

# 14

## Military use

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Military activities and exercises regularly take place in the Belgian part of the North Sea (BNS) and in the coastal area. These include: target practice on land towards sea, target practice on sea towards floating targets, detonation exercises with practice mines and historical real mines, exercises to lay, search and sweep mines, and extensive mine exercises with several NATO countries. In addition, amphibian, rescue and fly exercises take place as well, and Defence is also involved in search and rescue operations, enforcement, pollution control, etc. in the BNS ([Maes et al. 2005](#), [GAUFRE project BELSPO](#), [Berichten aan Zeevarenden \(BaZ\) 2018 nr.1](#), [website Belgian Defence](#)).

A World War I dump site of war munitions is located in the BNS. It is situated along the coast of Knokke-Heist on the shallow sandbank *De Paardenmarkt*. According to OSPAR, 148 dump sites are located in the North Sea and the northeastern part of the Atlantic Ocean ([OSPAR QSR 2010](#)).

The naval component of the Belgian Ministry of Defence is also developing activities outside the BNS. In cooperation with e.g. the Federal Public Service for Mobility, support is provided to vessels navigating the Belgian flag. *Belgian Maritime Threat Awareness and Reporting* (BEMTAR) provides information on the maritime safety situation, identifies threats and monitors ships worldwide ([BaZ 2018 nr.1](#), see message 1/6B). Within the framework of NATO, it is also foreseen to contribute to the organisation of an information hub for commercial shipping and to proactively contact ships in high-risk zones (Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping (NCAGs), see [BaZ 2018 nr.1](#), see message 1/6A). In the remainder of this text, however, the first focus will be on the activities within the BNS.

The Ministry of Defence also participates in the SAR organisation (Search and Rescue), under the coordination of the Maritime Rescue and Coordination Centre (MRCC) (see theme **Maritime transport, shipping and ports**), by nautical or aeronautical vessels. The frequency depends on the incidents that occur in de BNS. Moreover, in cooperation with other authorities, Defence resources can be deployed for enforcement, pollution control and other security reasons, taking into account existing agreements and cooperation agreements as well as general emergency and intervention plans.

## 14.1 Policy context

The policy relating to military activities is a federal matter belonging to the Ministry of Defence ([website Belgian Defence](#)). An overview of the legislation with regard to the military activities (at sea) is given in the [Codex Coastal Zone, theme Military activities](#) and [Berichten aan Zeevarenden \(BAZ\) 2018 nr.1](#).

## 14.2 Spatial use

In the marine spatial plan (RD of 20 March 2014, see also [Van de Velde et al. 2014](#)), a number of zones reserved for military activities are indicated on the nautical chart (figure 1). Attention is paid to the compatibility with other (potential) users, such as shipping traffic and wind farms. The coordinates of these areas are communicated in the '[Berichten aan Zeevarenden](#)' ([BaZ 2018 nr.1](#), see messages 1/36A, 1/36B, 1/37, 1/38 and 1/39).

Also in the process to establish the new MSP (2020-2026), the objective remains that the BNS continues to provide sufficient space for conducting military exercises (including exercises with an amphibious vehicle in shallow water). The contours and use of the different legally defined zones should be discussed, in function of good coordination with other activities and customs in the BNS (e.g. compatibility between Nieuwpoort-Lombardsijde shooting exercises and nature functions) ([MSP 2020-2026, public consultation 2018](#)).

### 14.2.1 Military activities and exercises in the coastal zone and the BNS

In the BNS and the coastal zone, military activities and exercises regularly take place ([BaZ 2018 nr.1](#), [Belgian Defence](#)). These include:

- Target practices from land towards the sea. These practices only take place during the day on the military base (beach) in Lombardsijde. Appropriate signs and announcements are provided (see also the [Ministry of Defence website](#)) The practice area (D07) is divided into three sectors (K-small, M-medium and G-large), depending on the weapons used ([BaZ 2018 nr.1](#), see messages 1/36A and 1/36B). Every year, the practice area is available for military activities for approximately 150 days. The K-sector is used about 54 days, the M-sector 39 days, and the G-sector zero days per year. These numbers may vary depending on the operational requirements of the Belgian Defence;
- Exercises to lay, search and sweep mines. These exercises take place in two smaller areas, more precisely NB-01 (between Gootebank and Westhinder, for exercises in deep water) and NBH-10 (between Wenduine and Oostende Bank, for exercises in shallow water). For certain manoeuvres, or due to weather conditions, it may be

## SPATIAL USE - MILITARY USE

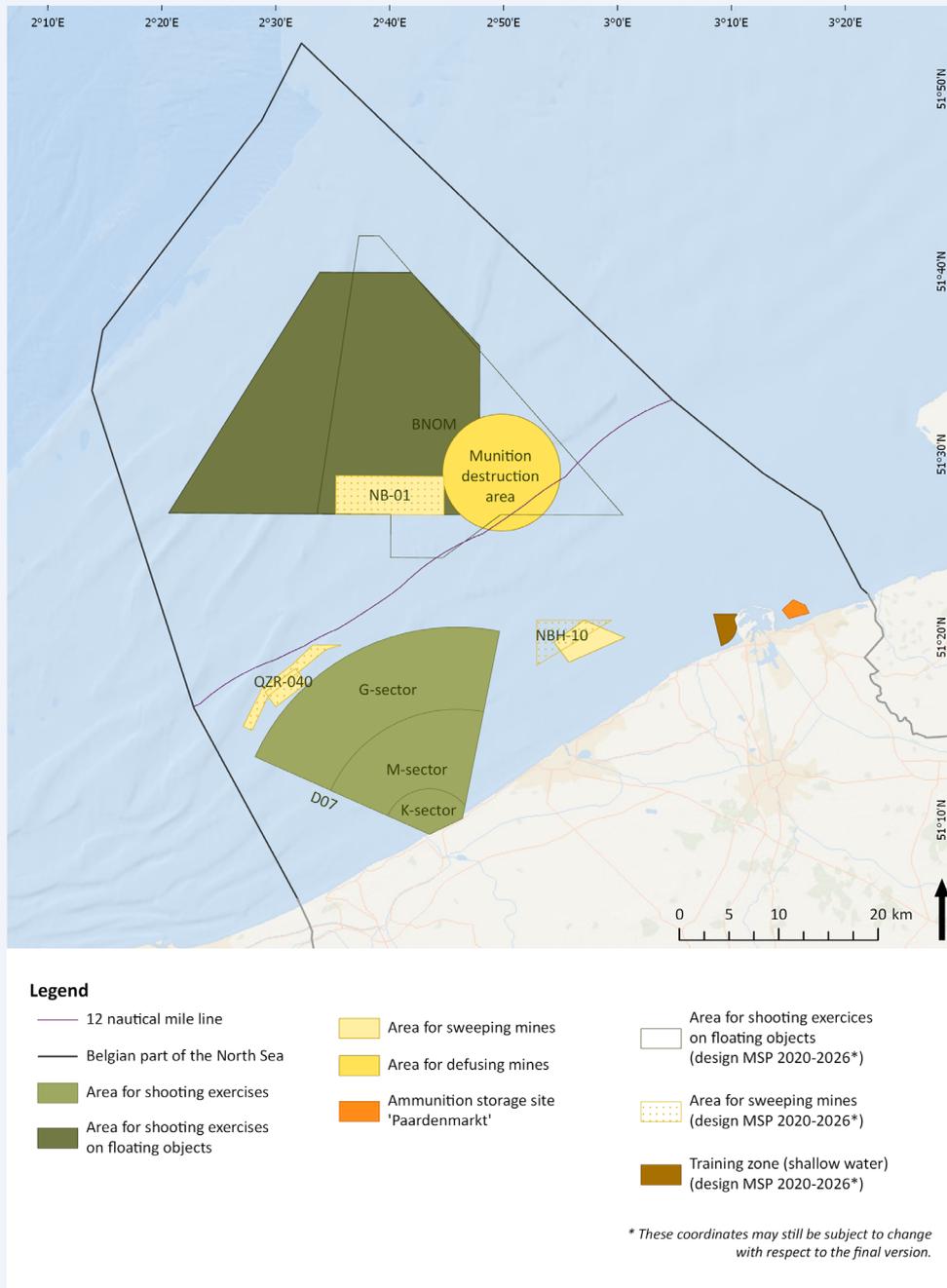


Figure 1. The demarcation of the military training zones in the BNS (Source: RBINS, [marineatlas.be](http://marineatlas.be) (based on the RD of 20 March 2014), *MSP 2020-2026, public consultation 2018*).

necessary to navigate outside of these areas. The training zones can therefore be extended, if necessary, to the circular detonation zone and towards the port of Ostend;

- Detonation exercises with practice mines. These exercises take place in the circular area (see also figure 1; 'munition destruction area') in the southeastern part of the BNOM zone (zone Thornton Bank-Gootebank). After the exercises, the practice mines are removed;
- The QZR-040 zone and the zone Buiten Ratel is a practice area used by the international naval mine warfare school of Eguermin in Ostend for Naval Mine Counter Measures (NMCM) training (*BaZ 2018 nr.1*, see message 1/39);

- Detonation of historical real mines. Very occasionally, a real war mine is found by ships, fishermen or dredgers. The treatment of mines and explosives fished at sea must be carried out in accordance with [BaZ 2018 nr.1](#), see message 1/10. Such mines are also detonated in the circular area, unless in case of an emergency and the munition appears to be immovable ([BaZ 2018 nr.1](#), see message 1/38);
- Amphibian, rescue and fly exercises;
- Extensive mine exercises by several NATO countries. There is no set area for this kind of exercises. NATO always announces the location of the exercises beforehand. The NBH-10 zone is one of the possible training zones. Such large-scale exercises are held every two years in the BNS. Under the new MSP ([MSP 2020-2026, public consultation 2018](#)), a new amphibian exercise zone west of the port of Zeebrugge was requested.

Besides the different training activities, the navy vessels and resources of the Belgian Defence are used for military operations such as ensuring the Maritime Situational Awareness (MSA) for the guidance and monitoring of foreign vessels and for a large range of specific military security interventions (e.g. Maritime Security Operations – MSO).

Visits by foreign warships must be reported in advance and, if necessary, approved by diplomatic means (RD 30 December 1923). Submarines are required to navigate on the surface when passing through the territorial sea. In case of submarine accidents, a specific Distressed Submarine procedure is used (DISSUB, see [BaZ 2018 nr. 1](#), message 1/9).

## 14.2.2 Military bases

The following military bases are located in the coastal area ([website Belgian Defence](#)):

- Camp Lombardsijde (Nieuwpoort/Middelkerke);
- Camp Adjutant Vlieger F. Allaeyns (Koksijde);
- Bootsman Jonsen barracks (Ostend), including the naval mine warfare school;
- Naval base Zeebrugge;
- Camp LTZ V. Billet Damage Control center (Brugge).

The following military domains in the coastal zone have a management protocol with the Flemish Region (in general the Agency for Nature and Forest ([ANB](#))):

- Camp Lombardsijde in Nieuwpoort/Middelkerke (54 ha);
- Camp 't Pompje in Oudenburg (62 ha).

## 14.2.3 Munitions dump site

After WWI, the Belgian Defence dumped German munitions on a large scale a few kilometres off the coast of Knokke-Heist on a shallow sandbank called the *Paardenmarkt*. There are at least 35,000 tonnes of munitions left on the seabed. Until recently, it was assumed that about one third consisted of toxic gas grenades. However, new indications reveal that this percentage may be significantly higher ([Missiaen 2013](#)). The exclusion zone is a pentagon of about 3 km<sup>2</sup> ([Missiaen et al. 2002](#)). The official coordinates of the pentagon are included in the marine spatial plan (RD of 20 March 2014, see also [Van de Velde et al. 2014](#)). In this pentagon, bottom-disturbing activities are prohibited (RD of 20 March 2014).

## 14.3 Societal interest

The Belgian Defence is not only responsible for the protection of the Belgian territorial sea. In case of an emergency in the Belgian seas, the Channel or the North Sea, the Belgian army offers help and assistance and provides *inter alia* helicopters ([website airbase Koksijde](#)), 'ready duty ships' and divers (General Emergency and Intervention Plan (ANIP) North Sea). The commander of the province of West Flanders is competent for the deployment of additional staff, infrastructure and military resources (Source: Belgian Defence, Guidelines for Homeland Operations).

In addition, the Belgian Navy (Belgian Maritime Component) is responsible for the detection of violations in the Belgian sea zones (law of 13 June 1969, law of 20 January 1999, law of 22 April 1999). There is a collaboration with the Management Unit of the Mathematical Model of the North Sea of the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences ([RBINS-MUMM](#)) in the framework of detecting and combating pollution at sea. In the same way, support is provided for the identification of polluters to DG-ENV with the aid of Remoted Piloted Aerial Systems. The regent decree of 30 March 1946 grants other specific competences to the Belgian Maritime Component regarding marine and coastal demining and the surveillance of fisheries. In this context, the Belgian Navy performs checks on board fishing vessels in cooperation with the Flemish Agriculture and Fisheries Department.

Through *Maritiem Informatie Kruispunt (MIK)* in Zeebrugge and Ostend Radio, the Belgian Defence constitutes a part of the operational branch of the *Coast Guard* (see theme **Maritime transport, shipping and ports**). The organisation and responsibilities of MIK are stipulated in the RD of 6 February 2009. In addition to distress, emergency and safety traffic, Ostend Radio provides the notifications to shipping, both inland and at sea (Source: Admiralty List of Radio Signals – Maritime Radio Stations, *BaZ 2018 nr.1*, see message 1/4). The Belgian Defence also intervenes in case of pollution in the North Sea, SAR operations and in case of the detonation of explosives at sea.

Furthermore, the Belgian Navy is responsible for the operation of the marine research vessel *Belgica*, which is managed by the Operational Directorate Natural Environment (*RBINS-OD Nature*). The Belgian Navy is also responsible for the training of foreign naval officers in the NATO naval mine warfare school in Ostend (*website Eguermin*). For this purpose, they have databases at their disposal with regard to the seabed and resources to investigate this matter. In this context, there is also collaboration with universities. In addition, the law regulating the protection of the underwater cultural heritage (law of 4 April 2014) introduced a notification obligation for finds that the discoverer may suspect to be cultural heritage (see also theme **Maritime and coastal heritage**). In consequence of this law, the Marine Commando asks ship commanders to report discoveries in the territorial sea, the exclusive economic zone or on the continental shelf to the Governor of West Flanders who takes on the role of receiver of the underwater cultural heritage (see also the website of *vondsteninzee.be*).

## EMPLOYMENT

With several bases along the coast, the Belgian Defence is responsible for significant direct and indirect employment. In 2018, direct employment in the coastal region amounted to 2,301 employees (table 1). Indirect employment derives from various maintenance companies which employ their staff at the bases (e.g. vessels maintenance), as well as from companies which perform occasional assignments for the Navy either at the naval base, or at their own shipyards. Furthermore, the suppliers of the quarters and ships should also be taken into account (Source: Belgian Defence).

**Table 1. The direct employment at the army bases in the coastal zone in 2018 (Source: Belgian Defence).**

Base	Employment (2018)
Zeebrugge (naval base, including crew)	1,111
Ostend (naval mine warfare school)	115
Lombardsijde (practice area + medical detachment)	318
St-Kruis (training navy, including Dutch colleagues in the context of binational activities)	437
Koksijde (airbase)	320
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,301</b>

## 14.4 Impact

### 14.4.1 Impact on the marine environment

#### MILITARY ACTIVITIES IN THE BNS AND SEAWARD TARGET PRACTICE

The impact of military activities in the BNS and seaward target practice on the marine environment is discussed in detail in *Degraer et al. (2011)*. The detection of mines and submarine exercises where sonar is used (zones NB-01 and NHB-10) may have a negative effect on marine mammals and fish (*André et al. 2010, Degraer et al. 2011*). Other exercises with explosions / target practices can disrupt marine animals and birds (*Degraer et al. 2011*). The mitigating measures taken by the Ministry of Defence in this context, in accordance with the Marine Environment law (MMM law of 20 January 1999), are discussed in **14.5 Sustainable use**.

Munitions that end up on the seabed during exercises are not cleared, except for practice mines. This may locally have a negative impact on the ecosystem due to the risk of leakage of copper and lead from munitions. Although the effect of this leaching may be smaller than the leaching due to other activities (*Deros 2005 (GAUFRE project BELSPO), Maes et al. 2005 (GAUFRE project BELSPO), Degraer et al. 2011*).

The target practices on land towards the sea take place near the the *IJzermonding* nature reserve (Yser Estuary) and near the habitats directive area 'Flemish Banks'. Furthermore, there are two marine birds directive areas (special protection area 1 and 2) and the Ramsar area 'Western Coastal Banks', which is designated for seaducks and grebes living in the vicinity of the target practices. The negative impact on fauna can be partially reduced by a proper timing taking into account the presence of marine mammals and large concentrations of susceptible seabirds and the breeding season ([Degraer et al. 2011](#)).

## WAR MUNITIONS DUMP SITE

The release of chemicals that were used in the munitions of the *Paardenmarkt* site, such as mustard gas and Clark components (e.g. [Missiaen and Moerkerke 2002](#), [Francken and Ruddick 2003](#), [Francken et al. 2006](#), [Francken and Ruddick 2007](#), [Francken and Hafez 2009](#), [Missiaen and Henriët 2010](#), [Degraer et al. 2011](#), [Missiaen 2013](#)), may lead to pollution of the sediment and the water column, and to disturbance of the food chain ([Goffin et al. 2007](#), [OSPAR QSR 2010](#), [Tweede Federaal Milieuraapport 2015](#)).

Every year, divers of the Belgian Defence take part in a 'survey campaign' to collect samples from the bottom of the sea. A synthesis of the scientific research which was conducted on the impact of the munitions storage on the *Paardenmarkt* site is available on [Missiaen and Henriët \(2010\)](#). A summary is given of the studies with regard to the topography, localisation of the munition, characterisation of the seafloor substrate, sampling and chemical monitoring, security, distribution of toxic components, biomonitoring and potential technical solutions. Furthermore, recommendations are formulated in this report for potential future research and / or actions that should be undertaken.

### 14.4.2 Impact on other users

Unexploded war materials constitute a potential danger for users of the sea such as fishermen and dredgers. The procedure to be followed in Belgium when mines or explosives are encountered is available in [BaZ 2018 nr.1](#), see message 1/10 and in the [chart of explosives](#).

In order to keep the sea, coastal waters and harbour channels free from mines, the Belgian Navy has concluded an international cooperation with the Dutch Navy: BENEFICIAL COOPERATION. In this context, they particularly address the problem of residual explosives from the First and Second World Wars. Weekly, fishermen and other vessels still encounter mines in the North Sea, which are subsequently marked and reported to the Coast Guard after which they are defused by a minehunter.

## 14.5 Sustainable use

### 14.5.1 Measures for seaward target practice

The target practices which occur in the coastal area of Nieuwpoort-Lombardsijde are subject to restrictions in order to reduce social nuisance. No target practices take place on Saturdays, Sundays, and public and school holidays, and in addition, these exercises only take place during the day. The periods when the target practices are suspended, are shown in the BaZ ([BaZ 2018 nr.1](#), see messages 1/36A and 1/36B) and on the [website of Belgian Defence](#). Infringements and complaints relating to the target practice rules can be submitted to the federal Police.

The target practices take place near the nature reserve the *IJzermonding* and in the marine areas of the western coastal zone which are protected by the EU Birds and Habitats Directives (see also **14.4.1 Impact on marine the environment**). The effects of these target practices on the environment can be reduced by a proper timing (for example, no target practices during the breeding season or by taking into account the presence of marine mammals) ([Maes et al. 2005](#), [GAUFRE project BELSPO](#), [Degraer et al. 2011](#)).

### 14.5.2 Measures for military activities at sea

On an international level, naval ships need to respect the rules stipulated in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ([UNCLOS 1982](#)). The impact of military activities on the marine environment is not covered by environmental policies and treaties, such as the international [ASCOBANS](#) Agreement (although the (sound)impact of military activities on small cetaceans is studied in the framework of this agreement and is called upon introducing mitigating measures in cooperation with military authorities, see e.g. [Bräger et al. 2010](#)) and the European Marine

Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) (see e.g. [descriptor 11](#) Energy, incl. underwater noise). In the revision of the initial assessment for the Belgian marine waters (under MSFD obligations) it is reported that no measurements of underwater noise were executed in the BNS during the detonation of ammunition that ended up in the sea. Presumably, this noise will be at least of the same magnitude as pile driving for offshore wind turbines ([Belgian State 2018, public consultation](#)). Recent studies show that the damaging effect of the shock wave can be large and can reach very far, for example several tens of km for a 250 kg bomb ([von Benda-Beckmann et al. 2015](#)). There has been a plea for the consideration of the environmental effects of new military activities in the context of the Natura 2000 sites, protected by the European Birds Directive and Habitats Directive. Article 6 (section 3 and 4) of the Habitats Directive provide a balanced framework to solve potential conflicts between military activities and environmental protection at sea ([Guidelines for the establishment of the Natura 2000 network in the marine environment 2007](#)).

The measures protecting the marine environment (see theme **Nature and environment**) do not cover military activities (law of 20 January 1999). The military activities can only be subjected to a permission or authorisation as a result of a common recommendation by the minister whose authority includes the protection of the marine environment and by the minister of Defence. In that case, the permission or authorisation is granted by both ministers. The law of 20 January 1999 does state that the military authorities, in consultation with the minister responsible for the protection of the marine environment, must make every effort to prevent damage and environmental disturbance, without jeopardising the deployment and preparedness of the armed forces. In [Degraer et al. \(2011\)](#) a few measures have been proposed in order to mitigate the impact of military shipping, the detonation of ammunition at sea, the use of sonar, chemical pollution, etc. In this context, the Belgian Defence investigates the frequencies of sonars and minehunters that have no influence on marine mammals, and 'pingers' are purchased to chase away the marine mammals during exercises or during the detonation of underwater ammunition (Source: *Defensie - Wapensysteem Management overleg 1<sup>e</sup> niveau – MijnenBestrijdingsVaartuigen (MBV 2018\_02) -17 april 2018*).

The current trend for naval ships is to set an example on the ecological level. Within NATO, a special task force exists for this purpose (NATO Naval Armaments Group (NNAG) A/C141 - SWG12). Its aim is to promote the exchange of information between the NATO navies as well as the development of solutions, in order to meet the national and international regulations regarding the protection of the marine environment and in order to create common initiatives for building an environmentally friendly fleet. To realise these goals, NATO has adopted the principles of the [MARPOL Convention](#) and the London Dumping Convention and Protocol and adapted them to the specific demands of naval ships. Technically, the treaties are not applicable to military vessels, but military vessels do make the necessary efforts to respect these rules. This has resulted in a series of publications such as the Allied Maritime Environmental Protection Publication (AMEPP). Each of these publications treat a specific aspect of maritime environmental protection. The purpose of these documents is to provide a clear, general guideline for shipping architects and designers of naval systems, in accordance with the treaties mentioned above. On the basis of the AMEPP publications, the environmental legislation is incorporated in the design of new ships with minimal impact on the operational capacity, readiness, safety, survival and comfort of the crew (Source: Belgian Defence).

Since 1966, the testing of nuclear weapons in the BNS has been forbidden by law (5 August 1963 – Convention for the banning of experiments with nuclear weapons). The abandonment of nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction outside territorial waters has been forbidden since 1973, and from 1999 onwards, this prohibition applies to the entire BNS (law of 18 August 1972, [Maes et al. 2005, GAUFRE project BELSPO](#)). In 2017, the fourth periodic evaluation was concluded regarding the objectives set in the OSPAR strategy for radioactive substances ([OSPAR IA 2017](#)).

### 14.5.3 Measures with regard to munitions dump sites

On an international level, the [OSPAR Convention](#) (1992) prohibits the dumping of all waste or other matters, including chemical waste. The dumping of chemical weapons at sea was forbidden with the ratification of the [Chemical Weapons Convention \(CWC\)](#) in 1997 ([Missiaen and Moerkerke 2002](#)). Subsequently, OSPAR published a recommendation for the reporting of conventional and chemical ammunitions in the OSPAR area ([OSPAR Recommendation 2010/20](#)).

On the European level, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) constitutes an important framework for measures against pollution from ammunition in offshore dump sites. Two of the descriptors in the MSFD to determine a good environmental status (GES) concern the concentration of polluting matters: [descriptor 8](#) ([Law et al. 2010](#)) and [descriptor 9](#) ([Swartenbroux et al. 2010](#)). The revision of the initial assessment for Belgian marine waters (in the context of MSFD obligations) did not include ammunition leakage and monitoring of these chemicals ([Belgian State 2018, public consultation](#)). Given the fact that the dumping site at the *Paardenmarkt* sandbank is situated within the territorial waters and partly within the coastal waters, the Water Framework Directive (WFD) offers a relevant legislative framework in case of pollution. The WFD and the MSFD have been incorporated in Belgian legislation by the RD of 23 June 2010 (surface water status) and the RD of 23 June 2010 (marine strategy).

Due to the short distance from the coast and the shallow location, and given the fact that the dumping area is partly situated in the birds directive area (SPA-3), it is crucial to monitor the *Paardenmarkt* ammunition dump site on a regular basis (e.g. [Missiaen et al. 2002](#), [Missiaen and Moerkerke 2002](#), [Martens 2005](#), [Missiaen and Henriët 2010](#), [Missiaen 2013](#)). RBINS-OD Nature coordinates sampling at regular intervals on the *Paardenmarkt* with DG- ENV and Defence (divers) in order to detect any leaks of pollutants from the ammunition ([website OD Nature](#)). For this purpose the technique of passive samplers has been used for some time (see e.g. [Monteyne et al. 2013](#), [ICES WGMS Report 2015](#)). The publication [Missiaen and Henriët \(2010\)](#) provides an overview of the conducted research and gives recommendations concerning further research and monitoring (e.g. geochemical monitoring) of the *Paardenmarkt* site. In [Degraer et al. \(2011\)](#) it is recommended not to intervene the *Paardenmarkt* site.

More recently, the Government of Flanders has been considering the possibility of clearing the *Paardenmarkt*. In this context, an ‘innovative government contract’ was set up to arrive at a pilot clearance of the ammunition dump. This assignment is drawn up by the Maritime Access Division (MOW Department) in cooperation with the EWI Department and forms part of the [Complex Project Coastal Vision](#). The Interreg project [North Sea Wrecks](#) will provide tools necessary for planners, response organisations, economic actors and other stakeholders to assess and propose solutions for risk mitigation regarding wrecks and munitions in the North Sea.

#### 14.5.4 The management of military domains

The Belgian Defence applies the federal and regional environmental legislation to the military activity, as far as this application does not obstruct the operational character or the international obligations (Source: [Bijlagenota bij het Federaal Milieucharter](#) (12 December 2001) and [Beleidsnota van Landsverdediging inzake Leefmilieu](#) (14 January 2004)). The internal environmental care within the Belgian Defence is mentioned in [André et al. \(2010\)](#).

The [LIFE project Danah](#) aimed at protecting the species, protecting and expanding the heathland habitats, and preserving and restoring the nature values within Flemish military domains. This European nature restoration project did not have any applications in the coastal zone. Two military domains in the coastal area (owned by the Ministry of Defence) are managed by the Agency for Nature and Forest (ANB) through a cooperation protocol: Camp Lombardsijde and Camp ‘t Pompje. The military function prevails and sets preconditions, but the often unique ecological as well as recreational/economic values are recognised and correspondingly managed ([Dumortier et al. 2009](#)). The environmental technical management plan concerning the dunes of the military domain ‘Camp Lombardsijde’ has been established in [Degezelle and Hoffmann \(2002\)](#). The ammunition depot Zedelgem-Zuid has been fully transferred by the Defence to the Agency for Nature and Forest (ANB).

## Legislation reference list

Overview of the relevant legislation at the international, European, federal and Flemish level. For the consolidated European legislation we refer to [Eurlex](#), the national legislation can be consulted in the [Belgisch staatsblad](#) and the [Justel-databanken](#).

International agreements, treaties, conventions, etc.		
Title	Year of conclusion	Year of entering into force
Treaty banning nuclear weapon tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water (The Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT))	1963	1966
Treaty on the prohibition of the emplacement of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction on the seabed and the ocean floor and in the subsoil thereof (Seabed Treaty (Seabed Arms Control Treaty))	1971	1972
The convention of wetlands (Ramsar Convention)	1971	1975
International Convention for the prevention of pollution from ships and its Annexes, as amended (MARPOL Convention)	1973	1978 - 1983
United Nations Convention on the law of the sea (UNCLOS)	1982	1994
Agreement on the conservation of small cetaceans in the Baltic, North-East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS)	1991	1994
Convention for the protection of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR Convention)	1992	1998
Convention on the prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons and on their destruction (Chemical Weapons Convention, CWC)	1993	1997
Scheldt Treaty (Scheldeverdrag)	2002	

European legislation		
Title	Year	Number
Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (Habitats Directive)	1992	43
Directive establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy (Water Framework Directive)	2000	60
Directive establishing a framework for Community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive)	2008	56
Directive on the conservation of wild birds (Birds Directive)	2009	147

Belgian and Flemish legislation		
Abbreviation	Title	File number
Decision of the Regent of 30 March 1946	Besluit betreffende oprichting en organisatie van de Marine	
RD of 30 December 1923	Koninklijk besluit inzake toelating van vreemde oorlogsschepen in de wateren en havens van het Koninkrijk	1923-12-30/01
RD of 6 Februari 2009	Koninklijk besluit tot oprichting en organisatie van het maritiem informatiekruispunt	2009-02-06/39
RD of 23 June 2010	Koninklijk besluit betreffende de vaststelling van een kader voor het bereiken van een goede oppervlaktewatertoestand	2010-06-23/04
RD of 23 June 2010	Koninklijk besluit betreffende de mariene strategie voor de Belgische zeegebieden	2010-06-23/05
RD of 20 March 2014	Koninklijk besluit tot vaststelling van het marien ruimtelijk plan	2014-03-20/03
Law of 13 June 1969	Wet inzake de exploratie en de exploitatie van niet -levende rijkdommen van de territoriale zee en het continentaal plat	1969-06-13/30
Law of 18 August 1972	Wet houdende goedkeuring van het Verdrag tot verbod van de plaatsing van kernwapens en andere wapens voor massale vernietiging op de zeebedding en de oceaانبodem en in de ondergrond daarvan, opgemaakt te Londen, Moskou en Washington	1972-08-18/32
Law of 20 January 1999	Wet ter bescherming van het mariene milieu en ter organisatie van de mariene ruimtelijke planning in de zeegebieden onder de rechtsbevoegdheid van België	1999-01-20/33
Law of 22 April 1999	Wet betreffende de exclusieve zone van België in de Noordzee	1999-04-22/47
Law of 4 April 2014	Wet betreffende bescherming van het cultureel erfgoed onder water	2014-04-04/07

