set up its own steering groups or consultation procedures –involving to a large extent the same people – this is very time consuming for all parties. There are no joint efforts to inform or communicate towards the public. New ways towards better integration and more efficient consultation need to be aimed for.

Some authorities have proposed to work towards a joint and integrated long-term vision for the coast. However, it is not clear who should be the driver of this process.

Reporting question: Have legal instruments been adopted or amended in relation to ICZM?

No legal instruments specifically dealing with ICZM have been adopted. However, there have been legal changes for some land-sea interactions:

- 1) Fishing on the beach:

For a description of the problem: see State of Play – Implementation of Recommendation 2002/413/EC in Belgium. Update on the national reporting- June 2009.

Action taken: Fishing with gill nets in Belgium above the average low water line is still authorized, but the Ministerial Order of 21st December 2006 imposed several restrictions:

- the length and height of the authorized nets are at the most 50 m long and 80 cm high
- the number of gill nets per recreational fisherman is restricted
- multi-layer gill nets are prohibited.

These measures have been prolonged at the end of 2007, 2008 and 2009 in anticipation of final rules and regulations.

The Flemish government granted its final approval on 15th May 2009 for the species protection act in implementation of the Flemish nature decree. This act is essential as it provides the legal basis within nature policy to make arrangements for the protection of the porpoise. The act obliges the Flemish government to register accidental by catches or killings of this species and allows for the possibility to write a species protection plan including if necessary, prohibitions on current practices threatening the species.

The act took effect on 1st September 2009. Currently steps are being taken to update the Red List of Mammals. This step is necessary as a Ministerial Decree containing an approved Red List is mandatory prior to making a species protection plan.

Follow-up actions: Depending on the measures taken by the Flemish government, other points of action can be identified. For example: support in communication, applying and checking the new protective measures.

2) Coast line protection, storm surge, forecast, warning systems and managing the baseline

For a description of the problem: see State of Play – Implementation of Recommendation 2002/413/EC in Belgium. Update on the national reporting- June 2009. (*tekst hier over nemen?*)

Action taken: a Decree on Coast Line Protection is being drafted dd. 2010.

Reporting question: Have plans or programmes been adopted (e.g. spatial plans, coastal development strategies)?

Yes. The following new documents specific for the coast are relevant to mention:

- 1) Integrated master plan for Flanders future coastal safety (Coastal Devision-MDK, Flemish government): a master plan was agreed on in 2010 proposing general solutions to improve the coast against flooding. The time horizon is 2050. In a next phase, detailed plans for the coastal towns will be worked out.
- 2) Strategic plan for tourism and recreation at the coast (Tourism Flanders, Flemish government, and Westtoer): strategic visioning document and action plan for the period 2009-2014.
- 3) Conservation objectives for the coast (Agency for Nature and Forests, Flemish government): specific conservation objectives for the special protection areas in Flanders –including those at the coast- have been proposed in 2010, in the frame of the implementation of the birds and habitat directive.
- 4) Policy plan for the Marine Protected Areas in the Belgian part of the North Sea (DG Environment, federal government): this plan outlines strategic options and concrete actions for the MPA's.
- 5) Flemish fishery policy (Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Flemish government): An operational programme for the implementation of the National Strategic fisheries plan has been published in 2009. In 2009 consultations started for the implementation

of the action plan for sustainable development in the fisheries sector. This plan should be ready end of 2010.

Reporting question: Have coordination mechanisms been improved or new ones set-up?

Yes. The Coordination centre on ICZM was first established in 2001 as a project under the Objective 2 programme of the European Commission. After an evaluation of the Centre in 2006, the partners decided to sign a protocol on ICZM, in which they agreed to further support the Coordination centre and to use it as a tool and primary partner for ICZM.

The protocol was signed by the provincial government, the Flemish (regional) government and Flanders Marine Institute in 2007. The federal government (DG Environment) joined in 2009.

The work of the Coordination centre in terms of consultation, communication, raising awareness and providing a discussion platform proves useful. However, because the Centre's involvement and advice has an informal base and not a mandatory one, major changes towards a sustainable approach in important coastal issues lack. There is no mandate to take a decisive position or to force commitments to change.

In general, because ICZM is a non-statutory and voluntary approach, major changes lack and the weight given to ICZM remains limited.

Reporting question: Have coastal information systems been improved or developed?

The main coastal information systems in Belgian remain the same as before 2005. The federal government as well as the Flemish government keep investing in a coastal information system and monitoring.

Within the Coordination centre on ICZM, the coastal sustainability indicators are updated yearly – where possible. The coastal atlas (www.kustatlas.be) is being reviewed, and will become a more interactive information and mapping tool (launch foreseen in 2011).

Reporting question: Have pilot projects been started, have research or studies been launched?

Yes. During the period 2005-2010 Belgian partners have been involved in several new (research) projects with ICZM as a key topic or with ICZM relevant topics.

Partners include administrations as well as universities and scientific institutes. This shows a continued interest in the ICZM process by these partners. A collaboration between the different project is established where relevant.

Some examples:

- AMORE III - Combined Effect of Changing Hydroclimate and Human Activity on Coastal Ecosystem Health (Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO)): <http://www.ulb.ac.be/assoc/esa/AMORE/amore.htm>
- CLIMAR - Evaluation of climate change impacts and adaptation responses for marine activities (Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO)) : <http://www.arcadisbelgium.be/climar/>
- AS-MADE - Assessment of Marine Debris on the Belgian Continental Shelf: occurrence and effects (Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO)): <http://www.belspo.be/belspo/fedra/proj.asp?l=en&COD=SD/NS/12A>

- COREPOINT: Coastal Research and Policy Integration (Interreg IIIB, North West Europe programme): www.corepoint.ucc.ie
- IMCORE Innovative Management for Europe's Changing Coastal Resource. (Interreg IV B, North West Europe programme): www.imcore.eu
- C-Scope: Combining Sea and Coastal Planning (Interreg IV B, 2 seas programme): www.cscope.eu
- SUSCOD: Sustainable Coastal Development in Practice (Interreg IV B, North Sea programme)
- BLAST: Bringing Land and Sea together (Interreg IV B, North Sea programme)

Reporting question: What best-practices can be identified?

The Coordination centre on ICZM has contributed to the OURCOAST initiative of the European Commission, for which 350 cases on best practices were gathered. The following cases were delivered to the EC:

- Sustainability indicators for the coast
- Spatial structure plans for beach and dike
- Coastal atlas as communication and policy support instrument
- The Coordination Centre on ICZM as a coordinating body
- Sustainable beach management
- Awards for sustainable projects on the coast

These initiatives started before 2005, and have been explained in the national report of Belgium in 2006.

4. AN ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS IN ICZM AND THE STATE OF THE COAST

Reporting question: What progress has been made in enhancing institutional coordination and integration (horizontal between sectors, vertical between levels of governance)?

The coordinating structures as mentioned in the national report of 2006 (the coast guard and the coordination centre on ICZM) still exist.

In 2005 the regional (Flemish) coast guard partners were officially incorporated into the Coast Guard structure, which entailed a remodelling of objectives. This was ratified by the signing of an agreement of cooperation on 8 July 2005 by both Flemish and federal coast guard partners. Before the agreement of cooperation, the Flemish coast guard partners could only act as observers. The agreement of cooperation has ensured the equality of Flemish and federal coast guard partners.

The objectives of the Coordination centre have been revised, following an evaluation in 2006. As mentioned before, a protocol was signed by provincial, regional and federal authorities, in order to improve the vertical integration. All administrations having activities linked to the coast, are informed about new initiatives in a special Consultation body, working within the structure of the Coordination Centre. For the plans and strategies mentioned before, mostly

specific steering groups were used, involving other sectors, to stimulate the horizontal integration. The working of some of these consultation bodies could be optimized, but there is an increased awareness and preparedness to be involved and collaborate. This is also shown by some recent agreements that were signed, e.g. between the tourism and the coastal protection administration at Flemish level, and between the fisheries (Flemish) and environment (federal) administrations.

Reporting question: What progress has been made in enhancing participation?

Participation has been taken into account to a certain degree in all the ICZM related initiatives and gets more attention during the last 5 years.

During the drafting of the policy plan for the MPA's in the Belgian part of the North Sea public consultation meetings were organised.

In view of the establishment of Natura 2000 areas in the EEZ area, a public consultation was organised to receive scientific and socio-economic remarks on a proposed potential site of Community Importance (Habitats Directive) in the Belgian part of the North Sea. The scientific remarks were taken into account for the notification of the site to the European Commission and the socio-economic remarks will be taken into account for the future management of the site.

Furthermore, DG Environment issued an analysis evaluating the existing environmental socio-economic advisory bodies in Belgium. On the basis of this study, the DG Environment presently prepares a socio-economic consultation body to coordinate and strengthen the involvement of stakeholders in the marine environment policy.

The coastal division of the Flemish government, which is responsible for the Integrated master plan for Flanders future coastal safety, has developed a communication strategy, including public consultation, exhibitions, information evenings. Participation was an integral part of the strategy development.

The Flemish Department of Agriculture and Fisheries organised a stakeholder consultation on the EC Green paper on a reform of the Common Fisheries Policy in the summer of 2009.

In order to enhance the participation of the coastal stakeholders, the Coordination centre on ICZM started organising a coastal forum in 2009. This should become a yearly tradition, where stakeholder can interact with other stakeholders, politicians and administrations and express their concerns or discuss priority themes for the coast.

It can be concluded that the participation of coastal stakeholders has increased, but each administration is still approaching the stakeholders individually, concerning their own plans and topics. Consultation fatigue and confusion of who does what is a real risk. Joint efforts to inform or consult the coastal stakeholders should be considered. The Coastal Forum could potentially fulfil this role.

Reporting question: What progress has been made in establishing a knowledge-based approach to coastal planning and management (including the availability and use of information, availability and use of research, stimulation of education to support ICZM in long-term)?

On the federal level, a specific research program for coastal research exists, under the Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO): the Belgian Federal North Sea Research Program.

This programme aims to develop and consolidate the Belgian scientific expertise related to the North Sea ecosystem and to offer decision-makers the necessary scientific support for drawing up and carrying out North Sea related policies.

Since 1970 the North Sea research program has been implemented in different multi-annual phases. The seventh phase of North Sea research (2006-2010) is imbedded in the programme Science for Sustainable Development (SSD) and contains 14 research projects.

The information and data from the research projects as general publications are available through the BELSPO website and the Belgian Marine Data Centre (BMDC).

VLIZ already plays an important role in making coastal and marine data publically available through the Flanders marine data centre and linking this to educational programmes.

VLIZ as well as the province of West-Flanders develop educational initiatives in support of ICZM (e.g. Expedition Zeeleeuw, Planeet Zee/Planet Sea, Week van de Zee/Week of the Sea).

Reporting question: What progress has been achieved in making the use of coastal resources, including space, more rational and sustainable?

Little tangible progress has been made in making use of coastal resources more rational and sustainable.

Although initiatives and research are on-going, which could support this:

- an expert group on Marine Spatial Planning has been set-up in 2009, by the Coordinator centre on ICZM, within the C-Scope project.
- DG Environment started a bilateral consultation round in 2010 on MSP with the relevant federal and regional administrations, and an informal expert group.
- The coastal division issued an exploration for new possibilities for sand and gravel extraction; The Quest4D project (BELSPO) will focus on a better definition of the sediment and sediment transport system of the Belgian part of the North Sea in the frame of sustainable use of mineral resources. The continued extraction of sand and gravel is an important concern for Belgium.
- Consultation and research on sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in the Belgian part of the North Sea are ongoing (e.g. Wako II project (BELSPO)).

Reporting question: What progress has been achieved in making coastal zones more resilient and prepared for risks, including climate change?

See description under 1.2. concerning the Integrated master plan for Flanders future coastal safety.

Reporting question: How is the state of the coast evolving?

One of the instruments used to monitor the state of the coast are the coastal sustainability indicators, which are updated yearly by the Coordination Centre on ICZM in collaboration with Flanders Marine Institute. Data is gathered from a variety of scientific institutes and administrations. For each of the 21 indicators, the trend is described and interpreted within an ICZM context. The indicators are published on the internet, and every couple of years in a publication "The coastal compass".

Reporting question: Regarding state of the coast: Where has most progress been achieved in curbing unsustainable development trends?

No majors changes can be reported for the period 2005-2010.

Reporting question: Regarding state of the coast: What are hotspots or issues that still require significant action?

Important challenges lay in tackling unsustainable fisheries, extraction of sand and gravel, sustainable use of space on land and in the marine environment, further development of sustainable tourism and a better coordination between sectors.

Reporting question: What progress has been achieved in addressing planning and management across the land-sea boundary?

In the 2006 National ICZM report the main land-sea interface interactions and problems were presented (chapter 5). Since 2006 two progress reports have been developed under the North Sea and Oceans Steering Committee of the Coordination Committee for International Environmental Policy. These reports have been sent to the European Commission in response to the further implementation of the ICZM recommendation.

Reporting question: What progress has been achieved in addressing coastal issues in cross-border and/or regional sea context?

No specific changes to report in the period 2005-2010. Cross-border cooperation exist through concrete projects and through regional seas collaborations such as OSPAR, ICES, the ESF Marine Board, UNESCO-IOC, etc.

Reporting question: How can the performance of the country be rated in implementing the ICZM principles (e.g. on a scale from 1 to 10, what progress has been achieved in implementing the principle(s)?; what is the further potential for progress?)?

The progress indicators have been used to develop an ICZM specific indicator. A first evaluation using these indicators was done in 2005. The conclusion was described as follows: "All participants agreed that effective planning and management is present for the Belgian coastal zone. To this end, several instruments are available, such as legislation, structural plans, consultation forums, monitoring programmes and protection statutes. It was emphasised however, that these were not integrated.

Most participants were of the opinion that different elements are present to create a framework for sustainable management of the coast. Ad-hoc actions, inventory of problems and the start of specific guide lines for the coast are positively assessed examples.

Although aspects for ICZM are present, the implementation of the process is still below standard. According to the participants, problems remain with the effective involvement of coastal actors, an open communication from those responsible for coastal management, the implementation of good plans, but also and especially with the statute of drawn up ICZM plans and strategies.

Over half of the people involved are of the opinion that sufficient budget and the lack of any official consultative structure remain a problem.

The fourth phase in the process assesses the embedding of an integrated process at all policy levels. It was obvious from the test that especially in this matter improvements are to be made. As concerns the collaboration across the coastal and marine borders, this phase had a good score.

Also the accessibility of qualitative information needed to take timely, coherent and sound decisions was evaluated positively."

A follow-up evaluation is planned for end 2010. This will be a good opportunity to compare if fundamental changes for ICZM have taken place in Belgium. In the period 2000-2006, Belgium took an innovative approach concerning ICZM, but the initial ICZM momentum was not translated into formal procedures.

It is very difficult to rate the progress numeric (on a scale from 1 to 10). The descriptive method as used with the progress indicators is considered a better way to evaluate the progress.

5. OUTLOOK FOR FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION OF ICZM

The protocol for the Coordination Centre on ICZM ends in 2012. In 2011 the evaluation will determine the conditions for a new protocol.

However, the Coordination centre is there to stimulate and promote ICZM, but for a successful implementation it should be imbedded into the operational life of all coastal actors. Not only administration, but private actors, stakeholders and even individual.

6. PROCESS

This report was drafted by the Coordination centre on ICZM. It was then discussed and approved within the Coordination Centres Executive Committee and the North Sea and Oceans Steering Committee of the Coordination Committee for International Environmental Policy.

The Environmental and Nature Council of Flanders, the Fisheries and Agriculture Council of Flanders, the federal Council for Sustainable Development and the Social and economic Council of Flanders will be consulted and their reflections and the report will be send to the European Commission.