

# National Ocean Decade Committee for Belgium NDC-BE

## Annual Report 2024



### *National Ocean Decade Committee for Belgium Annual Report 2024*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Organisation of the NDC-BE

The Ocean Decade National Committee for Belgium (NDC-BE) is established as an open group, focusing on an active contribution to the Ocean Decade (OD). The committee consists of a core group and an open meeting. The core group and core group members formally represent organizations, administrations, and authorities at the federal, regional (sub-national) and local level that contribute with concrete actions to the OD challenges to achieve the OD objectives. Participation to the open meeting is voluntary and based on willingness to contribute with active communication and outreach, exchanges during the open meetings, and promotion and awareness raising on the Ocean Decade outside the meetings and in participants' networks.

Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ) is given mandate to provide secretariat support to the NDC-BE. VLIZ supports the secretariat with a 1FTE programme specialist (also covering the Ocean Decade secretariat for Flanders) and a part-time dedicated specialist in International Relations. The NDC-BE is supported by 18 active members, representing the diversity of ocean actors and stakeholders in Belgium.

Following the **operational guidelines**<sup>1</sup> of the IOC-UNESCO (2021) for the NDCs, the core activities of the NDC-BE are clustered in four core roles:

- Supporting national members in the co-design and co-delivery of Decade Actions (DA)
- Mobilizing resources and contributions
- Engaging with National Decade Committees operating in other countries
- Communications, outreach and raising awareness on the OD.

### Key Achievements in 2024

In its second year of operation, the NDC-BE has **significantly expanded Belgium's Ocean Decade portfolio**:

- **60 actions** initiated, completed or prepared by end of 2024
  - **50 activities** implemented in 2024
  - **10 additional activities** planned for 2025
- **183 Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs)** directly supported via services, activities or grants
- **International collaboration strengthened with 9 countries** across **3 continents**
- Actions reached audiences up to **1000+ people**, including engaged citizens, students, scientists and practitioners
- Priority Belgian Ocean Decade actions strongly addressed the following themes:
  - Ocean observation & prediction
  - Ocean data management & sharing
  - Ocean literacy & citizen engagement
  - Capacity development & knowledge exchange

NDC Belgium has taken a **leading role in the global network of NDCs**, working closely with Portugal, the Netherlands, UK, Germany, Chile and Madagascar, and engaging with three Decade Implementing Partners (JPI Oceans, European Marine Board, EMODnet), and the DCO for Data Sharing.

These relationships have been translated into **tangible results**, including:

- Scientific exchanges on plastic research with Peru (IMARPE) and Chile (IFOP)
- Co-designed projects such as **Co-Management 2030+** (Belgium–Chile partnership)
- Shared knowledge and common strategic priorities, creating a solid base for **expanded joint actions in 2025**

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO-IOC (2021). [National Decade Committees Operational Guidelines](#). UNESCO, Paris. (IOC Ocean Decade Series, 24).

## New Ocean Decade projects in 2024

by NDC-BE members and their partnerships were endorsed in Belgium in 2024

1. INSPIRE (Innovative Solutions for Plastic Free European Rivers, a Horizon Europe project under the Mission Ocean and Waters programme (DGRTD) by VLIZ-DIP (VLIZ Research department).
2. A probabilistic model for plastic clean-up technologies by VLIZ-DIP (PhD project, promoted by the VLIZ research department).
3. Co-management 2030+ by NGO Connect to conserve, Fisheries Development Institute in cooperation with NDC Chile and VLIZ (submitted in ocean decade call #7)
4. EDITO contributing to the DITTO by EU Commission - DG MARE (submitted in ocean decade call #7)

These add to the existing and previously endorsed actions (see annexes).

## Engagement and actionable support

- Capacity Development Facility, coordinated by the Decade Coordination Unit and in cooperation with IODE Project Office – Capacity Development team, VLIZ participates in the Steering committee. The CDF is a platform supporting the Ocean Decade by assessing opportunities for matchmaking (offer-demand; gaps) with the capacity development needs from the decade actions (Funded by government of Flanders through Flanders UNESCO Trust Fund FUST)
- Collaboration and engagement with the Decade Coordination Office (DCO) for Ocean Data Sharing under IODE Project Office
- Ocean Decade Data Coordination group: with active membership of the VLIZ Marine Data Center, dr. Lennert Tyberghien, director of the VLIZ Marine Data Centre and member for the core group NDC-BE.
- VLIZ coordinates the Belgium node of the Early Career Ocean Professionals Programme under the Ocean Decade.

## Growing Ocean Decade Community in Belgium

Since 2022, Belgium has built a strong implementation ecosystem, now consisting of:

- 4 Decade Implementing Partners: EMODnet, European Marine Board, JPI Oceans, EuroGOOS
- 1 Decade Coordination Office (Data Sharing)
- 1 and first Grant-making Facility in the Ocean Decade (Sea As a Good Cause – VLIZ Philanthropy)
- ECOP Belgium Node

The NDC-BE and DIP-VLIZ have aligned strategies, and work plans to maximise efficiency, impact and visibility.

## Looking ahead

The National Decade Committee for Belgium will further strengthen its role by:

- Expanding bilateral cooperation with National Decade Committees to deliver co-designed projects with global, regional and local impact
- Deepening capacity development pathways, ensuring ECOPs are empowered to lead and shape future ocean science and innovation
- Scaling partnerships with the Global South, advancing shared commitments to equity, resilience and the Leave No One Behind principle
- Enhancing visibility and accessibility of ocean knowledge, data, and innovation for the benefit of all communities
- Mobilising new funding, including philanthropy and mission-driven investments, to accelerate implementation of endorsed Decade Actions

# OCEAN DECADE BELGIUM 2024



2021-2030 United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development



Flanders State of the Art

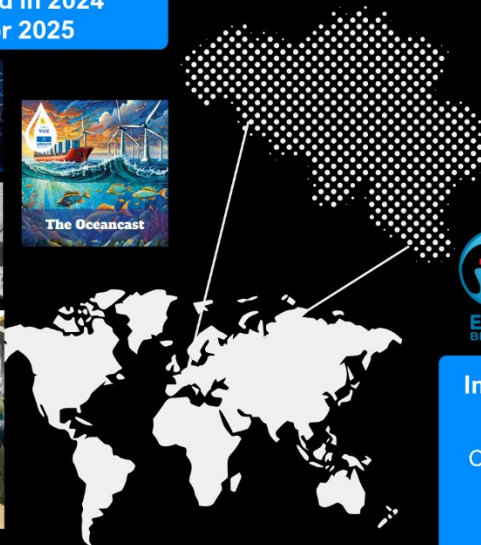
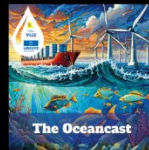


**Action Focus**  
Most targeted Ocean Decade Challenges & SDGs



**10K EUROS**  
PARTICIPATION GRANTS FOR THE OCEAN DECADE CONFERENCE 2024

50 actions completed in 2024 & 10 scheduled for 2025



**183**  
EARLY CAREER OCEAN PROFESSIONALS DIRECTLY SUPPORTED

**International collaboration**  
with 7 National Decade Committees (Netherlands, Portugal, Germany, Chile, Colombia, UK, Madagascar)  
& 12 partner institutions

Actions contribute to 'Leave no one behind' & 'One Ocean' principle, besides the following priority areas:

- Ocean observation and prediction
- Ocean Literacy
- Capacity development
- Data management & sharing

National Decade Committee for Belgium  
Decade Implementing Partner (VLIZ)

Figure 1 2024 Snapshot of ocean decade actions by National Decade Committee for Belgium and Decade Implementing Partner (VLIZ)

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## Ocean Decade: context

The United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030 (the 'Ocean Decade') aims to generate transformative ocean research at all levels to achieve a well-functioning ocean in support of all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), connecting people and our ocean. The Ocean Decade is guided by an Implementation Plan (IP) to achieve the vision 'the science we need for the ocean we want' through Decade Actions (DA). There are four types of DA: programmes, projects, activities, and contributions. Activities that meet the specific criteria as identified in the IP can be endorsed as part of the collaborative effort to meet the Ocean Decade's vision and mission.

The Decade Coordination Unit (DCU) acts as a primary office for the implementation of Ocean DA. It collaborates with National Decade Committees (NDC) and Decentralized Coordination Structures: i) Decade Coordination Offices (DCO), ii) Decade Collaborative Centres (DCC) and Decade Implementing Partners (DIP) and iii) existing international and regional organizations and networks. The governance and coordination for the Ocean Decade is described in the implementation plan. The UN Ocean Decade is for everyone to participate in and aims to 'Leave no one behind'. (See References for further information on the Ocean Decade implementation).

## NDC-BE in the Ocean Decade: vision & mission

The NDC-BE adheres to the Ocean Decade mission, seeking to co-design and co-develop transformative ocean science solutions for sustainable development, connecting people and our ocean.

To this purpose the NDC-BE subscribes to the broadly identified OD Outcomes to be achieved:

- **A clean ocean** where sources of pollution are identified and reduced or removed.
- **A healthy and resilient ocean** where marine ecosystems are understood, protected, restored, and managed.
- **A productive ocean** supporting sustainable food supply and a sustainable ocean economy.
- **A predicted ocean** where society understands and can respond to changing ocean conditions.
- **A safe ocean** where life and livelihoods are protected from ocean-related hazards.
- **An accessible ocean** with open and equitable access to data, information and technology and innovation.
- **An inspiring and engaging ocean** where society understands and values the ocean in relation to human wellbeing and sustainable development.

## NDC-BE: structure, organisation and role

The Ocean Decade National Committee for Belgium (NDC-BE) is established as an open group, focusing on an active contribution to the Ocean Decade (OD). The committee consists of a core group and an open meeting. The core group and core group members formally represent organizations, administrations, and authorities at the federal, regional (sub-national) and local level that contribute with concrete actions to the OD challenges to achieve the OD objectives. Participation to the open meeting is voluntary and based on willingness to contribute with active communication and outreach, exchanges during the meetings, and promotion and awareness raising on the Ocean Decade outside the meetings and in participants' networks. Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ) is mandated to provide secretariat support to the NDC-BE. VLIZ supports the secretariat with a 1FTE programme specialist (also covering the Ocean Decade secretariat for Flanders) and a dedicated specialist in International Relations.

Following the **operational guidelines**<sup>2</sup> of the IOC-UNESCO (2021) for the NDCs, the core activities of the NDC-BE are clustered in four core roles:

- Supporting national members in the co-design and co-delivery of Decade Actions (DA)
- Mobilizing resources and contributions
- Engaging with National Decade Committees operating in other countries
- Communications, outreach and raising awareness.

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO-IOC (2021). [National Decade Committees Operational Guidelines](#). UNESCO, Paris. (IOC Ocean Decade Series, 24).

The membership of the core group is defined and agreed on by approved terms of reference. The core group consists of the NDC-BE secretariat and representatives from the following entities (Figure 2):

- Belgium National Focal Points for IOC UNESCO
- Federal and Regional authorities and administrations with competences and active contributions related to marine research, nature conservation, public works and maritime economy (POM, Province of West-Flanders, BELSPO, FPS Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment, RBINS..)
- VLIZ Core Scientific Committee (university associations and research performing organisations (Ghent University, University of Antwerp University, VUB, UHasselt, INBO, ILVO, WatLab, AoE..)
- University from the French-speaking regions (University of Liege)
- Private sector (Flanders Blue Cluster..)
- Early career scientists who are leading an Ocean Decade Action

Membership of the core group is renewed on an annual basis, and/or defined by the duration of specific OD actions and contributions. A description of procedures is included in the Terms of References (link in [References](#)).

In 2022, Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ) was formally endorsed as a Decade Implementing Partner (DIP). Aiming for efficiency and impact, the NDC-BE and the Decade Implementing Partner (DIP) VLIZ have aligned their strategy and workplans in as much as possible to complement and strengthen each other mutually (see NDC-BE handbook, NDC-BE work plan, VLIZ-DIP Ocean Decade strategy). This is also reflected in the number, diversity, and scope of the endorsements of Ocean Decade actions (DA) achieved by NDC-BE (see below). VLIZ is secretariat to the NDC-BE and VLIZ- DIP is also participating as an active member to the NDC-BE.



Figure 2 Organization of the National Decade Committee for Belgium (NDC-BE) with core group and open meeting

## Ocean Decade engagement in numbers

### Overall Activities in 2024

A total of 60 **Ocean Decade Actions** were initiated, completed, or prepared by Flanders and Belgium. This includes:

- **50 actions** initiated and/or completed in 2024, and
- **10 additional actions** prepared or scheduled for implementation in 2025 (up to June).

These actions collectively engaged **183 Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs)** directly supported via services, activities or grants, and strengthened partnerships with **nine countries across three continents**. Individual actions have reached up to **1000+ participants**, ranging from engaged citizens to ocean professionals.

The NDC Belgium also played an **active and increasingly visible role** within the global NDC network coordinated by the Decade Coordination Unit (DCU), and engaged with four other NDCs (Portugal, Netherlands, UK, Germany, Chile, Madagascar, Colombia), three Decade Implementing Partners (DIP) (JPI-Oceans, European Marine Board, EMODnet) and the Decade Coordination Unit on Data Sharing.

The NDC for Belgium has successfully addressed the four core roles of NDCs (as established in the guidance for NDCs and as set forward in the NDC-BE strategic plan) in its 2nd year of operation:

- The core-members and secretariat of the NDC-BE supported (inter)national members in the process of co-design and co-delivery of decade action (DA) proposals and actions (see detailed list of 2024 Ocean Decade Actions in annex I)
- The core-members and secretariat of the NDC-BE have mobilised resources, facilitated and implemented contributions (see detailed list of 2024 Ocean DA in annex I).
- The NDC-BE secretariat has continued its engagement with other NDCs:
  - NDC Netherlands (Maarten Heijnen, Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management),
  - NDC Portugal (Luís Menezes Pinheiro, Chair of the Portuguese Committee for the IOC)
  - NDC Germany (Ulrike Heine, GEOMAR),
  - NDC Chile (Juan Fierro Contreras, Comisión Nacional del Oceano and SHOA Chile),
  - NDC Colombia (Francisco Arias Isaza, Colombian Ocean Comision (Comisión Colombiana del Océano)
  - NDC UK (Matt Frost, Plymouth Marine Laboratory)
  - NDC Madagascar (Aina Le Don Mone Nomenisoa, National Oceanographic Data Center of Madagascar)
- The core-members and secretariat of the NDC-BE have developed and participated in communication, outreach, and awareness campaigns (see detailed list of 2024 Ocean Decade Actions in annex I).

Co-design of decade actions and setting up collaboration has been addressed through at least 15 bilateral and follow-up meetings with the NDC-BE core group members complementary to the core group meetings, at least seven other meetings with Ocean Decade actors and stakeholders, and nine global meeting with the current 40 National Decade Committees and Decade Coordination Unit. These meetings have allowed the secretariat to provide first-hand information to our NDC-BE core members and partners, allowing the secretariat to support the NDC-BE members efficiently. The secretariat has also actively engaged and provided substantial input to relevant documents and processes for the OD implementation at national level (e.g. see NDC monitoring and evaluation, NDC subgroups discussions...).

The continue bilateral interactions with particularly seven NDCs (see above) have served mutual learning and exchanges about best practices and discuss common priority areas. It has result on co-designed ocean decade projects like Co-Management 2030+ (NDC Chile and local partners). The NDC-BE anticipates more joint actions in 2025 with global, regional and local implementation to keep the engagement, promote the role, contribution and support of NDCs with national constituencies and strengthen international cooperation, including the DIPs, where relevant and impactful/actionable.

Actions focused on the 4 core roles of an NDCs and strengthening Ocean Decade priority areas such as ocean observation and prediction, ocean data management and data sharing, ocean literacy and citizen engagement, capacity

development and knowledge transfer/exchange, outreach, and raising awareness on the Ocean Decade Mission and Vision.

New Ocean Decade projects by NDC-BE members and their partnerships were endorsed in Belgium in 2024:

- INSPIRE (Innovative Solutions for Plastic Free European Rivers, a Horizon Europe project under the Mission Ocean and Waters programme (DGRTD) by VLIZ-DIP (VLIZ Research department).
- A probabilistic model for plastic clean-up technologies by VLIZ-DIP (PhD project, promoted by the VLIZ research department).

A higher amount of project proposals was developed in 2024 for call #7 and #8:

1. Co-management 2030+
2. EDITO contributing to the DITTO
3. Digital Twin of the Ocean: Animal Tracking via Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership (SBEP) and in cooperation with European Tracking Network-VLIZ (Jan Reubens)
4. Boosting seaweed farming with genetic resources via SBEP and in cooperation with ILVO (Tom Ruttink)
5. Rare Earth Element Reduction in Ocean Green Energy via SBEP and in cooperation with VUB (Jan Helsen)
6. FOODIMAR via SBEP and in cooperation with Ghent University (Jo Dewulf)

These add to the existing and previously endorsed actions (see annexes).

Engagement and actionable support were provided to recent groups and coordination offices in 2024:

- Capacity Development Facility, coordinated by the Decade Coordination Unit and in cooperation with IODE Project Office – Capacity Development team, VLIZ participates in the Steering committee. The CDF is a platform supporting the Ocean Decade by assessing opportunities for matchmaking (offer-demand; gaps) with the capacity development needs from the decade actions (Funded by government of Flanders through Flanders UNESCO Trust Fund FUST)
- Decade Coordination Office (DCO) for Ocean Data Sharing under IODE Project Office, coordinated by mr. Jan-Bart Calewaert.
- Ocean Decade Data Coordination group: with active membership of the VLIZ Marine Data Center, dr. Lennert Tyberghein, director of the VLIZ Marine Data Centre and member for the core group NDC-BE.
- VLIZ coordinates the Belgium node of the Early Career Ocean Professionals Programme under the Ocean Decade.

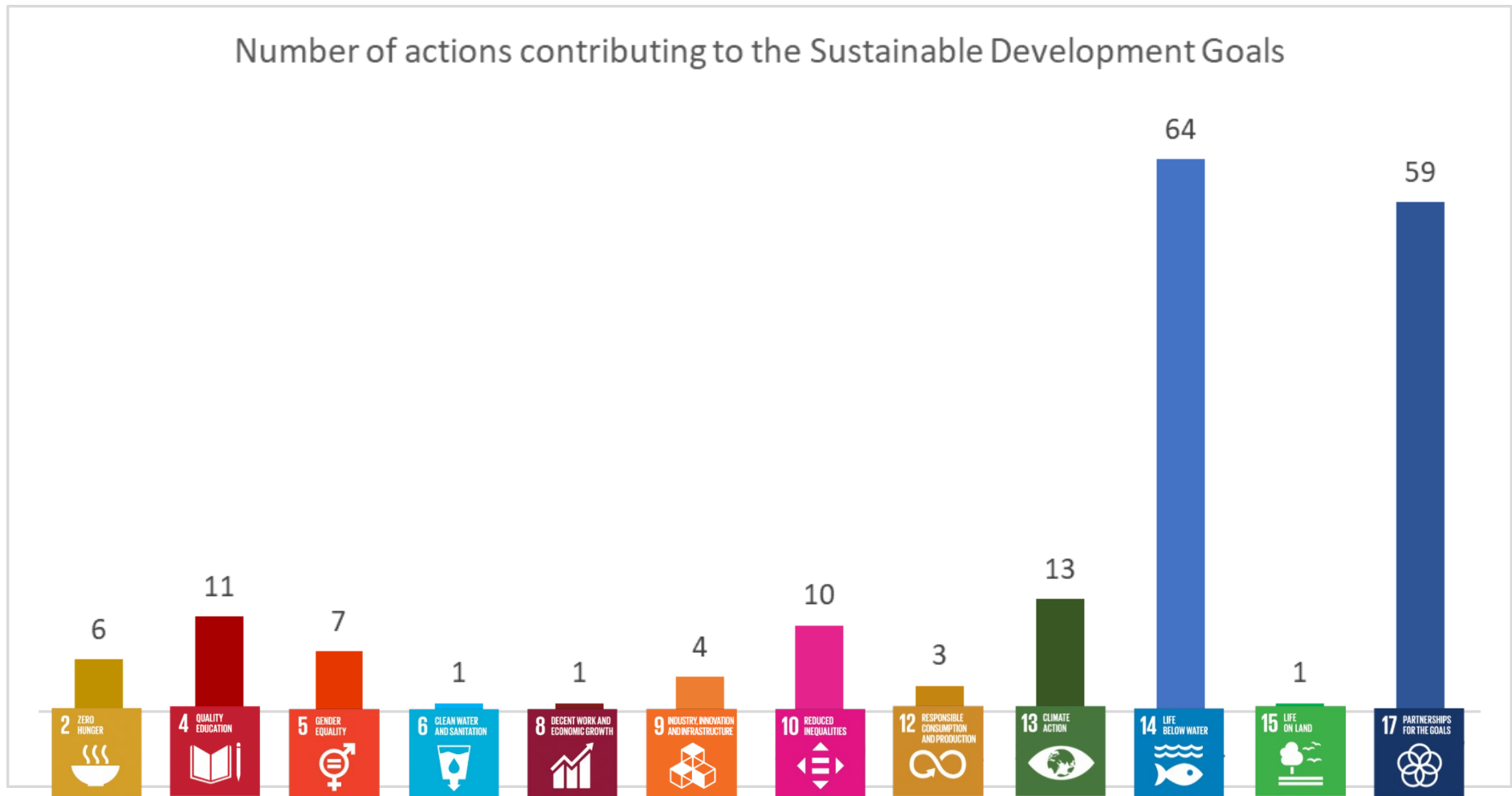


Figure 3 Number of ocean decade actions by the National Decade Committee for Belgium (NDC-BE) that contribute to respective Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

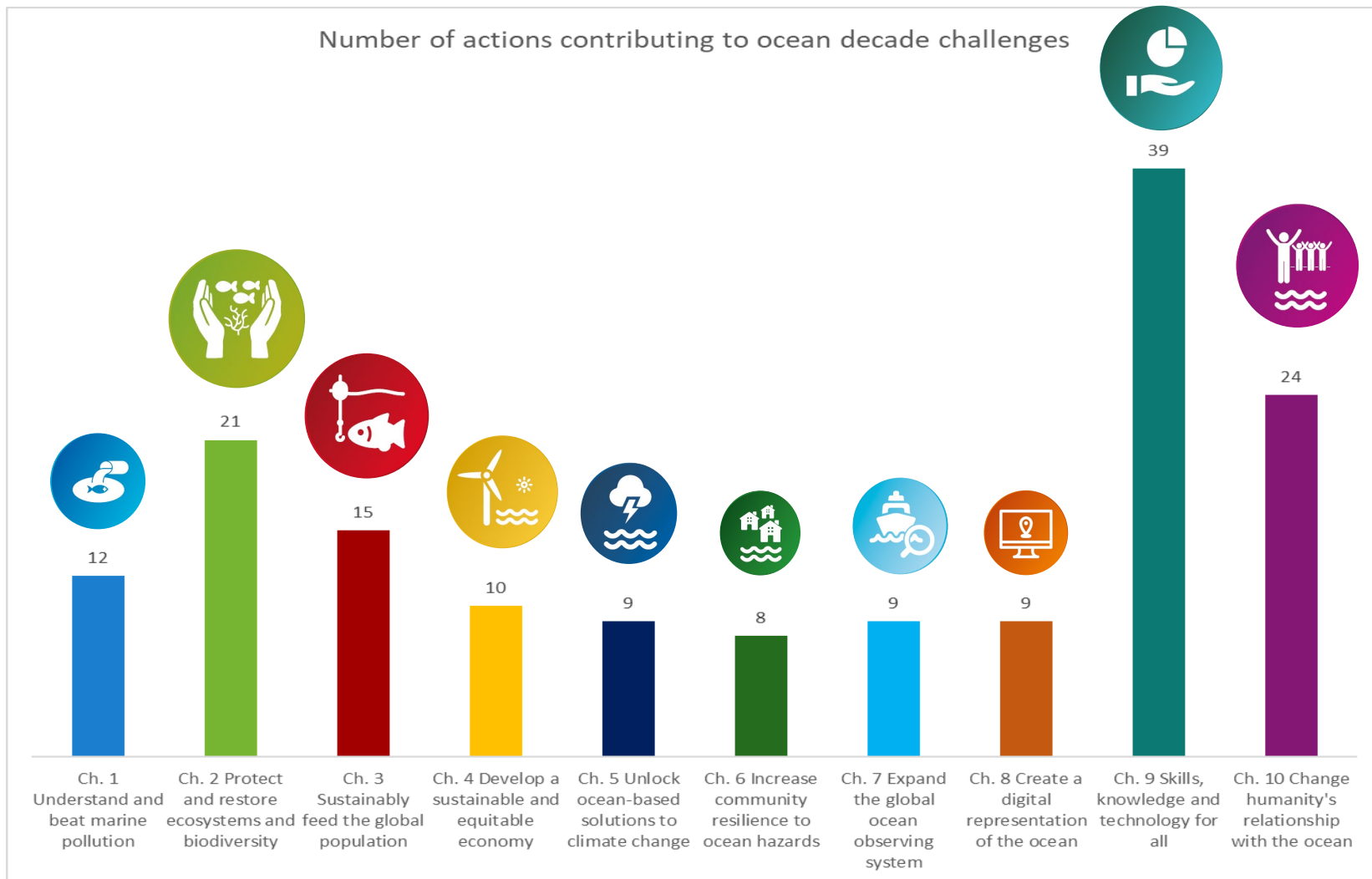


Figure 4 Number of ocean decade actions by the National Decade Committee for Belgium (NDC-BE) contributing to each Ocean Decade challenge

## Concluding remarks

Over the past two years, the National Decade Committee for Belgium has demonstrated that Belgium is not only an active participant in the UN Ocean Decade, but also a trusted partner, mobiliser, and enabler of ocean science solutions. With 59 coordinated actions, 183 ECOPs supported, and collaborations across three continents, Belgium-Flanders has successfully translated the Decade vision into tangible and inclusive outcomes.

Looking ahead, the NDC-BE will further strengthen its role by:

- Expanding bilateral cooperation with National Decade Committees to deliver co-designed projects with global, regional and local impact
- Deepening capacity development pathways, ensuring ECOPs are empowered to lead and shape future ocean science and innovation
- Scaling partnerships with the Global South, advancing shared commitments to equity, resilience and the Leave No One Behind principle
- Enhancing visibility and accessibility of ocean knowledge, data, and innovation for the benefit of all communities
- Mobilising new funding, including philanthropy and mission-driven investments, to accelerate implementation of endorsed Decade Actions

Belgium-Flanders will continue to lead by example — ensuring that Decade Actions are implementation-driven, aligned with global priorities emerging from Barcelona and the Vision 2030 process, and contributing to the outcomes of the 2025 UN Ocean Conference.

## Next steps for 2025

Towards the end of the current reporting period January-December 2024, 10 OD actions have initiated and/or scheduled or in preparation in view of their implementation in 2025. These OD actions follow the core principles of co-design, multidisciplinary approach, innovation and abide by the ‘leave no-one behind’ principle. The preliminary list of activities of the NDC-BE for 2025 includes (subject to input and co-design of the NDC-BE partners):

1. Testing new sea level stations supported with capacity development by SLSMF in the Western Indian Ocean.
2. VLIZ Marine Science Day 2025
3. World Conference on Marine Biodiversity 2026 – participation of ECOPs and support to local Ocean Decade actors and partners
4. Dag van de Wetenschap 2025
5. EMSEA conference 2025 – ECOP participation grant
6. Workshop for ECOPs on FAIR, CARE and TRUST principles – EuroGOOS-VLIZ
7. Communication campaign by National Decade Committees
8. VISTool podcast – science communication exercise for sustainable fisheries (ILVO + Creators for Climate)
9. IKUWA 8 conference
10. Gearing up brochure: contribution from Flanders to Ocean Decade and UN Ocean Conference

## PARTICIPATION IN THE OCEAN DECADE CONFERENCE 2024

In its fourth year of implementation, the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development hosted more than 1500 participants from all over the world in the city of Barcelona. The time was a unique opportunity to address key questions: Which have been the main achievements since the launch of the Ocean Decade? And What should be they areas for action over the next three to five years?

The National Decade Committee participation consisted in 12 interventions: 9 participations as speakers in conference sessions, organisation of 2 booths related to ocean data sharing and ocean prediction and 1 poster session from the National Decade Committee for Belgium. Besides, the National Decade Committee for Belgium was among the conference sponsors, supporting the participation of 9 early career ocean professionals via the Federal Public Service for Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment of Belgium, the department of Economy, Science and Innovation of the Flemish government, the province of West Flanders and the Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ).

Input was given to the key outcomes of the conference:

**the Ocean Decade Barcelona statement and brought a new roadmap between UNESCO-IOC and DG Research and Innovation. Formally acknowledging systemic contributions made by the Commission, for example: the European Digital Twin of the Ocean and the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership.**

Other key outcomes of the conference consisted of:

- Generate consensus on science – policy – society priorities for the Ocean Decade over the next 3 to 5 years through structured dialogue around white papers resulting from the Ocean Decade Vision 2030 Process.
- Convene and prepare existing and future ocean decade partners and initiatives prior to the 2025 UN Ocean Conference, Inmersed (San José, Costa Rica - 7-8 June 2024) and the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference itself (Nice, France - 9-13 June 2025).
- Commitment by the Barcelona City Council and the Port of Barcelona to develop a Decade Collaborative Centre focusing on sustainable ocean economy.
- Launch of the Ocean Matcher Tool to enhance opportunities for philanthropic funding to Decade Actions

The Conference concluded by setting the tone for further collective and concrete actions, outlined in the newly launched 2024 Ocean Decade Barcelona Statement. Based on insights shared by the global ocean community, the Statement identifies the priority areas of action for the Ocean Decade in the coming years. Vidar Helgesen, IOC/UNESCO Executive Secretary and Assistant Director-General of UNESCO, called to consider it as an actionable framework to be included in implemented scenarios to orient, guide, and refine existing initiatives, as well as new ones, on local, national, and global scales.

## Pre and post conference events

Two events were organised by the NDC-BE core-group members served as pre and post conferences events:

- **Preconference event:** VLIZ Marine Science Day (VMSD), de Grote Post (Ostend), 6<sup>th</sup> of March 2024  
The VLIZ Marine Science Day (VMSD) 2024 was formally framed within the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union – revolved entirely around the EU Mission Ocean & Waters, and its three main themes: ocean pollution, climate/carbon, and biodiversity. Renowned personalities such as Mission Ocean co-lead John Bell and esteemed diver-explorer Paul Rose delivered keynote speeches, setting the stage for a diverse program encompassing interactive sessions, presentations, and poster sessions. Participants from academia, government agencies, non-profit organizations, industry, and the public sector were offered ample opportunities to engage, learn, and contribute to the goals of Mission Ocean and the UN Ocean Decade. Around 400 Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs) participate in the VMSD 2024, one of the most attended editions. One of the highlights of the event was the awards and grant presentations, where 13 grants and awards were given to ECOPs. Besides six participation grants to ECOPs for the Ocean Decade Conference 2024 in Barcelona.
- **Post conference event:** Ocean Decade meets Mission Ocean (EU Presidency event), led by Vlaamse UNESCO Commissie (VUC), InnovOcean Campus (Ostend), 25 of April 2024.  
The event was organised within the framework of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Participants emphasized the importance of ‘Blue skills’ meant providing professionals with a basic understanding of ocean-climate-ecosystem interactions to enable the transition to a sustainable, resilient and socially just society. The conference explored how capacities, talents and skills can be used more optimally for a successful transition. As part of the conference, The Oceancast was produced: a three-part podcast series on building a ‘blue economy’ driven by technological innovation (<https://open.spotify.com/show/7h9hjbHIO4XPvxOYNP928K?si=e47cdeb38a4d4173>). As a post conference event from the ocean decade, NDC secretariat representative and two awarded ECOPs presented their experience in a panel discussion.

## Walking the talk: Our support to ECOPs and Leave no one behind principle

### Support to Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs)

We invest directly in the next generation of ocean leadership by expanding skills, visibility, and participation pathways for ECOPs.

Element of Support	NDC-BE Ocean Decade actions
Capacity Development (training, skills, leadership)	• OORI 2024 workshop: “Upskilling Transferable Skills” – incl. ECOPs (Kenya)
Representation and Participation	• Call for ECOPs to join the scientific committee of the <b>World Conference on Marine Biodiversity</b> (global) • <b>ECOPs scientific committee</b> roles secured (global) • <b>Coordination of ECOP Belgium node</b> (Belgium)
Funding & Accessibility	• <b>9 travel grants</b> for ECOPs to attend the <b>Ocean Decade Conference 2024</b> (Spain) • <b>Monsoon School Kenya 2024</b> with <b>2 travel grants</b> supporting young researchers (Kenya)
Networking & Mentoring	• <b>Internships</b> during <b>IKUWA 8 underwater archaeology conference</b>
Communication & Visibility	• Contributions to <b>ECOP newsletter</b> (global)

### Support to the Global South

We apply the *Leave No One Behind* principle by directing scientific cooperation, knowledge exchange, and funding toward under-resourced regions in the Global South.

Region / Principle	NDC-BE Ocean Decade actions
Capacity-building collaborations	• <b>Monsoon School Kenya 2024</b> + grants (Kenya) • <b>Workshop on transferable skills</b> – includes Kenyan participation
Bi-regional research exchange	• <b>Exchange missions</b> Belgium–Chile on marine litter, marine life and data (Chile) • <b>Exchange for OD projects: INSPIRE</b> – Belgium–Peru (Peru)
Local knowledge co-production	• <b>REDCAMP – community-led monitoring</b> (Chile) • <b>RDA – small-scale fisheries learning network</b> (Chile) and • <b>Co-management 2030+</b> (Chile)
Strengthening national data systems	• <b>FAIR oceanographic data collection</b> projects (Chile) • <b>Peruvian Register of Marine Species publication</b> (Peru)
South–South / cross-regional participation	• Presence and support provided at <b>Ocean Decade Conference 2024</b> (Barcelona) participation from Latin America & Africa
Global inclusion mechanisms	• <b>Support to the Capacity Development Facility</b> (global) with explicit Global South focus • <b>Co-management 2030+</b> and <b>EDITO</b> cooperation proposal (global) for the Ocean Decade

## Resources

The NDC-BE is supported by the engagement of its members and members’ institutions and partnerships. Additionally, the Flanders government (EWI) has reserved earmarked funding to support the Ocean Decade in response to Flanders government ambition to adhere to the Ocean Decade. This funding and mobilisation of resources is reflected in the outputs/outcomes of the VLIZ DIP and the NDC-BE and includes a 1 FTE in support of the Implementation of the Ocean Decade, and 1 PTE in support of the implementation of the Ocean Decade and related programmes and initiatives at EU, sea basin, regional, national, and local level. Additional funding secured through Flanders government provides ‘seed money’ for actions and initiatives under the Ocean Decade.

## References

- UNESCO-IOC. 2021. Operational Guidelines for the establishment of Decade Collaborative Centres and Implementing Partners. Paris, UNESCO. (IOC Ocean Decade Series, 23 REV).
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## Relevant Ocean Decade documents

- [The Science We Need for The Ocean We Want](#)
- [Join the movement for the Ocean We Want](#)
- [Co-designing the Science We Need: Guidance and recommendations for DA](#)
- [State-of-the-Art of Ocean Literacy](#)
- OD Implementation plan [full report](#) and [summary](#)
- [Decade Collaborative Centers and Decade Implementing Partners: Operational guidelines 2021](#)
- [Ocean Literacy framework for the UN Ocean Decade](#)
- [Advancing science for sustainable ocean business: an opportunity for the Private Sector](#)
- [Ocean Knowledge for a Sustainable Ocean Economy](#)
- [The transformative role of Foundations in the Ocean Decade](#)
- [Foundations Dialogue – The Bouknadel Statement](#)
- [Brand Guidelines for the Ocean Decade](#)
- [National Decade Committee for Belgium HANDBOOK](#)

## ANNEX I

## Overview of actions developed by the NDC-BE in support of the Ocean Decade in 2024

PM = Person months

Start year	Title	Belgian partner involved	Contact person	Partners (non-Belgium)	Focus Area - NDC	NDC Secretariat		Co-support	
						Total NDC financial contribution (in cash, euro)	Total NDC contribution in-kind (PM)	Total Co-funding, in cash (euro)	Total Co-in-kind
						58617.00	21.30	156900.00	55.00
Start year	Title	Belgian partner involved	Contact person	Partners (non-Belgium)	Focus Area - NDC	NDC-financial	NDC-in-kind (PM)	Co-financial	Co-in-kind (PM)
2024	Nagoya Protocol Masterclass	VLIR	Philip Colson	NA	data manag., capacity dev., global net, local net	500.00	0.30		1.20
2024	VLIZ Marine Science Day 2024 (EU Presidency event)	VLIZ	Juana Jimenez	NA	capacity dev., global net, local net	100.00	0.30	3600.00	7.00
2024	BESS (EU Presidency event)	VLIZ, Blue Cluster	Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet	NA	capacity dev., global net, local net	300.00	0.30		3.00
2024	Ocean Decade meets Mission Ocean (EU Presidency event)	VUC, VLIZ, VLEVA, POM Flanders	Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet	NA	capacity dev., global net, local net	3100.00	0.50	33000.00	0.60
2024	OceanCast: podcast	VUC VLIZ VLEVA	Nele Rabijns, Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet, Stijn Dhert	NA	capacity dev., local net, citizen	2800.00	0.10	8000.00	0.50
2024	Monsoon School Kenya 2024 + 2 travel grants	VUB, VLIZ Philanthropy	Diana Di Nitto, Karolien Van Puyvelde	Oceans and Lakes partners	capacity dev., global net, local net	0.00	0.20	4000.00	2.00

2024	NDC Belgium representation at OD Conference 2024	NDC Belgium	Juana Jimenez	NA	ocean obsv., data manag., citizen, capacity dev., local net., global net.	6000.00	1.00	11000.00	0.50
2024	9 travel grants - Ocean Decade Conference 2024	NDC Belgium, VLIZ, West-Flanders Province, EWI, FOD Health	Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet	NA	capacity dev., global net	0.00	1.00		1.00

Start year	Title	Belgian partner involved	Contact person	Partners (non-Belgium)	Focus Area - NDC	NDC-financial	NDC-in-kind (PM)	Co-financial	Co-in-kind (PM)
2024	RDA – Learning and Exchange network, small scale fisheries and science-based monitoring	VLIZ	Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet	RDA, IFOP, NDC Chile	capacity dev., global net	0.00	1.00		1.00
2024	REDCAMP – community led observation and monitoring in MPA	VLIZ	Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet	REDCAMP, IFOP, University Aysen, NDC Chile	capacity dev., global net	0.00	0.30		1.00
2024	Preparation proposal for Co-management 2030+	VLIZ	Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet	IFOP, NGO Conectar para Conservar	ocean obsv., data manag., citizen, capacity dev., local net.	302.00	0.25		1.00
2024	2nd part - Identifying Seashells: Citizen Science initiatives in ocean observation and monitoring	Horizon Educatief, Province of West-Flanders, VLIZ	Phaedra Van Kerrebrouck	NA	ocean obsv., data manag., citizen, capacity dev., local net.	1502.00	0.25		1.00
2024	2nd part -Sustainable fishing for educational purposes: Citizen Science initiatives in ocean observation and monitoring	Horizon Educatief, Province of West-Flanders, VLIZ	Phaedra Van Kerrebrouck	NA	capacity dev., global net		0.25		1.00
2024	Involvement with other NDCs 2024	VLIZ	Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet, Juana Jimenez	NA	local net.	700.00	1.50	700.00	1.00
2024	NDC core meetings 2024	VLIZ	Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet, Juana Jimenez	18 partners	ocean obsv., data manag., capacity dev., global net., local net.	1500.00	1.50		3.00
2024	NDC Belgium open meeting 2024	VLIZ	Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet, Juana Jimenez	25 institutions	ocean obsv., data manag., citizen, capacity dev., global net., local net.	100.00	1.50	100.00	0.20
2024	NDC Belgium [one-one] meetings	VLIZ	Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet, Juana Jimenez	18 partners	capacity dev., global net.		1.50		1.50
2024	Global NDC meetings	VLIZ	Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet, Juana Jimenez	40 countries	citizen, capacity dev., global net.	100.00	1.50	500.00	2.00

Start year	Title	Belgian partner involved	Contact person	Partners (non-Belgium)	Focus Area - NDC	NDC-financial	NDC-in-kind (PM)	Co-financial	Co-in-kind (PM)
2024	OORI 24 workshop 'Upskilling Transferable Skills to Interconnect Alumni Networks': support ECOP VUB WIOMSA KMFRI	VUB	Karolien Van Puyvelde	KMFRI, STEM-Steunpunt Brussel, NIA Ventures, VLIR-UOS, Close the GAP Kenya	capacity dev., global net	1555.00	0.50	15000.00	3.00
2024	ECOP support to OL summer school	VLIZ Marine Data Center	Alice Pohle	NA	citizen, capacity dev., global net.	428.00	0.20	1000.00	1.00
2024	The Sea As a Good Cause in support to the OD - 2024	VLIZ Philantrophy	Karen Rappé	NA	capacity dev., global net., local net.		0.40	15000.00	4.00
2024	IKUWA 8 Conference 2025	Flanders Heritage Agency, Flanders Marine Institute, the City of Ostend, Ghent University, Free University of Brussels, Visitflanders (the governmental tourism agency), Agence wallonne du Patrimoine, Brussels Heritage Agency	Pieters Marnix	NA	citizen, capacity dev., global net., local net.	298.00	0.40	15000.00	0.20
2024	Coordination of ECOP Belgium node 2024	VLIZ, JPI Oceans, IMBRSea, Oceans&Lakes, Horizon Educatief	Juana Jimenez	NA	capacity dev., global net., local net.		0.40		1.00
2024	IKUWA 8 ECOP internship part 1	VLIZ	Heidi/Juana	NA	citizen, capacity dev., local net.	300.00	0.20		1.00
2024	Dag van de Wetenschap / Science Day 2024	VLIZ, VLOT, Technopolis, Ugent	Bart De Smet	NA	citizen, capacity dev., global net., local net.	500.00	0.80	1000.00	2.00
2024	Organisation World Conference on Marine Biodiversity 2026	VLIZ	Leen Vandepitte, AnnKatrien, Juana	WCMB2026 Scientific Committee	capacity dev., global net.	2402.00	0.60		0.40

Start year	Title	Belgian partner involved	Contact person	Partners (non-Belgium)	Focus Area - NDC	NDC-financial	NDC-in-kind (PM)	Co-financial	Co-in-kind (PM)
2024	VUC day presentation by Ann-Katrien L.	VLIZ, VUC, DKBUZA	Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet	NA	ocean obsv., data manag., capacity dev., global net	20.00	0.30		0.10
2024	preparation proposal for EDITO in the Ocean Decade (DITTO)	VLIZ	Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet, Juana Jimenez	NA	capacity dev., global net		0.20		0.30
2024	Call for ECOPs to the scientific committee of World Conference on Marine Biodiversity 2026	VLIZ	Juana Jimenez	NA	data manag., capacity dev., global net.	13000.00	0.20		1.50
2024	A probabilistic model for plastic clean-up technologies (PhD project Plastic Research team)	VLIZ	Giulia Leone	The Ocean Cleanup, INSPIRE partners	ocean obsv., data manag., citizen, capacity dev., global net.		0.30		1.30
2024	INSPIRE (Innovative Solutions for Plastic Free European Rivers)	VLIZ	Ana Catarino	see INSPIRE partners	ocean obsv., data manag., global net.	0	0.10		
2024	Participation in Decade Coordination Office (DCO) for ocean data sharing	VLIZ, NDC Belgium	Lennert Tyberghein	NA		0	0.10		
2024	Contribution to ECOP Newsletter	VLIZ	Juana Jimenez	NA	capacity dev.		0.10		0.10
2024	Brilliant Marine Research Idea Grant 2025	VLIZ Philanthropy	Karen Rappé	NA	capacity dev.		0.10	30000.00	0.40
2024	Preparation proposal for Expedition Coastline - Horizon Educatief	Horizon Educatief, Province of West-Flanders, VLIZ	Phaedra Van Kerrebrouck	NA	capacity dev., local net		0.10		0.50
2024	Support (liaise) MangRes course - OTGA, theory part (August 2024)	VLIZ	Juana Jimenez	NA	capacity dev., global net.		0.10	8000.00	2.50
2024	Support (liaise) Mangrove VLIR-UOS project VUB	VLIZ	Juana Jimenez	NA	capacity dev., global net.		0.10	10000.00	2.50
2024	Communication toolkit about VISTOOLS - part 1	ILVO, Creators for Climate	Hans/Johan	NA	citizen, global net	11250.00	0.30		0.30
2024	Awareness campaign underwater sound - FPS Transport - part 1	FPS Transport, Eelco Leemans	Marie-Lucie Susini	NA	citizen, global net., local net.	8160.00	0.30	1000.00	0.30
2024	Review proposal for MarineLife 2030	VLIZ	Juana Jimenez	NA	global net		0.10		0.10
2024	Marine Life Chile philanthropy project in cooperation with Delphine Vanhaecke and eDNA	VLIZ	Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet		ocean obsv., data manag., citizen, capacity dev., local net., global net.				

Start year	Title	Belgian partner involved	Contact person	Partners (non-Belgium)	Focus Area - NDC	NDC-financial	NDC-in-kind (PM)	Co-financial	Co-in-kind (PM)
2024	Reconstruction of fisheries catch (Daniel Pauly) - Belgium node	VLIZ	Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet				1.00		
2024	FAIR oceanographic data collection and protocols for ocean observation in the Ocean Decade - Magallanes region - part 1	UGent	Luana Da Costa Monteiro		ocean obsv., data manag., citizen, capacity dev., local net., global net.	3500.00	0.30		4.00
2024	Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership call: Unified paths to a climate-neutral, sustainable, and resilient blue economy: engaging civil society, academia, policy, and industry	SBEP	Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet	SBEP partners			0.10		
2024	Sustainable Ocean Planning	SBEP	Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet	SBEP partners			0.10		
2024	EDITO I - international cooperation	VLIZ	Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet, Juana Jimenez	MOi, EMODnet, Sea Scape	global net	0.00	0.20	0.00	
2024	Support Capacity Development Facility - Steering Committee 2024	VLIZ	Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet, Juana Jimenez	NA	capacity dev., global net.		0.10		
2024	Acquired promotional materials 2024: stickers	VLIZ	Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet, Juana Jimenez	NA	local net., global net.	200.00	0.10		
2024	Communications NDC Belgium	VLIZ	Ann-Katrien Lescrauwaet, Juana Jimenez	NA	local net., global net.		0.20		

## ANNEX II

### Formally endorsed Ocean DA involving partners based in Belgium (including NDC-BE members projects and activities).

Last update March 2025

Disclaimer: It was possible to keep track of the decade activities by partners in Belgium which were shared via email by the Decade Coordination Unit. If you are a partner based in Belgium and your activity/project/programme that you are involved in is not in the list, you can share it with us to [oceandecade@vliz.be](mailto:oceandecade@vliz.be).

Start year	Title	Category	Institution based in Belgium	Contact person	Partners	OD Programme assigned
2024	Downscaling Climate and Ocean Change to Services	Project	University of Liege	no specific contact	info not available	Ocean Acidification Research for Sustainability (OABS)
2024	Acoustic to Assess the Health Status of Reefs	Project	University of Liege	Xavier Raick	info not available	Ocean Decade Research Programme on the Maritime Acoustic Environment (OD-MAE)
2024	Integrating coastal ocean observing and predicting	Project	EuroGOOS	no specific contact		CoastPredict
2024	Conservation of the deep-sea in light of mining	Project	University of Ghent	no specific contact		Challenger 150 - A Decade to study Deep-Sea Life
2024	A probabilistic model for plastic clean-up technologies (PhD project Plastic Research team)	Project	VLIZ	Giulia Leone	The Ocean Cleanup, Ughent, INBO, FWO	ECOP programme
2024	New Copernicus capability for ocean food networks	Project	Uliege		Mercator (leading, Stefano Ciavatta), Plymouth Marine Laboratory limited, Istituto Nazionale di oceanografia e di geofisica sperimentale, Helmholtz-zentrum hereon GMBH, Stiftelsen Nansen Senter for Miljø og Fjernmaling (NERSC)	

<b>2024</b>	INSPIRE (Innovative Solutions for Plastic Free European Rivers)	Project	VLIZ	Ana Catarino	see INSPIRE partners	tbc
<b>2024</b>	EOOS Technology Forum 2024 Catching the momentum in ocean observing technology	Activity	EurGOOS	Alicia Blanco		N/A
<b>2024</b>	EMBracing the Ocean	Activity	EMB	Britt Alexander		N/A
<b>2024</b>	VLIZ Marine Science Day 2024	Activity	VLIZ	Juana Jimenez		N/A
<b>2024</b>	Ocean Decade meets Mission Ocean	Activity	VUC	Nele Rabijns		N/A
<b>2024</b>	Nagoya Protocol Masterclass	Activity	VLIR	Philip Colson		N/A
<b>2024</b>	Monsoon School Kenya 2024	Activity	VUB	Diana Di Nitto		N/A
<b>2024</b>	Brilliant Marine Research Idea Grant 2024	Contribu tion	VLIZ Philanthropy	Karen Rappe		N/A
<b>2024</b>	European Global Ocean Observing System (EurGOOS)	Contribu tion	EurGOOS	Dina Eparkhina, Inga Lips		N/A
<b>2024</b>	European Regional Hub for Blue Carbon	Project	JPI Oceans	Yekaterina Astafyeva		11.2. Global Ocean Decade Programme for Blue Carbon

<b>2024</b>	The Sea As a Good Cause in support to the OD	Contribution	VLIZ Philanthropy	Karen Rappé		N/A
<b>2024</b>	JPI Oceans Joint Call: changing marine lightscapes	Contribution	JPI Oceans	Frode Fjeldavli		N/A
<b>2024</b>	6th International Marine Science Communication Conference (CommOCEAN 2024)	Activity	EMB	Angel Muniz Piniella		N/A
<b>2024</b>	Ecopath 40 Years: From Knowledge to Decisions.	Activity	EMB	Sheila Heymans		N/A
<b>2024</b>	Cumulative effects assessment handbook	Activity	JPI Oceans	Lavinia Pomarico		N/A
<b>2024</b>	Navigating the Future VI – Rüm Hart-Stiftung	Activity	EMB			N/A
<b>2024</b>	Co-management2030+	Project	VLIZ	Ann-Katrien Lescauwet	NGO Conectar para Conservar, IFOP	FishCORE
<b>2024</b>	Expedition Coastline	Project	Horizon Educatief	Phaedra Van Kerrebroeck	VLIZ, Province of West Flanders, ...	Ocean Voices

<b>2024</b>	IKUWA8	Activity	Marnix Pieters	Flanders Heritage Agency	VLIZ, City of Ostend, Ghent University, VUB, VisitFlanders, Agence Wallonne du Patrimoine, Brussels Heritage Agency	N/A
<b>2024</b>	EU Ocean research and innovation	Contribution	DG Research and Innovation, EU Commission	Elisabetha Balzi		N/A
<b>2024</b>	Conservation of the deep-sea in light of mining	Project	Ugent			

## ANNEX III

### List of membership to the core group of the National Ocean Decade Committee for Belgium NDC-BE

#### Participants (in alphabetical order):

Affiliation	Name	Last name
<a href="#">Belspo (Federal Public Planning Service Science Policy)</a>	Koen	LEFEVER
<a href="#">Blue Cluster</a>	Kinnie	DE BEULE
<a href="#">Department of Chancellery and Foreign Affairs (DKBUZA)</a>	Nele	RABIJNS
<a href="#">EMSEA (European Marine Science Educators Association)</a>	Evvy	COPEJANS
<a href="#">Economy, Science and Innovation department (EWI) Flanders Government</a>	Gert	VERREET
<a href="#">Federal Public Service (FPS) Mobility and Transport, DG Shipping</a>	Marie-Lucie	SUSINI
<a href="#">Federal Public Service Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment of Belgium (FPS Health, Chair)</a>	Sophie	MIRGAUX
<a href="#">HAEDES Consultancy &amp; Engineering</a>	Piet	HAERENS
<a href="#">ILVO (Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food)</a>	Johan	ROBBENS
<a href="#">NGO Mundus Maris</a>	Patricia	MORALES
Oceans & Lakes (Master programme)	Karolien	VAN PUYVELDE
<a href="#">The Sea As a Good Cause (VLIZ philanthropy)</a>	Karen	RAPPE
<a href="#">Province of West-Flanders /Coastal office (Streekhuis Kust)</a>	Hannelore	MAELFAIT
<a href="#">University of Ghent /Ostend Science Park</a>	Colin *Sara	JANSSEN VANDAMME
<a href="#">University of Liege</a>	Marilaure	GRÉGOIRE

VLIZ (Focal point, co-chair)	Ann-Katrien	LESCRAUWAET
<a href="#">VLIZ (NDC Secretariat)</a>	Juana	JIMENEZ
<a href="#">VLIZ Marine Data Center</a>	Lennert	TYBERGHEIN
<a href="#">Vrije</a> Universiteit Brussel	Diana	DI NITTO