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Maritime and coastal heritage

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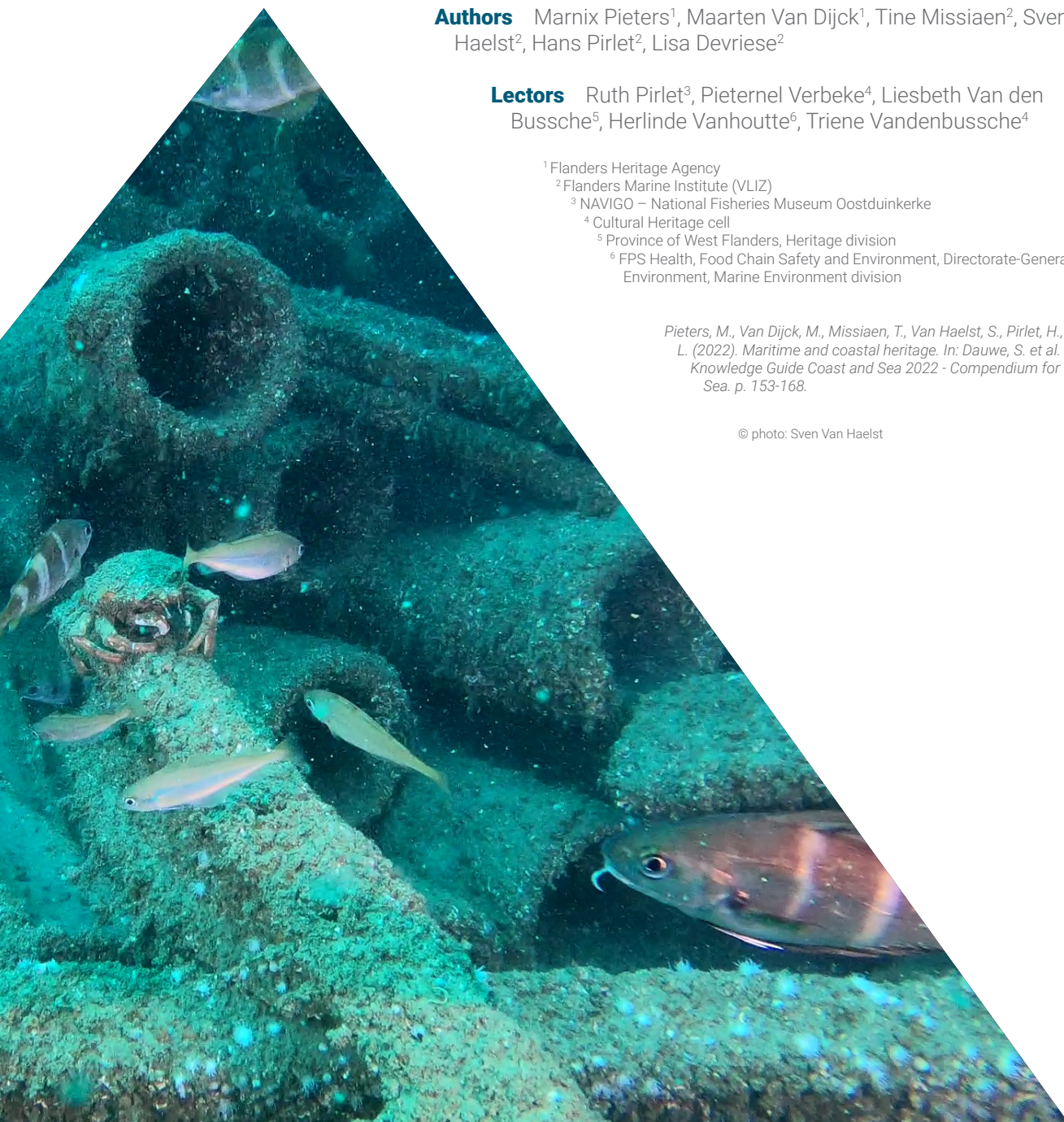
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Maritime and coastal heritage encompasses a very wide range of themes. Comprehensive works that cover these maritime heritage themes for the Belgian part of the North Sea (BNS) and the adjacent coastal area do not exist. Addressing maritime and coastal heritage in an integrated way does, however, offer benefits in terms of understanding interrelationships and elucidating the wider context. Furthermore, the various types of boundaries have changed significantly over time. In the Roman period, for example, the coastline was located further seaward compared to the present situation, even though several tidal channels penetrated into the hinterland (see [HisGISKust](#) for the evolution of the coastline since the 16th century). As a result, archaeological heritage originally shaped on land in the former coastal area may now be submerged. Maritime and coastal heritage includes the following sub-aspects:

- Immovable heritage (immovable elements such as monuments, landscapes or archaeological sites)
 - > Maritime archaeological heritage on land;
 - > Cultural heritage under water;
 - > Architectural heritage typical of the coastal area;
 - > Coastal landscapes with heritage value;
- Movable heritage (easily movable objects, e.g. paintings, tapestries, archives, photographs)
 - > Moveable maritime and coastal heritage;
- Nautical heritage
 - > Immovable heritage: nautical heritage that could sail or float but is now connected to the shore, such as the *Amandine* in Ostend;
 - > Movable heritage: nautical heritage that can still sail or float and, hence, is not attached to the shore;
- Intangible heritage (non-physical heritage such as customs, habits, stories, songs, traditions, parades, dialects, etc.)
 - > Intangible maritime or coastal heritage.

9.1 Current situation

9.1.1 Maritime archaeological heritage

The concept of ‘maritime archaeology’¹ includes the following aspects:

- Shipwrecks and other wrecks (e.g. airplanes) as well as parts thereof, regardless of the position they are found (in the sea, in rivers or former rivers or recycled anywhere on land). The extension to sites on land only applies to shipwrecks and parts thereof ([Pieters et al. 2015](#));
- Settlements or traces of remains of human activity in seas, rivers or other bodies of water and their paleo-environmental context ([Missiaen 2012](#), [Missiaen et al. 2017](#), [Missiaen et al. 2018](#)). An important category of these can be linked to sea level rise after the cold phases of the ice ages;
- Land-based archaeological sites and traces and their paleo-environmental context which, in terms of their former function, were entirely focused on the sea or the water such as lighthouses, fishing villages, shipyards, seawalls, peat extraction, salt extraction, quays, drainage canals, etc. ([Thoen 1978](#), [Tys 2013](#), [Tys 2017](#));
- Archaeological remains of marine fishes that are found far inland during archaeological research ([Van Neer and Ervynck 2006](#), [Van Neer and Ervynck 2016](#));
- Paleontological remains of terrestrial fauna found at sea (for the BNS and adjacent beaches, see [Vermeersch et al. 2015](#), [Pieters et al. 2020](#)).

There is no restriction with regard to the age of the investigated archaeological heritage. For instance, a shipwreck from WWII is given a different archaeological treatment than a shipwreck from the Bronze Age (e.g. [Moies 2020](#)).

Since 2003, systematic research on maritime archaeological heritage has been carried out by [Flanders Heritage Agency](#) and its precursors (Institute for the Archaeological Heritage (IAP), Flemish Institute for Immovable Heritage (VIOE)). Since 2017, focus has mainly been put on inland waterways (rivers, docks, the *Zwin*, etc.) and the intertidal area adjacent to the territorial sea. The [Flanders Heritage Agency Inventory](#) offers an overview of the valuable archaeological, architectural, landscape and nautical heritage in Flanders. In 2020, the former Central Archaeological Inventory (CAI) was fully integrated in the aforementioned Flanders Heritage Agency Inventory through the modules ‘[observations](#)’ and ‘[events](#)’.

¹ Maritime archaeology, nautical archaeology, marine archaeology, and underwater archaeology are all related concepts. In the heritage sector, the term ‘maritime archaeology’ is increasingly used as an umbrella term for all four concepts.

9.1.1.1 Databases

For the entire spectrum of maritime archaeological heritage, as outlined above, a number of central databases are available for Flanders and the BNS:

- The [database](#) of the Flanders Heritage Agency aims at structurally documenting and disclosing relevant information concerning maritime archaeological heritage in Flanders and in the BNS. On this website, more information can be found about shipwrecks (and their contents) that are present in the North Sea and in Flanders, artefacts from the sea, and maritime sites such as fishing villages and lighthouses.

In addition, two more databases offer valuable structured information about parts of the above described heritage i.e. shipwrecks, without having an archaeological perspective:

- The [wreck database](#) of the Flemish Hydrography was developed from a perspective of safe shipping. The information in this database formed the basis for a book on shipwrecks in the North Sea which provides an inventory discussing 227 different wreck sites ([Termote and Termote 2009](#));
- The online database [wreck site](#) (a private initiative), which has become an internationally respected and consulted database on shipwrecks and their positions (see also the [Coastal Portal](#)).

9.1.1.2 Key publications

In addition to the three databases mentioned above, a number of overview publications are available covering part of the maritime archaeological spectrum.

Since 2021, the web page [Onderzoeksbalans archeologie in Vlaanderen](#) replaces the Research Balance website of the Flemish Heritage Agency, and makes a range of research reports in chronological and thematic chapters available. For maritime archaeology we refer to [Lentacker and Pieters \(2021\)](#), which includes two synthesis documents:

- An overview of the archaeological research in the BNS seawards of the highwater line (including the beach) (published in adapted format by [Pieters et al. 2010](#));
- An overview of shipwrecks and components found in rivers and on land in Flanders. The medieval shipwrecks from Flanders have also been included in an overview article on medieval ships ([Van de Moortel 2011](#)).

For the study of the maritime archaeological heritage of WWI, the overview article: War Under Water ([Termote 2014](#)) provides a structured insight into the activities of the Unterseeboot Flottille Flandern during the period 1915-1918. In 2018, the exhibition '1914-18 - The Battle for the North Sea' on the underexposed story of the war at sea took place at the Provincial Court in Bruges ([Termote 2018](#)). Recently, the inventory of 100-year-old shipwrecks was created by VLIZ on behalf of FPS Mobility ([Demerre et al. 2020](#); the research reports of each wreck can be consulted via the website of [FPS Public Health](#)).

For the study of shipwrecks found on land, research on the medieval shipwrecks in the village of Doel is of importance from an international perspective (see [logbook immovable heritage](#), [Haneca and Daly 2014](#), [Vermeersch and Haneca 2015](#), [Vermeersch et al. 2015](#)). In recent decades, extensive research has been carried out in Flanders on the archaeological heritage of late medieval and early modern fishermen, particularly on the medieval fishermen's community of Walraversijde. A first substantial part of the research data from the archaeological survey at Raversijde was published in [Pieters et al. \(2013\)](#). A number of studies have been carried out by the *Vrije Universiteit Brussel* with regard to the maritime landscapes in the Belgian coastal plains (e.g. [Tys 2004](#), [Tys 2013](#), [Tys 2017](#)). Recently, the University of Ghent (UGent), in close cooperation with the Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ), took the first steps in structured research on drowned (pre)historic landscapes off the Belgian coast ([Missiaen et al. 2017b](#), [De Clercq 2018](#), [Pieters et al. 2020](#)). The available evidence for these drowned prehistoric landscapes is steadily growing. Research in the fairway the 'Scheur' discovered an area with exceptionally large numbers of bones from the Late Pleistocene and Palaeogene ([Pieters et al. 2020](#)).

9.1.1.3 Archaeological evaluation and reconstruction

- The IWT project *Archaeological research in the North Sea: development of an efficient assessment methodology and proposals for sustainable management in Belgium* ([SeArch](#)) (2013-2016) provided

methodologies and created a growing awareness for the knowledge gaps that exist concerning buried shipwrecks and prehistoric relics in the North Sea (Van Haelst et al. 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, Missiaen et al. 2016). In addition, guidelines are provided for the users of the North Sea, including a legal framework concerning maritime archaeological heritage. This legal framework must ensure the proper management of valuable heritage, taking into consideration the appropriate economic exploitation of the North Sea (Missiaen et al. 2016, Missiaen et al. 2017);

- The systematic stripping of Belgian beaches of unexploded ordnance regularly reveals archaeologically relevant data, such as the discovery of a cast iron cannon on Wenduine beach (Van Haelst et al. 2020);
- The project *Verdwenen Zwinhavens* examines the role of Bruges as a late medieval port and the maritime-cultural landscape that stretched along the Zwin tidal channel. The stories about the vanished Zwinhavens were presented virtually as a time travel in the expo space of the Zwin Nature Park (2021);
- Commissioned by the Department of Mobility and Public Works (MOW - Maritime Access division), a palaeo-landscape reconstruction of the Zeebrugge coastal area was carried out in the period 2016 - 2020. This involved a unique geological, palaeo-landscape and archaeological study of the Zeebrugge region (offshore) and was part of the *Coastal Vision* project (formerly known as the *Vlaamse Baaien* project or *Complex Project Kustvisie*).

The other categories of maritime archaeological heritage on land, such as seawalls, port structures, lighthouses, lime kilns, salt extractions, etc. remain largely unexposed in the archaeological research in Flanders. *Water Heritage Flanders* is the Flemish umbrella organisation for wet and dry water heritage aimed at stimulating new touristic initiatives and activities (e.g. Schoeters 2017). The dry water heritage on the coast includes the NAVIGO museum in Oostduinkerke and the lighthouses of Ostend and Nieuwpoort. The sailing vessel Mercator and the museum ship Amandine in Ostend (Van Dijck 2012) and the Cog of Doel, on the other hand, are part of the wet water heritage.

9.1.2 Nautical heritage

The nautical heritage policy was established relatively recently as a result of two parallel developments. Firstly, since the 1980s, there has been a focus on the types of vessels that are in danger of disappearing or have already disappeared. This led to attempts to preserve, restore or build replicas of ships that had already disappeared. The organisation of the *Ostend at Anchor* event belongs to this social development. Secondly, since the beginning of the 1990s, attention for the nautical heritage (historical fleet) arose from the Industrial Heritage cell within the former Department of Monuments and Sites (now Flanders Heritage Agency). The link between nautical and industrial heritage seems obvious, as the ships were built with materials that were also used in other economic sectors. The inventory of nautical heritage is kept by the Flanders Heritage Agency and has since been integrated into the aforementioned inventory of immovable heritage: inventaris.onroerenderfgoed.be. It was adopted on 16 June 2017, which means that the authorities or other parties such as ports can link certain legal effects and benefits to the nautical heritage inventory. The Flanders Heritage Agency published a comprehensive brochure containing information on the inventory, its establishment and the protection of nautical heritage (see also *Varend erfgoed in Vlaanderen* 2016). An overview of the corresponding literature can be consulted via the website of the *Onderzoeksbalans Bouwkundig Erfgoed*. Also the Flemish-Dutch magazine *Erfgoed van Industrie en Techniek* published a theme issue on nautical heritage in 2016-2017.

Specifically for the coast, two types of vessels are of great importance: fishing vessels and sailing yachts. An overview of the fishing vessels since 1929 can be found in the [database of the Belgian fishing fleet](#) of the VLIZ (see also thematic chapter **Fisheries**). The Panesi project examined the construction of fishing vessels on the coast using the archives and plans of the Panesi shipyard preserved by the NAVIGO museum (Van Dijck and Daems 2015). The study outlines the history of shipbuilding on the coast and describes the development of the fishing vessels built between 1870 and 1970.

The sailing vessel Mercator, is considered a case out of category, which was protected as a monument in 1996 and marked as nautical heritage in 2017. The steel barquentine of 78 m was built in 1932 according to the plans of Adrien de Gerlache (see also *VLIZ Wetenschatten 2012 – Adrien de Gerlache, VLIZ Wetenschatten 2015a*). The Mercator was used to train merchant marine officers. It opened to the public as a museum ship in 1961 (Vanden Bosch 2001). Lastly, the West-Hinder Light Ships (1950, Belliard yard, Ostend, Janssens 1997, De Graaf 2012, *VLIZ Wetenschatten 2015b*) were used as floating lighthouses warning ships for shallow sandbanks and were eventually replaced by unmanned light platforms in 1993.

9.1.3 Architectural heritage along the coast

The interest in the preservation of architectural heritage in Belgium dates back to the 19th century. The architectural heritage along the coast includes many components that are specifically maritime-related: hotels and other residential accommodation, tourist and recreational facilities and infrastructure (see also thematic chapter **Tourism and recreation**), coastal defence (civil and military) (see also thematic chapters **Safety against flooding** and **Military use**), lighthouses, sluices, all kinds of maritime business infrastructure, etc. The first two groups of coastal architectural heritage mentioned above are closely linked to the rise of tourism in Flanders during the last 200 years. This coastal tourism especially took off in the last quarter of the 19th century (Constandt 1986). The *Belle Époque Centre* in Blankenberge exhibits architectural accomplishments that originated along the coast between 1870 and 1914.

The Flanders Heritage Agency made an inventory of architectural heritage in Flanders, municipality by municipality, from 1970 to 2012 (*Bouwen door de eeuwen heen; geographic inventory*). The results of the inventory are publicly available and can be consulted online at: inventaris.onroenderfgoed.be. An up-to-date overview of the spatial distribution of the protected architectural heritage along the coast and additional information can be consulted on the Geoportal from the Flanders Heritage Agency (geo.onroenderfgoed.be). Specifically for West Flanders, there is the survey work *Monumentaal West-Vlaanderen* offers in three volumes an illustrated overview of all the protected monuments and landscapes in the province, on 1 January 2001. The coastal area is discussed in volume III, published in 2005 (Cornilly 2005).

Thematic overview publications, albeit not exhaustive, also exist for certain groups of architectural heritage such as lighthouses (Warzée 1999), military heritage from WWI along the coast (Deseyne 2007, Vernier 2012), the Atlantic Wall (Philippart et al. 2004, Philippart 2014), tourism-related heritage (Cornilly 2006), and modern architecture (Cornilly 2007).

The industrial archaeological heritage is also increasingly being addressed in the context of heritage conservation. This industrial heritage includes a number of typically maritime components such as shipyards, port infrastructure, docks and dry-docks and fish processing companies (*Onderzoeksbalans bouwkundig erfgoed, Onderzoeksbalans industrieel erfgoed*). In Ostend, for example, the 'new trading docks' (Houtdok, Zwaaidok and Vlotdok) are included as established architectural heritage (*inventory*). Because of its maritime location, Flanders could boast a fairly large number of shipyards until well into the 20th century, building both wooden and metal vessels for inland, coastal and maritime navigation. Research on the industrial heritage of shipbuilding in Flanders, however, is limited to a few case studies, such as the Van Praet and Van Damme shipyards in Baasrode (Segers 1994), and a first important overview of fisheries-related shipyards by Desnerck and Desnerck (1974) and Desnerck and Desnerck (1976). Pioneering work on the port of Antwerp was conducted by Albert Himler (Himler and Moorthamers 1982, Asaert et al. 1993, Himler 1993). The harbour cranes of Antwerp also received the necessary attention (Vrelust et al. 2014, Moermans, Van Dijck and Vrelust 2015, Van Schoors 2018). The other Flemish ports were studied to a much lesser extent or in a much less nuanced way. The industrial heritage linked to sea fisheries (fish processing companies) has been little explored nor mapped up till now. Information on the history of fish smoking and drying companies in West Flanders during the period 1850-1950 is available (e.g. De Clerck 2006, De Clerck 2007). An overview of the history of Belgian oyster farming is provided by Halewyck and Hostyn (1978), Polk (2002), Pirlet (2012), Steevens and Van Moerbeke (2015) and Pirlet (2016), as well as on the following website (see also thematic chapter **Marine aquaculture**).

9.1.4 Landscapes with heritage value²

The coastal landscape, bordered by the Pleistocene sand region, has been largely shaped by humans. Without embankments and drainage, this area would look completely different. There has been a significant human impact, although some areas such as *De Grote Keignaard* in Zandvoorde have a rather natural appearance (Cornilly 2005). The protected landscapes in the coastal area include very diverse areas ranging from creek areas (Lapscheure, *De Grote Keignaard* in Zandvoorde), backlands (Lampernisse), dune regions (*Westhoek dunes, Houstaeger dunes* in De Panne, *Cabour* in Adinkerke), tidal areas (the *Zwin* and Yser Estuary), heathlands (*Westende*), transitional areas (*Zwinbosjes, Duinenweg/Duinenstraat* in Raversijde) to specific and completely human-made areas such as the *Moeren* region (located between Veurne and Dunkirk on the French-Belgian border).

An overview of the spatial distribution of the known landscape heritage can be found in the scientific inventory *landscape atlas*, and can be searched on the *inventory website* and is offered on map in the *geoportal* *Immovable*

² Research on the genesis and significance of the maritime landscape (drowned paleo-landscapes) is included in maritime archaeology.

Heritage. An overview of the protected landscapes in West Flanders on 1 January 2001 can be found in 'Monumental West Flanders' (Cornilly 2005). The situation after the 1 January 2001 is recorded in the landscape atlas, the [geoportal](#) Immovable Heritage and via the website of [Monumentenwacht Vlaanderen](#).

9.1.5 Movable and intangible heritage³

9.1.5.1 Movable heritage

The term 'movable heritage' covers historically valuable objects that can usually be found in museum collections, archives or heritage libraries. Museums generally focus their collection policy on a particular theme. Certain museums focus on the historical story of a city, region or country, whereas others focus on collecting art, technology or everyday objects.

- An overview of the museums along the coast can be found on the website of [Uit in Vlaanderen](#). There are about twenty museums located in the coastal area⁴, some of which focus specifically on the coast (see [www.erfgoedinzicht.be](#) for the digital disclosure to the collection of these museums);
- Several libraries are located along the coast. Some of them have publications with historical value in their collection. An overview of these collections is provided on the website [collectiewijzer](#) of the Flemish heritage library. The [VLIZ library](#) exclusively collects publications on the sea and coast. The [library and documentation centre of the NAVIGO](#)⁵ focuses on the history of fisheries in the broadest sense.

Furthermore, the archives of the various government levels are important sources of movable heritage.

- The [Archiefbank](#) contains overviews of private archives that are of importance to maritime heritage (e.g. of the Free Fishing Schools);
- The State Archives of Belgium also preserve many records relating to coastal municipalities, which can be consulted via the searchable [database](#);
- The provincial archives have their own database, [Probat](#), where besides the archives of the province of West-Flanders, several municipal archives can be consulted (e.g. De Haan, Koksijde, Middelkerke, Blankenberge). The city archive of Ostend has its own [website](#). In addition, the various image databases should be mentioned for their role in providing access to historical photographic material. The [provincial image database](#) contains pictures of quite a few coastal municipalities. The municipalities De Panne, Koksijde and Nieuwpoort are connected to the image database [Westhoek verbeeldt](#). The [image database Kusterfgoed](#) primarily collects heritage collections from and on the municipalities of Middelkerke, Ostend, Bredene, De Haan and Blankenberge, and also focuses on the collections held by local heritage players and private individuals.

The initiative 'A century of sea fishery in Belgium' of VLIZ collects historical data on e.g. landings, income and legislation of the Belgian fisheries (see also thematic chapter **Fisheries**; [Lescrauwaet 2013](#)). In 2018, a reference work has been published on the core aspects of the wider fishing business during 500 years of Flemish sea fishing ([Lescrauwaet et al. 2018](#)). This work is based on archive, data and literature research, and the information is offered via the central online platform [History of Belgian sea fisheries](#). In cooperation with national and international partners, VLIZ has also initiated the project [Southern Netherlandish Prize Papers Research](#), in which documents of ships seized by the British Admiralty from the late 17th to early 19th century are valorised in a Flemish context ([Pannier and De Winter 2020](#)). These documents focus on the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1714) and the socio-cultural context of the privateering communities of Ostend and Dunkirk. In 2020, the book '[Gekaapte brieven](#)' was published, a private initiative about the letters that Ostend seamen and corsairs wrote home in 1664, but never reached their destination. Finally, the local historical societies also preserve a lot of interesting material. Until recently, an overview of all local historical societies along the coast was available via [Heemkunde Vlaanderen](#). Since 2019, [Heemkunde Vlaanderen](#) is included in [Histories](#), a Flemish heritage organisation subsidised by the Government of Flanders. Currently, as an extension to the [Bibliography of the History of Ostend](#), a Bibliography of the History of the Central Coast is being compiled by Ghent University (UGent), [Kusterfgoed](#) and VLIZ. The [bibliography](#) will be available for digital consultation and will include works on the history of Middelkerke, Ostend, Bredene, De Haan and Blankenberge.

³ Research on prehistoric heritage is included in maritime archaeology.

⁴ It should be noted that certain actors (museums, libraries, archives, etc.) that are not located in the coastal area also have interesting collections on maritime and coastal heritage.

⁵ Due to museum closure and renovations to the NAVIGO museum, this website page will not be available again until 2023.

9.1.5.2 Intangible cultural heritage

Intangible cultural heritage represents traditions, customs, knowledge and practices inherited or historically developed by a group of people, so in short for living traditions that are still continued. Dialects, processions or crafts are just some examples of intangible heritage. In this context, the Government of Flanders launched a [platform for intangible heritage](#) in Flanders. Individuals or organisations must apply to be included in the inventory. The inclusion in the inventory of Flanders is a prerequisite to apply for UNESCO recognition. Some examples of intangible heritage at the coast are the horseback shrimp fishermen in Oostduinkerke (recognised by UNESCO as intangible heritage in 2013) and the carnival of Blankenberge.

The typical coastal intangible heritage is currently threatened due to several factors. The fisheries heritage as well as the fisheries sector are under pressure. Rising fuel prices, expanding regulations and decreasing catch rates lead to the professional reorientation of many fishermen. As a result, the movable and intangible heritage related to fisheries is becoming less and less important. A museum such as NAVIGO collects everything related to fisheries and its history, but there are also other initiatives such as oral history projects ([Rappé 2008](#), [Strubbe 2011](#)), which are committed to the preservation of this heritage. Also see [Sincfala](#), the museum of the *Zwin* region, which does not only cover 2,000 years of folk history in the *Zwin* region but also offers a fisheries collection about the local fishermen and their families. Lastly, the Coastal Heritage Unit has a [story archive](#) in the context of coastal themes (such as go-carts, beach flowers made from crepe paper, agriculture, beach food, camping life, etc.).

9.2 Policy context

On an international level, the policies related to cultural heritage are primarily defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). Important legal instruments are the [Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage \(1972\)](#), and specifically for maritime and coastal heritage, the [Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage \(2001\)](#) and the [Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage \(2003\)](#) (see website UNESCO for full list of legal instruments). A [database](#) updated by UNESCO also contains many national laws of the member states related to cultural and natural heritage. The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) is an international non-governmental organisation dedicated to the preservation of monuments and sites throughout the world, working closely with UNESCO and also acting as an advisory body. ICOMOS consists of an international committee, national committees and scientific committees. For underwater heritage, there is an active international scientific committee, namely the International Committee on the Underwater Cultural Heritage (ICUCH) that promotes the Convention of 2001. Furthermore, Belgium is also involved as member of the Advisory Council in the organisation [European Maritime Heritage](#).

The main legal framework for activities at sea is the United Nations Convention on the law of the sea (UNCLOS 1982). In this almost globally ratified treaty, two clauses concerning heritage have been added. The UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Underwater Heritage has the intention to further complement and specify UNCLOS regarding the underwater cultural heritage.

At European level, the policy on cultural heritage is developed by the Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) of the European Commission, which recognised immovable heritage (landscapes, architectural heritage and archaeological heritage) as part of the cultural heritage. The Commission proposed a European cultural agenda in order to respond to challenges of globalisation and to intensify the cooperation inside the EU (COM (2007) 242, COM (2010) 390). By endorsing the [Agenda of Rome](#) (25 March 2017), the European Union (EU) promised to work towards a social Europe, a union which preserves our cultural heritage (COM (2017) 206). At the initiative of the European Commission, 2018 was designated [European Year of Cultural Heritage](#), involving intensive cooperation with major European heritage organisations such as Europa Nostra and Nemo. Additionally, the [Council of Europe \(culture, heritage and diversity\)](#) plays a very important part in heritage conventions, such as the [Convention of Granada](#) (Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe; 1985), [Convention of Valletta](#) (Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage of Europe – revised; 1992), [Convention of Firenze](#) (European Landscape Convention; 2000) and the [Convention of Faro](#) (Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society; 2005) (see website [Culture and Cultural Heritage](#) for an overview of the European cultural heritage legislation). The European Heritage Network (HEREIN) is a permanent information system that assembles public authorities of the member states responsible for cultural heritage (focusing on the architectural and archaeological heritage) under the umbrella of the Council of Europe. The HEREIN network also provides an overview of the heritage policies in the member states.

In Belgium, immovable cultural heritage is a competence of the Regions, whereas the movable and intangible cultural heritage is covered by the communities. Archaeological heritage in the North Sea under Belgian supervision is a federal competence. In this context, the Law of 4 April 2014 on the protection of underwater cultural heritage (the so-called 'OCE⁶ Law') and the accompanying RD were repealed by the new Law of 23 April 2021.

- This law largely implements the provisions of the UNESCO Convention for the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage. According to the OCE Law, all findings at sea had to be reported to the Governor of West Flanders. The governor acted as 'recipient of underwater cultural heritage' and was not only responsible for the registration and notification of findings, but also provided advice to the competent (former secretary of state) minister for the North Sea regarding the possible heritage status of a finding. Under the new Law of 23 April 2021, a cooperation agreement will be drawn up concerning the findings;
- On 21 September 2016, a RD was adopted imposing measures regarding in situ protected underwater heritage followed by several MDs for the protection of underwater cultural heritage, including individual measures for the protection of 9 of the 11 already recognised wreck sites in the Belgian North Sea (see [implementing measures of the Law of 4 April 2014](#), see **9.3.1 Maritime archaeological heritage**). For the shipwreck sites *HMS Wakeful* and UB-29, these measures were not necessary because of their location in a fairway. Consequently, these sites are indirectly protected. The Law of 23 April 2021 further defines the scope of application for underwater cultural heritage (e.g. including the paleontological context) ([Van Quickenborne 2020](#)). Wrecks which have been underwater for more than one hundred years will therefore automatically be considered as underwater heritage, and on the basis of a research report, the minister for the North Sea can determine whether specific wrecks are also eligible for this and the possible protection in situ. When the law was approved, this implied that, according to an initial inventory, 54 wrecks were granted the status of underwater cultural heritage, a selection of which can then be protected ([Demerre et al. 2020](#)).

The international and European regulations on underwater cultural heritage and the current legal situation in Belgium regarding this subject have been examined in the context of the [SeArch](#) project on the archaeological heritage in the North Sea ([Maes and Derudder 2014](#), [Derudder and Maes 2014](#), [Missiaen et al. 2016](#), [Missiaen et al. 2017](#)). Additionally, a 'best practice' brochure was developed with recommendations on how to optimally include the underwater heritage in the planning and execution of works at sea, as well as various protocols for reporting archaeological discoveries (downloadable via www.sea-arch.be/resultaten).

The policy notes on [immovable heritage \(2019 – 2024\)](#) and [culture \(2019 – 2024\)](#) contain the strategic lines of the heritage and cultural policy in Flanders, which are concretised and prioritised in annual policy letters. In Flanders, the competences with regard to immovable, movable and intangible heritage are covered by different bodies:

- [Flanders Heritage Agency](#), part of the Department of Environment and Spatial Development (OMG), is responsible for the policy preparation and evaluation as well as for the policy implementation (policy-oriented, scientific research, realisation of inventories, protection, management support and communication) with regard to immovable heritage (see also [Brochure Onroerend Erfgoed – Samen de zorg voor onroerend erfgoed vanzelfsprekend maken 2017](#)). The agency has carried out these tasks in an integrated way since 1 January 2013. The OMG [inspection division](#) is responsible for the supervision and enforcement;
- The Department of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media (CJSM) is responsible for the policy concerning movable and intangible heritage. The policy regarding this heritage has its own website within the Department. The official [Inventaris Vlaanderen – Immaterieel Erfgoed](#) is managed by the Government of Flanders in cooperation with [Werkplaats Immaterieel Erfgoed \(WIE\)](#) with the aim of highlighting intangible heritage in Flanders. The Flemish Institute for Cultural Heritage (FARO) plays an intermediary role between the cultural heritage field (movable and intangible heritage) and the government. It supports cultural heritage organisations, local and provincial governments and managers of cultural heritage, and promotes the development of the cultural heritage field. Additionally, the organisation [Herita vzw](#) supports and unites all actors involved in heritage. Herita vzw also manages several heritage sites and organises activities related to heritage (e.g. [Heritage Day](#)).

At the Flemish level, there are some important legislative documents and concept notes on heritage and cultural policy:

- Since January 1st, 2015, a decree on immovable heritage has been in place (see brochure [Onroerend Erfgoed: de regelgeving 2014](#), brochure [Onroerend erfgoed: een toelichting 2014](#)) that replaced three preceding decrees (Monument Decree of 1976, Archaeology Decree of 1993 and Landscape Decree of

⁶OCE – NL: *Onderwater Cultureel Erfgoed* (underwater cultural heritage)

1996) and a law on the preservation of monuments and landscapes (1931). All maritime immovable heritage present in the coastal area, including the beach down to the average low water mark at springtide, is included in this decree. On 14 July 2017, the Government of Flanders approved the concept note 'aanpassing Onroerendergoeddecreet', after which the [Amending Decree](#) was approved on 4 July 2018. The amendments include the adaptation of the protection procedure and the new relocation procedure. The enactment of this decree is gradually taking place from 1 January 2019 to 1 January 2022;

- Other important legal documents at the Flemish level are the [Topstukkendecreet](#) (Decree of 24 January 2003, protection of cultural heritage because of its special value in Flanders), the Decree of 29 March 2002 with regard to the protection of the historical fleet ([Province of West Flanders 2008](#)) and the Cultural Heritage Decree of 6 July 2012 with regard to cultural heritage (and the revision of 24 February 2017, concerning Flemish cultural heritage policy). The Cultural Heritage Decree of 27 February 2017 is linked to the [Implementing Decree of 31 March 2017](#) and contains a [Strategic Vision note](#) to recognise and support cultural heritage organisations;
- A revision of the Historical Fleet Decree was ratified by the Government of Flanders on 9 May 2014. The revised decree entered into force with the Implementing Decree of 27 of November 2015 (see also [brochure Onroerend erfgoed: Varend erfgoed in Vlaanderen](#)). In the [Decree of the Government of Flanders of 14 December 2018](#), some changes were made to the Historical Fleet Decree.

The Government of Flanders already put the depot policy on the agenda in 2008 by assigning the regional depot policy to the five provinces and the Flemish Community Committee. Since 1 of January 2018, the Government of Flanders, and no longer the provinces, are setting the direction for the regional depot policy (see also **9.5.5 Movable and intangible heritage**; website FARO [erfgoedwijzer](#)).

In 2015, the Coastal Heritage cell ([kusterfgoed.be](#)) was established in which five coastal municipalities (Middelkerke, Ostend, Bredene, De Haan and Blankenberge) work together on movable and intangible heritage along the coast.

9.3 Spatial use

9.3.1 Maritime archaeological heritage

The geographical position of the maritime heritage in marine areas is included in a number of databases. These also play an important role in policy and management decision making. Flemish partners have been involved in two European projects: the [Archaeological Atlas of the 2 Seas](#) project (in which the maritime archaeological heritage in France, England and Belgium has been mapped) and the [MACHU](#) project (Managing Cultural Heritage Underwater) in which a Geographical Information System (GIS) with the position of underwater cultural heritage in European seas was developed. The [North Sea wrecks](#) project strengthens cooperation and knowledge base on the location of wrecks, munitions and lost materials and waste, mapping maritime heritage sites in the North Sea area. As far as the BNS concerns, there are three databases that offer structured information: [www.maritieme-archeologie.be](#), [wrecks database](#) (and [digital map](#)), and [www.wrecksite.eu](#).

As far as maritime heritage in the North Sea is concerned, it is not evident to claim specific marine space for this purpose as heritage may potentially be present anywhere. It seems more appropriate to take advantage of the existing protective measures for *inter alia* nature to also conserve and protect a representative sample of the underwater heritage in situ. The aim of this policy is that, when underwater heritage has to disappear for compelling reasons, it gets the appropriate care and does not disappear without control. The locations of underwater heritage sites in the BNS that are recognised as cultural heritage underwater by the Law of 23 April 2021 are listed in a register ([www.vondsteninzee.be](#)).

Since 2014, underwater cultural heritage has been given a spatial translation by the recognition and protection of eight ship wreck sites (the lightship [West-Hinder](#), de [HMS Wakeful](#), a 19th century [wooden sailing ship](#) that perished near the coast of Ostend, the VOC ship 't [Vliegend Hart](#), the [SS Kilmore](#), the WWI submarine [U-11](#), the [HMS Brilliant](#) and the wreck site on the [Buiten Ratel Zandbank](#)). The MD of 6 April 2018 recognised and protected three more shipwreck sites (the French destroyer [Torpilleur Branlebas](#), the wooden gunboat [H.M. Motor Launch 561](#), and the German submarine [UB-29](#)) (figure 1, table 1). The Law of 23 April 2021 heritage ensures that 54 wrecks that have been underwater for at least 100 years will automatically be given the status of underwater cultural heritage, and can therefore be protected in situ in future ([FPS Public Health, Demerre et al. 2020](#)).

In annex to the RD of 20 March 2014, established for the marine spatial plan (MSP 2014-2020), the cultural and ecological importance of the more than 215 (ship)wrecks that lay in the BNS is acknowledged ([Maes and Seys](#)

2014). In the new marine spatial plan (MSP 2020-2026, RD of 22 May 2019, see also [Verhalle and Van de Velde 2020](#)), respect of underwater cultural heritage in the BNS is again an important objective, whereby:

- The most valuable cultural heritage under water is protected in situ according to a legal procedure;
- The areas with protection measures for the recognised shipwreck sites are included;
- Appropriate mitigating measures are adopted if cultural heritage would be threatened by human activities;
- Wrecks are enabled in the context of nature preservation.

Table 1. Individual protective measures for the 11 recognised ship wreck sites .

| Wreck site | Individual protective measures | Wreck site | Individual protective measures |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------|---|
| West-Hinder | Line fishing, anchoring, dredging and fishing with trawling nets prohibited | HMS Brilliant | Line fishing, anchoring and dredging prohibited |
| HMS Wakeful | Indirect (no individual measures) | Buiten Ratel Zandbank | Anchoring and dredging prohibited |
| zeilschip (kust van Oostende) | Anchoring and dredging prohibited | Torpilleur Branlebas | Fishing with trawling nets prohibited |
| 't Vliegend Hart | Anchoring and dredging prohibited | H.M. Motor Launch 561 | Fishing with trawling nets prohibited |
| SS Kilmore | Line fishing, anchoring and dredging prohibited | UB-29 | Indirect (no individual measures) |
| U-11 | Line fishing, anchoring, dredging and fishing with trawling nets prohibited | | |

9.3.2 Architectural heritage at the coast

The [geoportal](#) of Flanders Heritage Agency (geo.onroenderfgoed.be) provides an overview of the geographical locations of the architectural heritage in the coastal area. Additional information about the heritage elements can be obtained via click-through functions. Coastal municipalities such as Ostend can also dispose of an [Action Plan Architectural Heritage](#) to protect, preserve, manage and evaluate future developments.

9.3.3 Landscapes with heritage value

The [geoportal](#) of Flanders Heritage Agency provides an overview of the geographical location of landscapes with heritage value in the coastal area (see also the inventory [landscapes with heritage value](#) and the [Wetenschappelijke inventaris landschappelijk erfgoed](#)).

9.4 Societal interest

Despite the fact that the importance of heritage is generally recognised, the economic significance, benefits and societal return on investment are often unknown. The study by [De Baerdemaeker et al. \(2011\)](#) deals with the socio-economic impact of the immovable heritage (policy) in Flanders. The direct economic impact of immovable heritage in Flanders was investigated by [Vanhoutte \(2019\)](#). Flanders is mostly associated with heritage, art and artists, beer, good food and beverages, according to a [Reputation study \(2017\)](#) by Tourism Flanders. Furthermore, the report of the [Cultural Heritage Counts](#) project for Europe discusses the value of cultural heritage and its impact on Europe's economy, culture, society and environment. In general, marine and maritime cultural heritage are underappreciated ([Pieters 2017](#)).

With regard to the coastal zone, mainly the economic benefits related to coastal tourism are known (see also thematic chapter **Tourism and recreation**). According to [De Baerdemaeker et al. \(2011\)](#), 189.229 (or 10%) of the overnight stays in hotels along the coast in 2009 were related to the presence of immovable heritage. Along with day trippers and recreationists, heritage tourism expenditure amounts to more than 2 million visitors annually, whereas the total heritage-related tourism expenditure amounts to almost 60 million euro. Numbers on the cultural attractions are available in the [Trendrapport Kust \(2018-2019\)](#) (see also thematic chapter **Tourism and recreation**). According to [Maes et al. \(2005\)](#) (GAUFRE project BELSPO), many shipwrecks in the BNS create a tourism revenue.

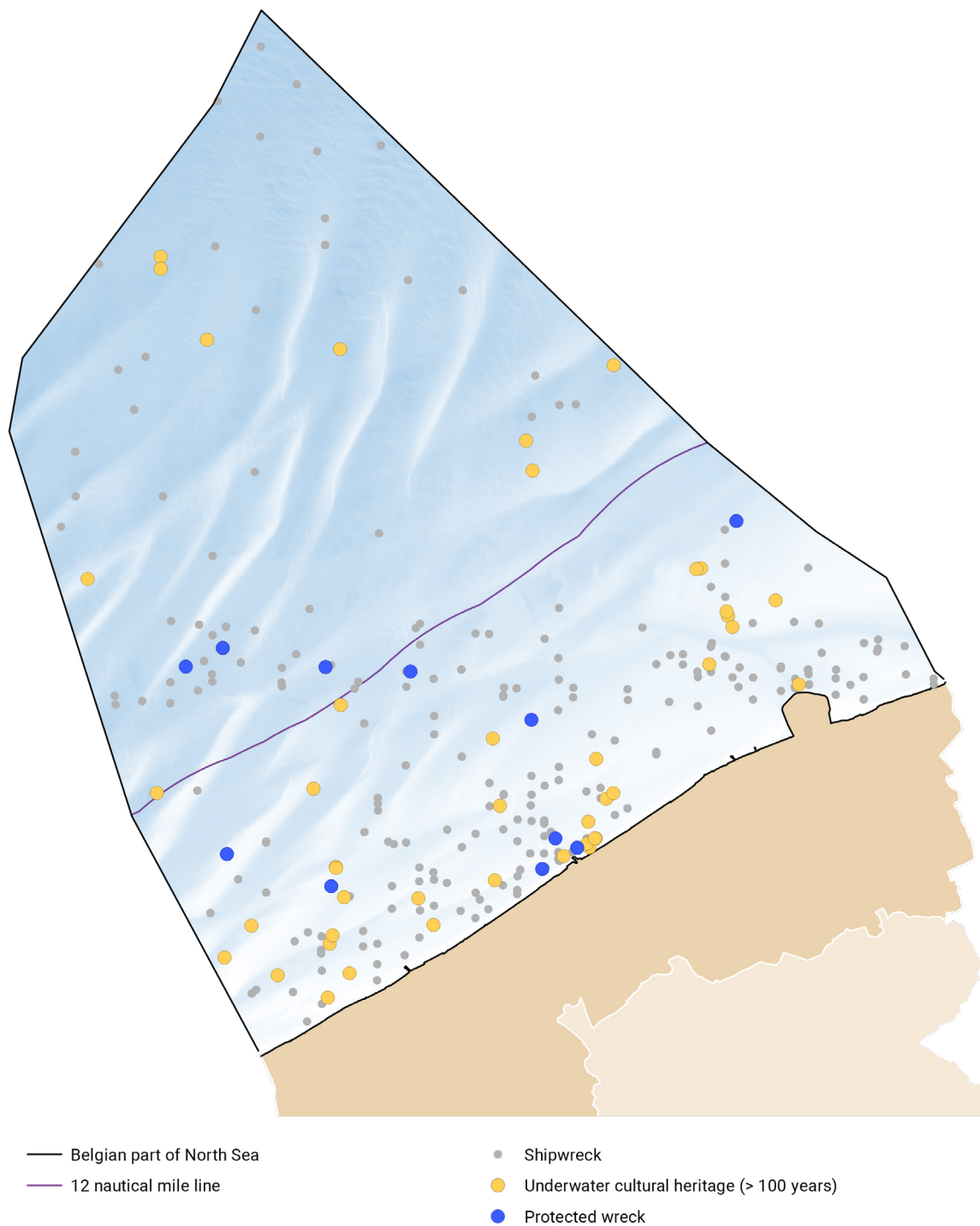


Figure 1. Ship wreck sites in the BNS (Source: Flanders Heritage Agency, MD of 6 April 2018, FPS Mobility, [Coastal Portal](#))

Other aspects of the social importance of cultural heritage in the coastal area are less known and only fragmented figures and information exist:

- According to [Maelfait et al. \(2012\)](#), more than 4 million euro of grants were allocated between 2008 and 2010 by the Government of Flanders for the restauration and maintenance of cultural heritage in the coastal zone;
- The proximity of immovable heritage creates a better living environment which affects the value of housing. In De Panne, where 44% of the municipal surface is protected (in this variable, the landscape heritage in

particular weighs in on the architectural heritage), a house would gain around 21.000 euro added value. In Knokke-Heist, this figure is 17% and a house will gain approximately 8.300 euro in added value (De Baerdemaeker et al. 2011);

- Social employment projects are developed in a number of historic shipyards;
- Museums are also associated with education. However, there are no data available regarding their impact. Local historical societies, heritage organisations or private individuals occasionally work together with schools;
- The social importance of heritage and the social aspect of volunteering are expressed through the many volunteers who are active in various community groups, heritage organisations, museums and other subsidised organisations (such as [Kusterfgoed](#)).

9.5 Sustainable use and management

9.5.1 Maritime archaeological heritage

Until recently, underwater heritage was barely considered, mainly because of the ignorance about it. In 2014, however, a law on the protection of underwater cultural heritage in the BNS entered into force (Law of 4 April 2014). This law introduced an obligation to report findings in the BNS of which the finder may suspect that they are cultural heritage. Discoveries in the territorial sea, the exclusive economic zone or the continental shelf have to be reported to the Governor of West Flanders on the website www.vondsteninzee.be, where they are subsequently entered in a register (see also the SeArch project established protocols: [Van Haelst et al. 2016a, 2016c](#)). Archaeological findings on the beach should be reported to the [Flanders Heritage Agency](#) (see also [Van Haelst et al. 2016b, De Blauwe 2017](#)). Under the new Law of 23 April 2021, a cooperation agreement will be drawn up regarding the discoveries. At the end of 2016, five new shipwrecks in the North Sea were recognised as cultural heritage on the basis of the Law of 4 April 2014. With the MD of 6 April 2018 another three wrecks were recognised, which ensures that a total of 11 wrecks are recognised (e.g. the sailing ship on the Buiten Ratel, the HMS Briljant, the light ship West-Hinder and the Torpilleur Branlebas). In the meantime, also protective measures are in place for these 11 heritage sites (whether or not indirectly for e.g. HMS Wakeful and the UB-29). The shipwreck Westhinder was completely cleaned up by order of the federal government (2018-2019) ([Devriese and Janssen 2021](#)), amounting up to 2 tonnes of iron, 1 ton of fishing lead and 1.5 tonnes of fishing nets and plastic waste. The Law of 23 April 2021 implies that wrecks that have been underwater for more than a hundred years are automatically considered as underwater heritage, of which a selection can then be protected ([Demerre et al. 2020](#)).

The amendment of the law on the marine environment in view of marine spatial planning (Law of 20 January 1999) is important as well. Underwater heritage is also mentioned in [annex 1](#) of this maritime spatial plan ([Verhalle and Van de Velde 2020](#)). This annex does not have the intention to claim specific areas for heritage purposes in the North Sea (as is the case for the other user functions). Instead, it is examined how existing protective measures can be used to achieve multiple uses of certain marine areas. Some field examples are listed below:

- The [Nemo Link](#) project (see thematic chapter **Energy (including cables and pipes)**), which aims at connecting transmission networks between Great Britain and Belgium, strives towards maximal evasion of known or newly detected [heritage sites](#) to reduce the effect on the maritime cultural heritage. Knowledge about these heritage sites and their position along the cable route is crucial for this purpose;
- A preliminary geophysical study (within the framework of the [Sustainable Management Plan](#)) also found locations with possible archaeological remains in the bed of the Upper Sea Scheldt, as a result of which an archaeological investigation was started ([Van Haelst et al. 2019](#));
- For the development of the new Princess Elisabeth zone for offshore wind energy, the federal government is proactively carrying out an archaeological (desktop) study;
- The paleolandscape reconstruction of the coastal area near Zeebrugge is a good example of how an economically driven project ([Coastal Vision](#) project) can be done in synergy with the research on drowned landscapes and underwater heritage. The extensive media attention for the recent discoveries of fossil bone material in the *Scheur* near Zeebrugge is a proof of the great social relevance ([Van Haelst and Pieters 2018](#)).

9.5.2 Nautical heritage

Since 29 March 2002, there has been a decree that regulates the protection of nautical heritage ([Van Dijck 2017](#)). This Nautical Heritage Decree was modified on 9 May 2014 and has, together with the accompanying Decision on Nautical Heritage of 27 November 2015, the purpose of supporting owners and users of heritage vessels in

keeping their vessels in service. They can develop a management plan for their vessel, in which for the period of several years of maintenance, the restorations, a budget and the opening of the vessel are worked out (see also [Brochure Onroerend Erfgoed: Varend erfgoed in Vlaanderen 2016](#)). Based on this plan, a grant can be claimed (maintenance and/or management grant). The nautical heritage policy is implemented by the Flanders Heritage Agency. A separate, fourth department of the Royal Commission for Monuments and Sites was established to advise the minister on nautical heritage and the historic fleet. On 1 January 2015, this commission was transformed to the Flemish Commission for Nautical Heritage (VCVE). In order to achieve a responsible conservation policy, an [inventory](#) of nautical heritage and the historical fleet was developed.

Early 2021, 32 vessels had already been inventoried as nautical heritage in the coastal area⁷ (see [inventory](#)). Seven vessels were listed as protected nautical heritage and two vessels (the school ship Mercator and the fishing vessel OD1 Martha) as protected monument. Of course, not all protected and inventoried vessels are coast-related. Other sectors such as inland shipping can be covered by the protections.

9.5.3 Architectural heritage at the coast

Due to the ever-growing scarcity of open space at the coast, the remaining heritage is under increasing pressure both in the coastal and hinterland municipalities ([Maelfait et al. 2012](#)). The protection of immovable heritage is regulated by the Decree on immovable heritage (see [Brochure Onroerend Erfgoed - de regelgeving 2014](#), [Brochure Onroerend erfgoed - een toelichting 2014](#)), which entered into force in 2015. Since 2009, the architectural heritage has been recorded in the [inventory](#), which has certain legal consequences: demolition becomes less evident (with a few exceptions), whereas a change of function is made easier as long as it benefits the preservation of the cultural heritage value ([Maelfait et al. 2012](#)). The protection decisions regarding immovable heritage can be consulted on the following website: <https://www.onroenderfgoed.be/de-gevolgen-van-een-bescherming>.

9.5.4 Landscapes with heritage value

The scarcity of open spaces along the coast also applies to landscapes with heritage value. Besides the protected landscapes which, in addition to their heritage value, usually have an important ecological value, the immovable heritage sector is currently focusing on the instrument of the so-called anchorage areas. These areas are designated by the Flemish minister for Heritage, and constitute the contribution from the sector to the AGNAS consultation (defining the natural and agricultural structure in the [Flemish Spatial Structure Plan \(Ruimtelijk Structuurplan Vlaanderen\)](#)). An anchorage area is a valuable landscape with a series of heritage elements (landscape, architectural, archaeological or maritime).

In the past, these anchor areas could be given legal status at the time of 'designation'. From then on, the local government was obliged to take it into account when developing a Spatial Implementation Plan (SIP) ([Landschappen: een kennismaking 2013](#)). The Decree on immovable heritage no longer allows such 'designation'. However, in order to preserve the immovable heritage, items from the landscape atlas can be established. Until recently, anchor points could be found in the protection database, but from now on they are searchable on the [inventory website](#). An established item can be used by the municipality, province or Flemish Region in a SIP as a basis for the demarcation of a heritage landscape. [Anchor sites](#) that were 'designated' under the old regulation have been equated with an item from the inventory website and with a [real estate heritage development plan](#).

9.5.5 Movable and intangible heritage

The list of objects and collections with an exceptional value ([topstukkenlijst](#)) contains several hundred pieces or (sub)collections. Some of these are linked to the coast. It mainly concerns paintings from Ensor, Permeke and Spillaert from the collection of Mu.Zee Ostend, the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp (KMSKA), and the Museum of Fine Arts (MSK) Ghent. In order to be incorporated in this list, an object has to meet strict selection criteria. It should be both rare and essential. Grants can be requested for the restoration of these valuable pieces (Decree of 24 January 2003).

As from 1 January 2018, the Government of Flanders itself determines this regional depot policy ([De Langhe 2018](#)). Currently, the allocation of the depot policy to the provinces has not yet been withdrawn, which does not

⁷ Four vessels of importance for the coastal area but located elsewhere in Flanders were also included (O.205 François Musin and the West-Hinder three in Antwerp, the West-Hinder one in Kruikebeke, and the BOU8 Isabelle in Boekhoute (Assenede)).

explicitly prohibit the provinces from pursuing their own depot policy. In West Flanders, it was decided in 2017 to no longer conduct a depot policy, but to support the three depot dossiers Ypres (*Potyze*), Kortrijk (*Trezoor*) and Bruges (*Erfgoedfabriek*). Since 2008, this policy focuses on two trajectories including the registration of movable heritage possessed by museums, local historical societies and other heritage managers, as well as the conservation and management of these pieces. In order to assist museums and heritage associations in registering their collections, the heritage database www.erfgoedinzicht.be was developed.

The official [inventory](#) of intangible heritage currently contains 64 elements, four of which are specific to the coast: the carnival of Blankenberge, the Godelieve procession in Gistel, [horseback shrimp fishing](#) in Oostduinkerke, and since 2021 also selling beach flowers on the beach. The inventory is established according to the bottom-up principle. Organisations or individuals must apply to have an element of intangible cultural heritage included in the inventory. Elements included in the inventory must receive an annual progress report (via the applicant) with information about the activities concerning the protection of the element. For now, inclusion in the inventory only increases the visibility of the element. Being in the inventory is a prerequisite to be included in the [UNESCO list of intangible heritage](#).

Legislation reference list

Overview of the relevant legislation on international ('Year A': adoption; 'Year EIF': entry into force), European, federal and Flemish level. For the consolidated European policy context see [Eurllex](#). The national legislation can be consulted on the [Belgian official journal](#) and the [Justel-database](#), the Flemish legislation is available on the [Flemish Codex](#).

| International conventions and agreements | | | |
|--|---|--------|----------|
| Acronyms | Title | Year A | Year EIF |
| WHC | World Heritage Convention | 1972 | 1996 |
| UNCLOS | United Nations Convention on the law of the sea | 1982 | 1994 |
| UCH | Convention on the protection of the underwater cultural heritage | 2001 | 2009 |
| ICH | Convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage | 2003 | 2006 |

| European legislation and policy context | | | |
|---|--|--------|----------|
| Acronyms | Title | Year A | Year EIF |
| Conventions | | | |
| Granada Convention | Convention for the protection of the architectural heritage of Europe | 1985 | 1987 |
| Valletta Convention | Convention for the protection of the archaeological heritage of Europe (revised) | 1992 | 1995 |
| Firenze Convention | European Landscape Convention | 2000 | 2004 |
| Faro Convention | Convention on the value of cultural heritage for society | 2005 | 2011 |

| Belgian and Flemish legislation | | |
|---------------------------------|--|---------------|
| Dates | Title | File number |
| Decrees | | |
| Decree of 3 March 1976 | Decreet tot bescherming van monumenten en stads- en dorpsgezichten | 1976-03-03/30 |
| Decree of 30 June 1993 | Decreet houdende bescherming van het archeologisch patrimonium | 1993-06-30/33 |
| Decree of 16 April 1996 | Decreet betreffende de landschapszorg | 1996-04-16/34 |
| Decree of 29 March 2002 | Decreet tot bescherming van varend erfgoed | 2002-03-29/37 |
| Decree of 24 January 2003 | Decreet houdende bescherming van het roerend cultureel erfgoed van uitzonderlijk belang (Topstukkendecreet) | 2003-01-24/40 |
| Decree of 16 July 2010 | Decreet houdende instemming met het verdrag ter bescherming van het cultureel erfgoed onder water, aangenomen in Parijs op 2 november 2001 | 2010-07-16/10 |
| Decree of 6 July 2012 | Decreet houdende het Vlaams cultureel-erfgoedbeleid (Erfgoeddecreet) | 2012-07-06/31 |
| Decree of 12 July 2013 | Decreet betreffende het onroerend erfgoed (Onroenderfgoeddecreet) | 2013-07-12/44 |
| Decree of 24 February 2017 | Decreet houdende de ondersteuning van cultureelerfgoedwerking in Vlaanderen (Cultureelerfgoeddecreet) | 2017-02-24/17 |
| Royal Decrees | | |
| RD of 21 September 2016 | Koninklijk besluit betreffende de reglementaire maatregelen ter bescherming van het cultureel erfgoed onder water | 2016-09-21/12 |
| RD of 22 May 2019 | Koninklijk besluit tot vaststelling van het marien ruimtelijk plan voor de periode 2020 tot 2026 in de Belgische zeegebieden | 2019-05-22/23 |

| Belgian and Flemish legislation (continuation) | | |
|--|---|---------------|
| Dates | Title | File number |
| RD of 30 July 2021 | Koninklijk besluit tot uitvoering van de wet van 23 april 2021 tot implementatie van het UNESCO verdrag van 2 november 2001 ter bescherming van het cultureel erfgoed onder water en de bescherming van waardevolle wrakken | 2021-07-30/17 |
| Ministerial Decrees | | |
| MD of 6 April 2018 | Ministerieel besluit betreffende de erkenning van 3 scheepswrakken als cultureel erfgoed onder water | 2018-04-06/01 |
| MD of 14 May 2020 | Ministerieel besluit tot opheffing van het ministerieel besluit van 4 oktober 2016 betreffende individuele maatregelen ter bescherming van het cultureel erfgoed onder water | 2020-05-14/18 |
| Laws | | |
| Law of 7 August 1931 | Wet op het behoud van monumenten en landschappen | 1931-08-07/30 |
| 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 23 April 2021 | Wet tot implementatie van het UNESCO-verdrag van 2 november 2001 ter bescherming van het cultureel erfgoed onder water en de bescherming van waardevolle wrakken | 2021-04-23/10 |