

The North Sea,
a rough sea awash with activities



Relaxing at sea



Supervision at sea



Rescue at sea



Storm at sea

Vision and mission

The Coast Guard is responsible for the cooperation and coordination between the partners in charge of the North Sea. The Belgian part of the North Sea measures 3600 km² and is also known as Belgium's eleventh province. This might seem a relatively small area in comparison to the mainland, but the North Sea features a number of the busiest shipping lanes in the world, which is why good cooperation is of vital importance in Belgium's marine region.

Apart from container carriers and ferries, you will also find tugboats, tankers, motorboats, cruise liners and yachts on the North Sea. Sand and gravel are extracted and fishing and dredging activities take place in the region. Moreover, military practice areas

can be found alongside Bird Directive and other protected areas. Scattered all across the North Sea are numerous sandbanks, shipwrecks, pipelines and cables. The North Sea bustles with activities!

No less than 18 regional and federal governmental institutions are responsible for all these activities. The main responsibility of the Coast Guard is to ensure good cooperation between all these partners so as to increase the efficiency of operations at sea.

The Coast Guard's main principles are:

- equality of all Coast Guard partners;
- respect for each other's authority;
- optimum use of resources so as to avoid additional costs.





Jacques D'Havé, Coast Guard Chairman



Alain Lefèvre Coast Guard Chairman



Vicky Boerjan, director of security and the North Sea, West-Flanders province



Carl Decaluwé, Governor of the province of West-Flanders



Coast Guard Secretariat: Ulrike Vanhessche, Sofie Rommelaere en Pascal Depoorter



Offices of the Coast Guard Secretariat

Structure

The Coast Guard is made up of an operational branch and an administrative branch. There are three administrative bodies complementing each other: the policy-making body, the consultation body and the Coast Guard secretariat.

Policy-making body

The policy-making body coordinates the cooperation between the different divisions. It also issues advice on behalf of the competent ministers and both the federal and regional government.

It consists of the heads of division and the general directors of all Coast Guard partners. The chairmanship rotates between regional official Jacques D'Havé (head of the Agency for Maritime and Coastal Services) and federal official Jaak Raes (General Director of the Federal Crisis Centre).

Consultation body

The consultation body collects information and prepares files for the policy-making body. The consultation body can also set up study groups. It is chaired by the governor of the province of West Flanders. A representative of each of the Coast Guard partners furthermore takes part in the meetings. These representatives can be engineers, scientists, legal or nautical experts as well as operational personnel. They have the appropriate practical knowledge to prepare files for the policy-making body.

Secretariat

The secretariat operates as the Coast Guard's engine. It coordinates all administrative and operational activities, ranging from the organisation of meetings to the preparation of emergency response plans in cooperation with the Coast Guard partners. The secretariat also assists with preparing policy decisions and is the designated point of contact for foreign coast guard organisations.

In addition, the public can consult the secretariat for any queries regarding the North Sea. The motto is: one question, one solution. The secretariat contacts the relevant Coast Guard partner for

the right answer or a suitable solution. The secretariat is located in the building of the Maritime Rescue and Coordination Centre (MRCC) in Ostend.

To contact the secretariat: info@kwgc.be



United we stand



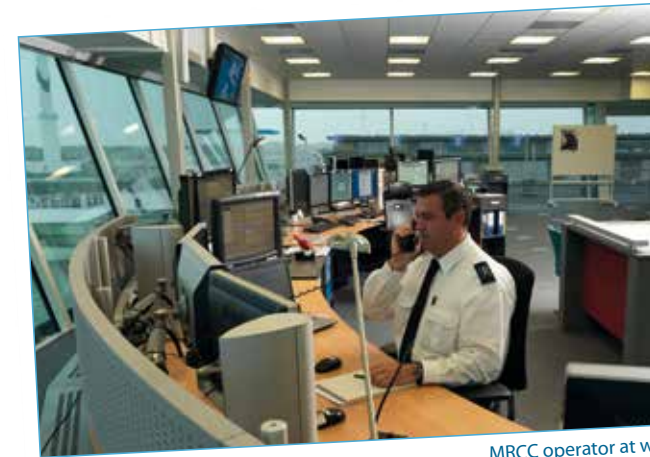
Three Coast Guard partners working together at the MIK in Zeebrugge



Maritime Rescue and Coordination Centre in Ostend



Maritime Security Centre Belgium (MIK) in Zeebrugge



MRCC operator at work



MIK operator at work

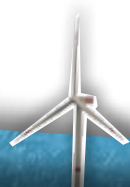
Coast Guard Centre

The Coast Guard's operational branch includes the resources of the different Coast Guard partners and the Coast Guard Centre. The Coast Guard Centre is made up of two centres complementing each other: the Maritime Rescue and Coordination Centre (MRCC) in Ostend and the Maritime Security Centre Belgium (MIK) in Zeebrugge. The MIK takes care of security at sea and ensures that legislation is not violated at sea. The MRCC is in charge of safety at sea and coordinates rescue operations.

Assisted by the vessels, helicopters and surveillance aircraft of the Coast Guard partners, the Coast Guard Centre serves as the eyes and the ears guarding the North Sea. Radar images, nautical charts and meteorological data enable the Coast Guard Centre's operators to watch over the North Sea and to prevent accidents.

The MIK has operators of the Navy, the Maritime and River police and Customs working closely together to ensure that all legislation is respected at sea as well. The MIK's operators track down illegal activities ranging from terrorist attacks over human and drugs trafficking to prohibited fishing practices and illegal oil discharges. Surveillance by competent Coast Guard partners is not a luxury but an absolute necessity.

The MRCC is responsible for organising emergency response and relief in moments of crisis. When a disaster unfolds at sea, the governor of the Province of West-Flanders will activate the North Sea Contingency Plan. Together with a specialist committee, the governor coordinates the emergency relief operations from the MRCC's crisis room. Both the MRCC and the MIK have a direct radio connection to the Federal Crisis Centre and all units on and above the North Sea involved in the provision of assistance.



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FPS of the Interior Civil Protection

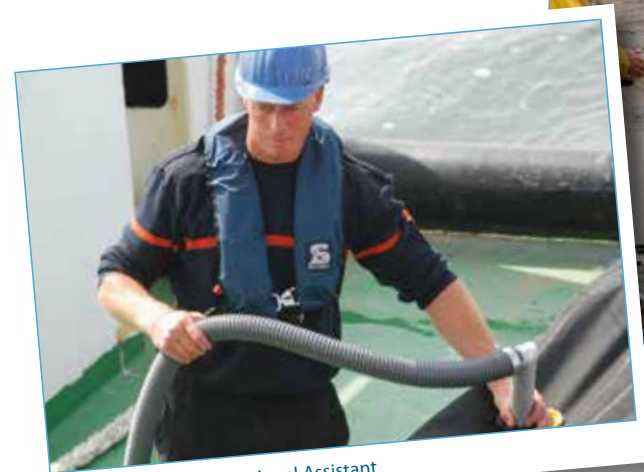
The Belgian Civil Protection consists of 6 operational units that are stand-by 24/7. In case of a disaster or an accident, the authorities, the police and the fire brigades can make use of the Civil Protection's specialised equipment and request their assistance.

During oil cleanup operations or attempts to stop pollution from spreading, the Civil Protection's assistance is often called for since they have specialised equipment to combat pollution at sea. Should the oil nonetheless reach the coast, the Civil Protection will work together with the fire brigade and the municipal sanitation service to clean up the beach. The majority of the clean-up equipment is stored at the unit located in Jabbeke.

The Civil Protection also assists with the disposal of dead sea mammals washing ashore.

"The Civil Protection is regularly called upon to clean up oil spills on the mainland, on inland waterways or in ports. Fortunately, heavy contaminations along the Belgian coast are not that common. Nevertheless, we regularly organise exercises at sea. The procedures are the same as those used on inland waterways, but the materials are different. At sea we use the heavier equipment of DG for the Environment and we can make use of the vessels of the Navy or Fleet Division."

Kurt Timmerman, operational assistant at the Civil Protection

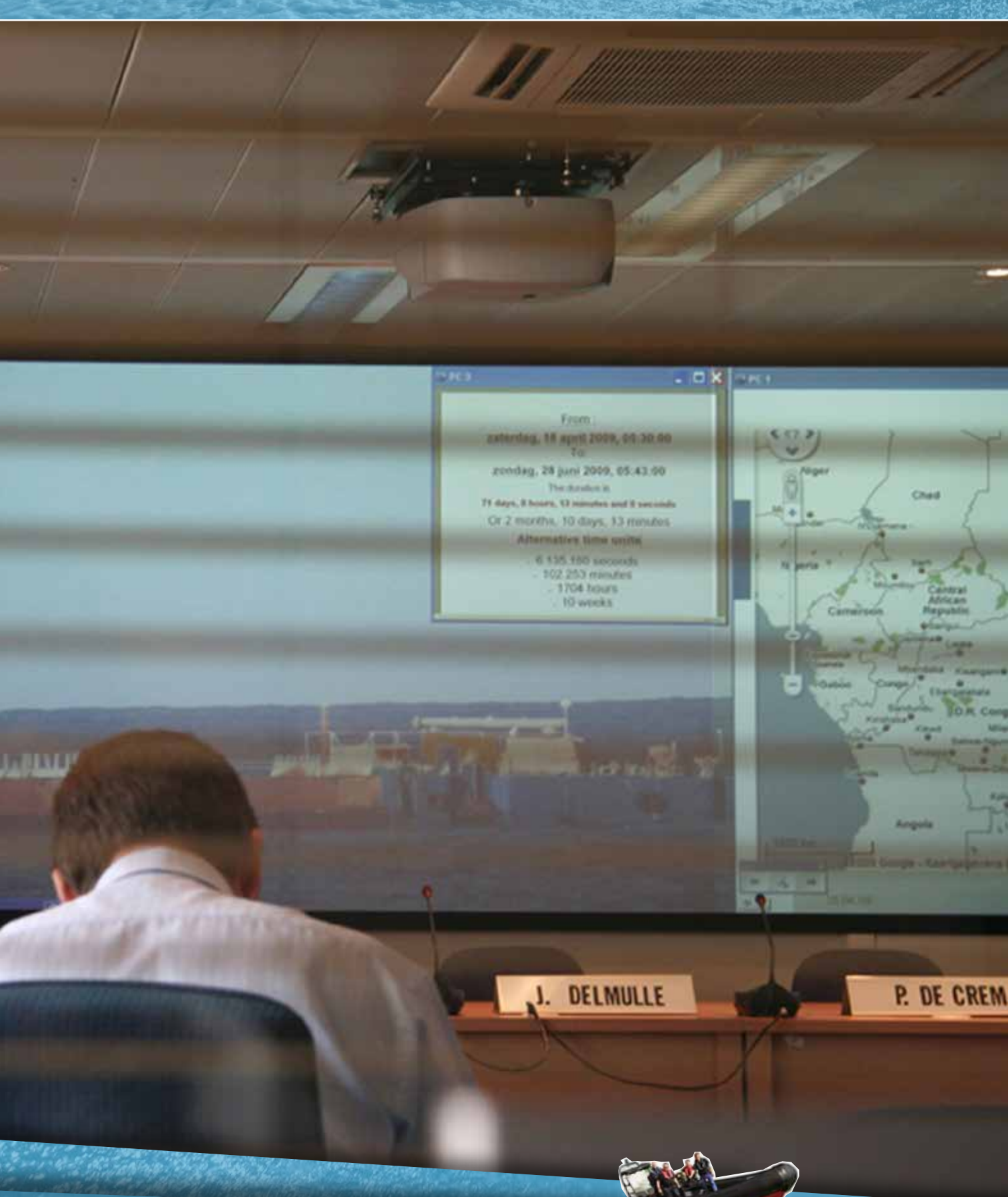


Kurt Timmerman, Operational Assistant



Fighting oil pollution at the beach





FPS of the Interior Crisis Centre

Active watchfulness

The staff at the Federal Government's Crisis Centre closely monitor current affairs and developments twenty-four seven. Every day they draw up six situational reports based on information gathered from partners and various media sources. This ensures the crisis centre is continuously up to date with the most recent state of affairs so that resources can be deployed efficiently, actions by partners can be coordinated effectively and policies can be agreed upon.

The crisis centre staff have different procedures and databases at their disposal to get crisis situations under control as quickly as possible with the help of other Coast Guard partners.

When necessary, they can request a real-time traffic image of all vessels sailing under the Belgian flag both off Belgium's coast and worldwide.

Emergency Response Plans

Emergency response plans are indispensable to be able to act efficiently in times of crisis. Such plans include procedures to control the situation and to guarantee the population's safety.

As the North Sea is one of the busiest seas worldwide, it has a specific emergency response plan. The North Sea Contingency Plan is activated in case of a large-scale incident at sea.

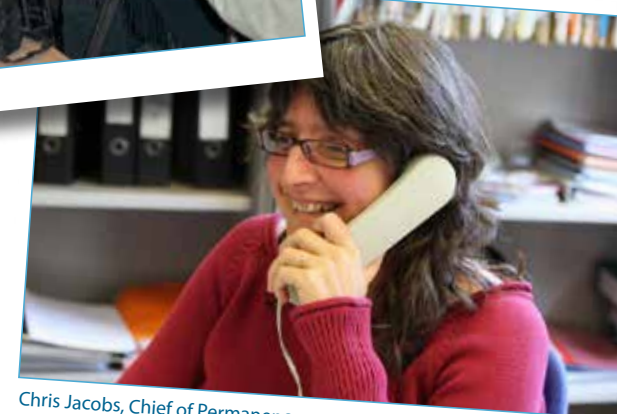
The centre's general director is also the federal chairman of the Coast Guard and is involved in drawing up the International Ship & Port Facilities Security (ISPS) Code and the Ports Directive.

"At the Crisis Centre we work by rotation to ensure that we can react quickly to events. When a disaster takes place, at sea or elsewhere, we are able to follow developments closely. In such a situation, the phones are red hot and it is important to keep your cool. The main concern is to get the right information to the right persons as quickly as possible. We regularly organise exercises to test all procedures and adjust them if necessary."

Chris Jacobs, Chief of Permanence at the Crisis Centre



Press conference at the Crisis centre



Chris Jacobs, Chief of Permanence



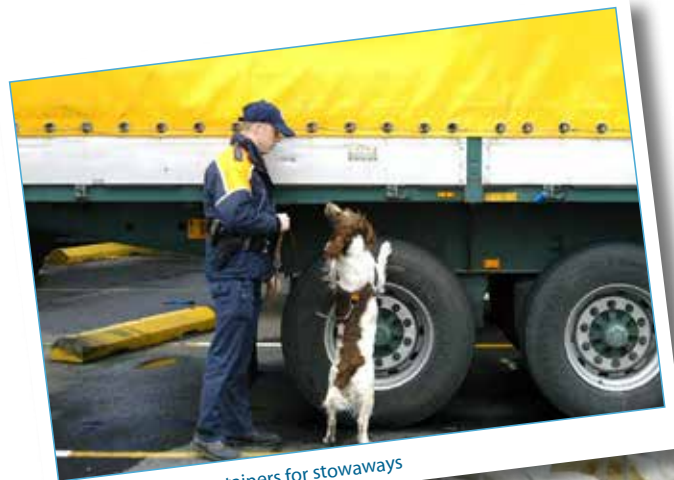
FPS of the Interior Maritime and River Police

Along the coast you will find the Maritime and River Police in the ports as well as in the marinas. The approximately 200 staff members of this division of the Federal Police monitor compliance with all legislation and regulations on and around the water. Border inspections are one of their main tasks and illegal immigration into the UK is one of their principal challenges.

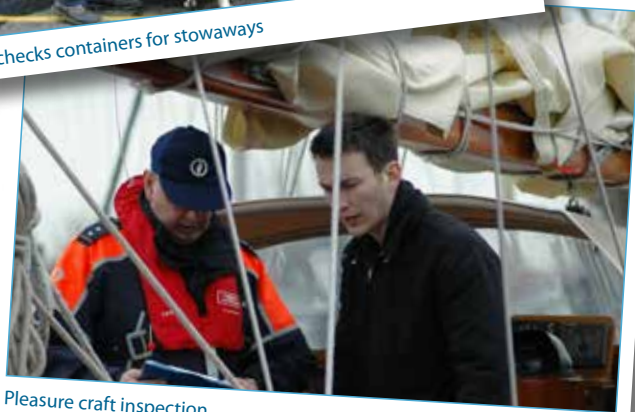
For this reason, the Zeebrugge – based Maritime and River Police has a technical support team at its disposal which can be mobilised not only at the border and in the coastal ports but also in the open sea and all across the country. This support team can make use of different means, among which a mobile x-ray scanner, a sonar and an underwater robot.

On the water, the SPN-09 patrol vessel is justly esteemed the Maritime and River Police's flagship. Furthermore, there is the SPN 15 rapid intervention vessel, which has a maximum speed of 40 knots or approximately 80 kilometres an hour. Both vessels, together with the smaller manoeuvrable rigid hull inflatable boats (rhīb), are of inestimable value to the Maritime and River Police. There is also a Maritime and River Police unit in the Maritime Security Centre Belgium (MIK) in Zeebrugge.

The Maritime and River Police aim at an integrated approach and want to distinguish themselves as a partner on and around the water who does not merely take repressive action but also contributes actively to solutions.



Georges checks containers for stowaways



Pleasure craft inspection

"Even a regular working day always remains unpredictable. Besides the usual supervisory tasks, you have to respond to emergency calls, incident reports and oil spills without delay. We have three vessels at our disposal: a sizeable rhīb (Rigid Hull Inflatable Boat) to support life guards on the beach, a patrol vessel to escort large gas carriers or to detect oil spills and a rapid intervention vessel to intercept ships entering a forbidden area, for example around the windmill parks. In short, a job with plenty of variety."

Police Commissioner Jan Garcet, Maritime and River Police





Ports and Water Policy Division

The Ports and Water Policy Division aims at safe and efficient shipping traffic on Belgian waterways. The division takes part in nautical and technical consultations and keeps track of all regulations related to the Flemish ports, waterways and shipping traffic. It voices the Flemish Government's point of view at both European and international level and converts international and European laws into a Flemish policy, paying special attention to the accessibility of ports.

An easily accessible port is crucial to be able to compete with ports abroad. This is why the Ports and Water Policy Division builds up logistic expertise. Together with the Agency for Maritime and Coastal Services and the Maritime Access Division, they ensure an efficient provision of services to shipping vessels and to the ports. The division works in cooperation with the Netherlands for the Scheldt Area.



Port of Zeebrugge



Katrien Van Meerbeek, Legal expert

"Within the Coast Guard, we take an active part in policy-making. We monitor European initiatives that are of importance to the Coast Guard, ranging from regulations over policies to projects. In case of shortcomings in nautical regulations we help find an appropriate solution. In this way we contribute to the efficient operation of all Coast Guard partners and to safe and efficient shipping traffic."

Nadège Dewalque, Legal Expert at the Ports and Water Policy Division



FPS for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation

The FPS for Foreign Affairs manages Belgium's diplomatic channels. Not only do they handle bilateral and multilateral agreements, but they also cooperate with specialised European and international bodies.

The FPS for Foreign Affairs runs a crisis centre that comes into action in case of an incident at sea occurring outside Belgian territorial waters that involves both Belgian and foreign victims.

Together with other Coast Guard partners, the FPS for Foreign Affairs handles the applications of foreign vessels requesting to carry out oceanographic or hydrographical research on the Belgian part of the North Sea. Vessels that receive a permit are monitored closely.

"I handle the applications of foreign vessels requesting to carry out research on the Belgian part of the North Sea. This varies from examination of the seabed to research on different types of fish or water sample analysis. The application needs to mention the nature of the researchers' activities, the location and the materials used. In cooperation with other Coast Guard partners we determine whether we can grant permission. In case of a positive answer, the vessels are granted diplomatic clearance or 'dipclear'."

Koen Verheyen, attaché at the Globalisation Directorate of the FPS for Foreign Affairs



Foreign Affairs Crisis Centre, Brussels

Foreign Affairs Headquarters, Brussels





International Environmental Policy Division

The International Environmental Policy Division, part of the Environment, Nature and Energy Department of the Flemish Government, attends international meetings on environmental issues both at the European and at the multilateral level. The division is the point of contact for environmental cooperation with various regions and countries. It keeps track of developments in environmental issues and assigns experts to follow these files; an example are the agreements on the reduction of shipping emissions.

The division is also responsible for converting international environmental directives into Flemish legislation. Additionally, the International Environmental Policy Division plays an active role in the Flemish partnership "Water for Development", in which Flanders commits to help reduce the number of people without access to clean water by half.

"To protect the sea as much as possible, we work together with our neighbouring countries as well as with countries all around the world. After all, the consequences of contamination are not limited solely to Belgium. To prevent contamination and to establish protected areas, treaties and agreements need to be concluded. The International Environmental Policy Division monitors developments closely, assesses the consequences for Flanders and determines whether adjustments need to be made to the policy."

Gert Verreet, staff member at the International Environmental Policy Division



Pollution on the beach



Climate change conference 2010 in Cancún



Ministry of Defence

With helicopters, ready duty ships and divers at its disposal, the Ministry of Defence is able to offer assistance in case an emergency unfolds on the North Sea.

The Ministry of Defence carries out inspections on Belgian and foreign fishing vessels in Belgium's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in cooperation with the Sea Fisheries Service.

The Ministry of Defence is often called upon in case of pollution on the North Sea or to destroy mines and other explosives. The Radio Maritime Services provide information to shipping traffic and monitor the emergency channels closely.

Off the coast of Lombardsijde, part of the North Sea is reserved for regular shooting exercises. The Belgian Navy contributes to the fight against piracy by taking part in international surveillance operations.



Lombardsijde shooting range



Minesweeper Lobelia

"We have three Caiman helicopters, type NH90 NFH and a fourth is expected in 2016. These are used to carry out SAR (Search and Rescue) operations and in the future also for MAR operations (navy). There are 5 crew members on board: 2 pilots, a cabin operator, a medic and a SAR diver. A Senso (sensor operator) will join the crew for MAR operations. The Caiman helicopter can fly at a velocity of 300 km/h even in the most difficult weather conditions. We are standby 24/7 and are ready to take off within 15 minutes. Our device stays the same: "aude audenda", dare what needs to be dared."

Valérie Verkeyn, Commanding pilot in the 40th Heli Squadron, Koksijde base





Coastal Division

Protecting Belgium's coast against flooding is without a doubt the Coastal Division's most important task. The division maintains dunes and dikes and raises beaches as a defence against the sea's power.

Next to coastal safety, the division also invests in coastal and water-related recreation. They construct, maintain and manage the marinas of Nieuwpoort, Ostend, Blankenberge and Zeebrugge and set up green areas as well as foot and cycling paths.

The Flemish Hydrography service, part of the Coastal Division, produces the official nautical charts for the River Scheldt and the Belgian part of the North Sea both on paper and in electronic form. Moreover, they produce nautical publications such as tide tables and Notices to Mariners.

The Flemish Hydrography service also carries out soundings in the River Scheldt and in the Belgian Continental Shelf. Furthermore, they research the position of wrecks and study the seabed, the tides, the direction and height of the waves, the wind and the currents. They run the Network of Flemish banks, a network of sounding masts and buoys on the North Sea. On the basis of the assembled data they draw up a specific weather forecast for the coast and the sea.

The Coastal Division is part of the Agency for Maritime and Coastal Services (MDK) together with the Fleet Division, Pilotage Division and Shipping Assistance Division.



Protection against flooding



Ria Desnouck, Cartographer

"Paper and electronic nautical charts for the shipping industry can be compared to road maps and GPS systems for car drivers. Users can easily adjust the paper charts themselves. Every other week they receive the 'Notices to mariners', which sum up the changes to the charts. Electronic charts are automatically adjusted. Due to changes in the depth of the seabed we need to update the charts continuously. The construction of wind mill farms and works in the ports can also be cause for adjustments."

Ria Desnouck, cartographer at the Coastal Division

Federal Institute for Sustainable Development

The federal institute for Sustainable Development coordinates the federal policy concerning sustainable development and is the moving force behind the Interdepartmental Commission Sustainable Development, a federal consultation platform, also including regional representatives. It runs the secretariat and coordinates various working groups.

Furthermore, this division supports other government institutions in making their policy and procedures more sustainable. To that purpose different products and services are available, e.g. the Guide on Sustainable Purchases. Moreover, every year in October, a "day of Sustainable Development" is organized in order to make civil servants more aware of issues related to sustainable development.

The federal institute for Sustainable Development also follows up international developments and policy within its scope, e.g. in the United Nations and the European Union.



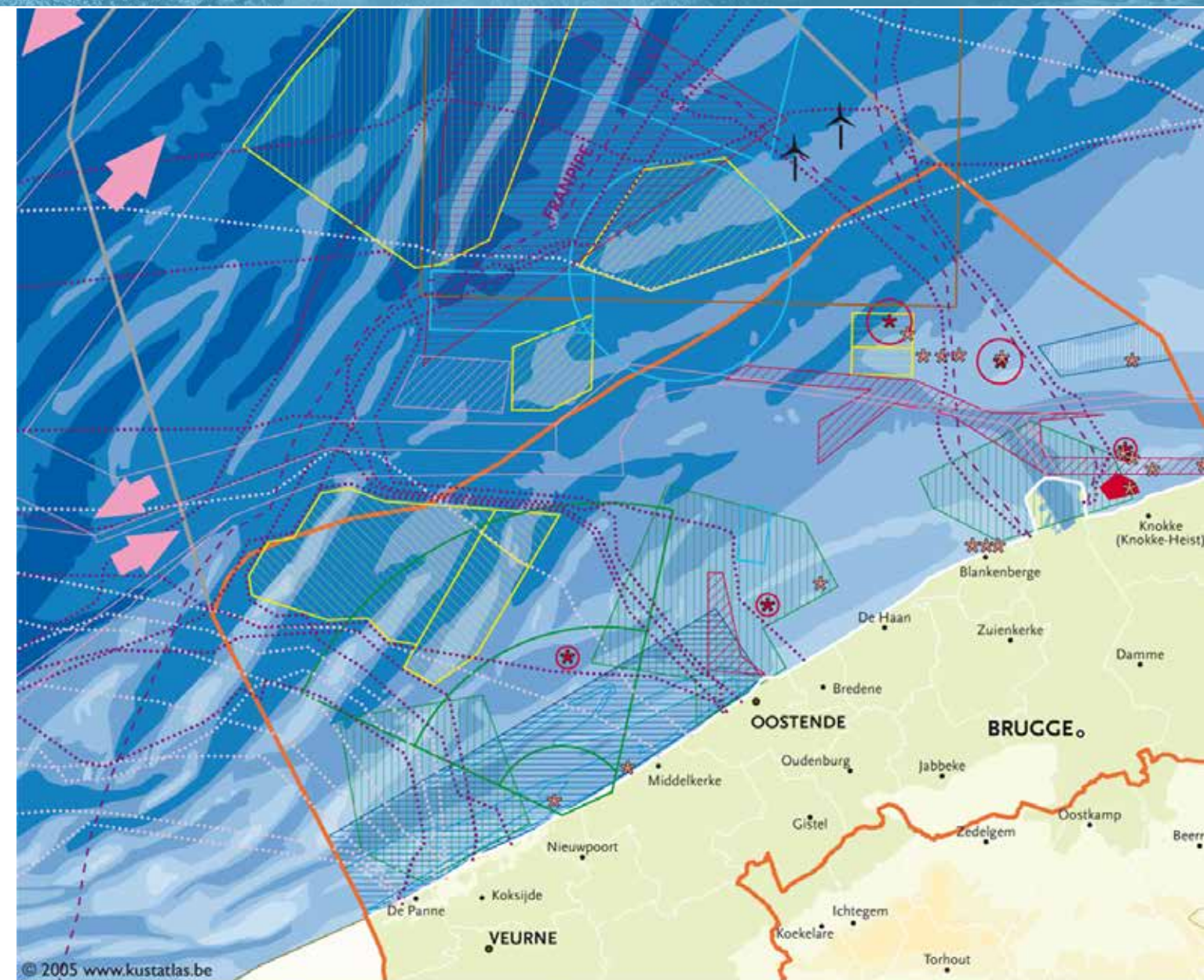
Promoting sustainable development

"I am responsible for the Guide for Sustainable Purchases. This online guide enables government institutions to purchase ecological and socially acceptable products and services. These vary from computers over washing products to stationery. A sustainable policy is equally imperative for the North Sea. This is why the Coordination Centre for Integrated Coastal Zone Management and a number of scientists have developed a coastal atlas that sums up all activities taking place on the North Sea and provides recommendations on a sustainable use of our marine environment."

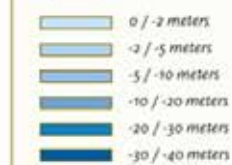
Jo Versteven, Project leader of the Guide for Sustainable Purchases at the Federal Institute for Sustainable Development'



Jo Versteven, Project leader of the Guide for Sustainable Purchases at the Federal Institute for Sustainable Development'



LEGEND



MILITARY USE



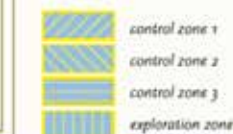
MARITIME TRANSPORT



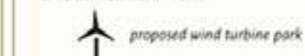
COMMUNICATION CABLES & GAS PIPES



SAND AND GRAVEL EXTRACTION



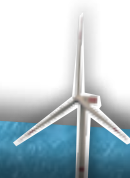
ENERGY GENERATION



DREDGING AND DUMPING SITES



NATURE



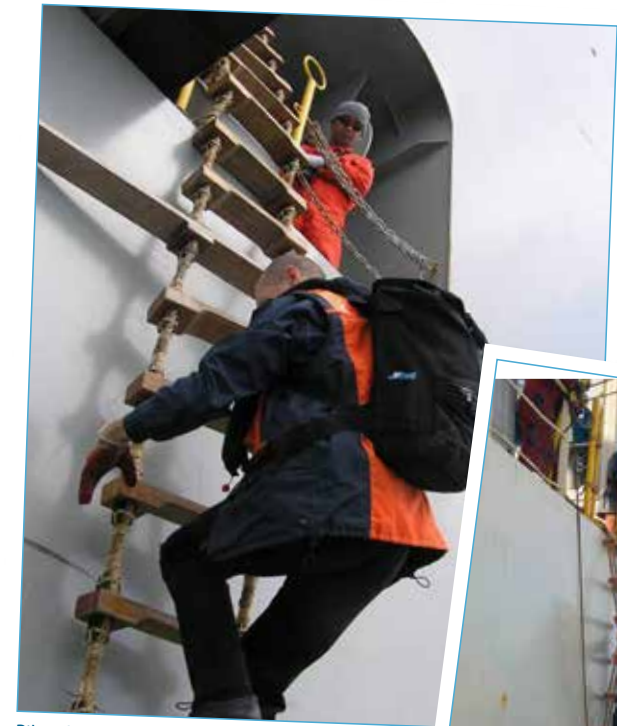


Pilotage Division

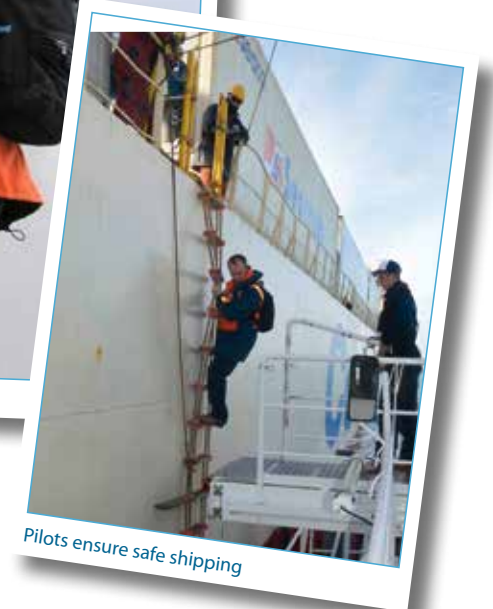
Pilotage at sea is carried out with the state-of-the-art SWATH (Small Water-plane Area Twin Hull) vessels. For vessels that are not equipped to be operated by SWATH, this is still done the 'old fashioned way' with a yawl (a small, open and engine-driven boat). Another possibility is "shore-based pilotage", which means that the captain aboard is assisted by a pilot operating out of a shore-based radar station.

The Pilotage Division also provides advice on high-risk transports, vessels that are difficult to manoeuvre, buoys and beacons, the salvage of wrecks and the deepening of waterways. The Pilotage Division thus contributes to safe and efficient shipping traffic to and from the Flemish ports.

The Pilotage Division is part of the Agency for Maritime and Coastal Services (MDK) together with the Shipping Assistance Division, Fleet Division and Coastal Division.



Pilot climbs aboard via pilot ladder



Pilots ensure safe shipping

"I assist vessels of various lengths when they enter and leave the ports of Zeebrugge, Ostend and Nieuwpoort. Under normal circumstances I board the ship. In bad weather, I am brought aboard by helicopter or I assist the captain through shore-based pilotage by means of radar images and VHF (radio communication). As a pilot, you especially have to be stress resistant. Not only do you have to communicate and to plan ahead, but you also need to anticipate and to improvise."

Paul Van Wezemael, Coastal Pilot at the Pilotage Division



FPS for the Economy, SMEs, Self-Employed and Energy

Two Directorates General of the FPS for the Economy contribute to the efficient operation of the Coast Guard.

Directorate General for Quality & Safety:

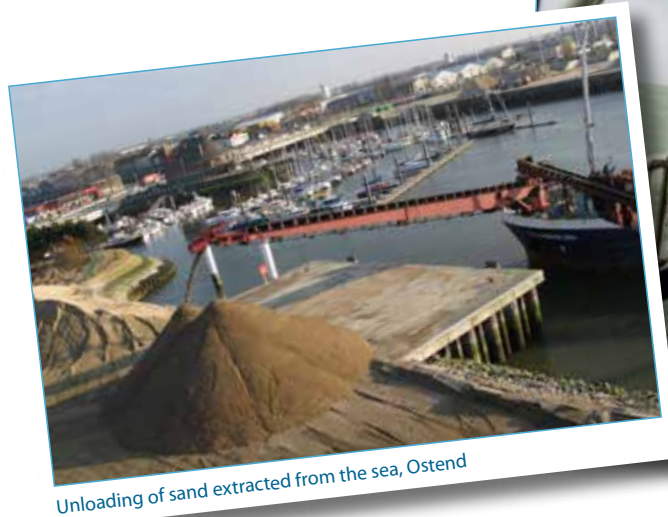
The Continental Shelf Service is in charge of the use and extraction of mineral and other non-living resources from Belgium's territorial waters, such as sand and gravel extraction. It also supervises the construction of telecommunication cables on the seabed. The Control Division and the Regulation and Control Policy Division monitor the safety of offshore pipelines.

Directorate General for Energy:

The Directorate General for Energy is in charge of the Zeebrugge gas terminals and the installation of electric cables and pipelines on the seabed. It is also responsible for the construction and operation of installations for the generation of electricity from water, tidal or wind power.

"With the oceanographic research vessel Belgica we carry out seven sounding campaigns at sea per year. Aboard the Belgica we have installed a multibeam, a specialised sounding device which we use to chart the different sand banks. We examine the effects sand extraction has on the level of the seabed. The results of this research allow us to intervene when necessary and to make sand extraction more sustainable. The extracted sand and gravel are mainly used by the building industry and for coastal defence."

Helga Vandenreyken, attaché at the Continental Shelf Service of the FPS for the Economy



Unloading of sand extracted from the sea, Ostend



Taking of seabed samples aboard the Belgica





Maritime Access Division

The Maritime Access Division manages and maintains all maritime access routes to the Flemish ports of Ostend, Zeebrugge, Ghent and Antwerp.

The division ensures safe passage for vessels on the River Scheldt from the coast up to and beyond Antwerp by carrying out dredging work and salvage operations on the River Scheldt. This is always done in an environmentally friendly way, e.g. by means of recycling of dredging material and ecological sanitation.

The division builds and maintains infrastructure allowing shipping vessels to access the ports, such as locks. It also helps finance other works in the port, including the construction of docks and the building of quays.

The Maritime Access Division furthermore maintains the grounds and roads managed by the Flemish Government in the port areas.

"I supervise the dredging works on the North Sea and in the River Scheldt. During dredging works in the port of Ostend we found explosives dating from the First and Second World War. For safety reasons we do not work with our customary trailing suction hopper dredgers in such circumstances. We will employ a Dipper Dredger, which is a giant crane on a floating pontoon. This crane is fully armoured and has already dredged up explosives up to 1000 kg."

Jan Deschagt, Dredging Works Supervisor at the Maritime Access Division



Jan Deschagt, Dredging Works Supervisor



Construction works for the Deurganck dock, Antwerp



FPS for Finance Customs and Excise

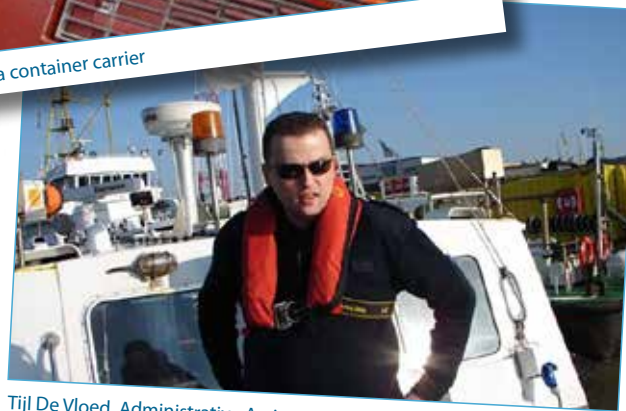
By closely guarding Belgium's borders, Customs and Excise protects the population and the economy against unfair and illegal trading practices. Moreover, they ensure the safety of the logistic chains, thus stimulating international trade. Customs and Excise looks after Belgium's financial interests by collecting and checking import duties, excise duties and VAT. A key task of Customs and Excise is the fight against fraud, organised crime and terrorism.

At sea and along the coast, Customs and Excise is represented by the Maritime Brigade. They patrol Belgium's territorial waters and the Belgian continental shelf and guard strategic infrastructure in the ports and at sea. Furthermore, their tasks include inspections of pleasure craft, inspections of fuel and provisions (for alcohol and cigarettes) and inspections of vessels for contraband goods and drugs. The Maritime Brigade supervises the import and export of goods through the Belgian ports and monitors products extracted or obtained from the sea, such as sand, gravel, electricity and fish products. They also map shipping traffic and assist other Coast Guard partners when necessary.

A unit of Customs and Excise is also present at the Maritime Security Centre Belgium (MIK) in Zeebrugge around the clock.



Inspection of a container carrier



Tijl De Vloed, Administrative Assistant at the Maritime Brigade

"The Maritime Brigade consists of 32 persons who mainly carry out inspections both on land and at sea. Merchant vessels are checked for tax-free goods and we supervise the use of red gasoil by pleasure craft. We organise searching operations for contraband and drugs. Moreover, during various operations we work together with other coast guard partners for the monitoring of fishing vessels in the Belgian part of the North Sea, the so-called Fishery Watch."

Tijl De Vloed, Administrative Assistant at the Maritime Brigade of Customs and Excise, the FPS for Finance





Shipping Assistance Division

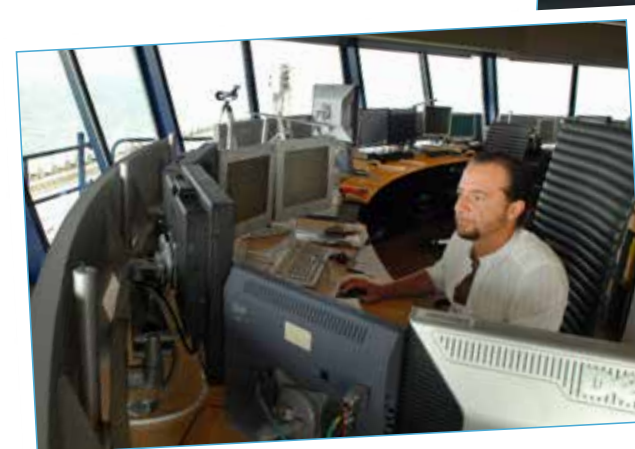
The Shipping Assistance Division provides Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) to shipping vessels. This means that all shipping vessels on the North Sea are identified and receive assistance. The provision of information and assistance is of utmost importance. The division works in close cooperation with the Netherlands through a network of manned and unmanned radar towers.

Whenever vessels on the busy North Sea find themselves in need or in danger, they can count on the help of the Maritime Rescue and Coordination Centre (MRCC). The MRCC is the central point of contact for incidents at sea and coordinates rescue operations.

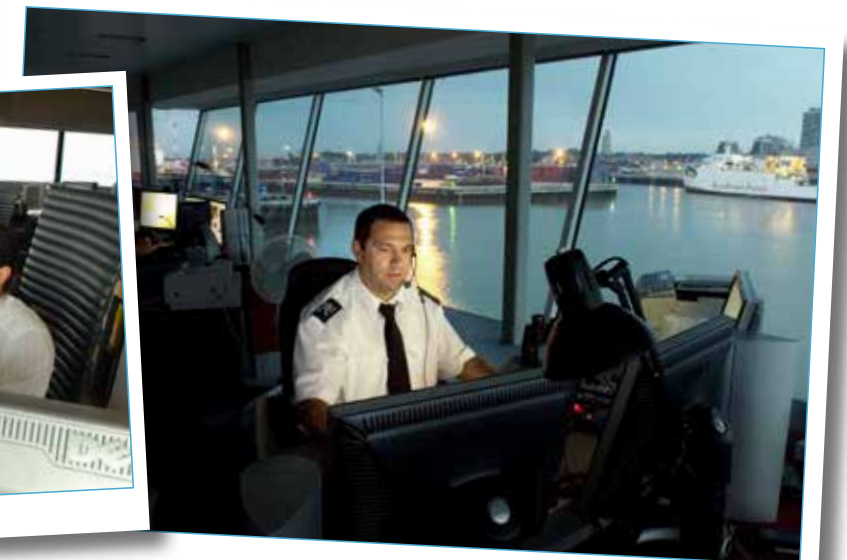
The Shipping Assistance Division is part of the Agency for Maritime and Coastal Services (MDK) together with the Fleet Division, Pilotage Division and Coastal Division.

"I am Head Traffic Operator at the Zeebrugge Traffic Centre. Together with my colleagues, I keep watch on the traffic off the Belgian coast. If we see a dangerous situation arising, we take action by providing information, communicating the position of buoys, etc. If a LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) tanker calls at the Port of Zeebrugge, we offer radar assistance to the tanker and we notify ships in the area to keep their distance. Above all, we try to avoid accidents. Prevention is better than cure!"

Alain Mahieu, Head Traffic Operator at the Shipping Assistance Division



Zeebrugge Traffic Centre Operator



MRCC operator, Ostend

FPS for Mobility and Transport DG for Maritime Transport

The Directorate General for Maritime Transport (a division of the FPS for Mobility and Transport) carries out inspections aboard vessels to check the seaworthiness, safety and living conditions aboard. The division furthermore verifies whether the marine environment is sufficiently protected and whether environmental directives are respected.

The Directorate General for Maritime Transport organises exams and issues documents such as certificates of tonnage and steering licences for the shipping industry. The division is responsible for monitoring the transport of dangerous goods and contributes to the development of national and international regulations for pleasure craft and merchant shipping.

"I inspect foreign vessels in the Belgian ports. Together with my colleagues I examine the structural part, the navigation and communication equipment and the machinery. We also inspect the accommodation, sanitary installations and the kitchen to make sure that the crew can do their job in decent conditions. Vessels with serious shortcomings have to stay in the port until the necessary repairs and improvements have been carried out."

Stefaan Verhellen, Shipping Inspector at Port State Control of the FPS for Mobility and Transport



Inspection of compliance with environmental guidelines



Stefaan Verhellen, Shipping Inspector





Fleet Division

Almost all of the vessels owned by the Flemish Government are grouped under a single ship-owner, the "Fleet Division", which also acts as a ship-owner in an international context. With approximately 50 vessels, the Fleet Division carries out practically all tasks outside of the Ministry of Defence's scope. These tasks include deploying vessels for pilotage tasks, transporting pilots, managing ferry lines, positioning buoys and beacons and organising search and rescue (SAR) operations. The Fleet Division's sailing area comprises the North Sea, the Flemish port, the Ghent – Terneuzen Canal and the River Scheldt. The Fleet Division's efforts contribute to increased safety on these waterways. The Fleet Division is also at the service of the public and enables other authorities and organisations to fulfil their tasks. The Fleet Division puts vessels at the disposal of other Coast Guard partners, such as the Flemish Hydrography, Maritime and River Police, Customs and Excise and the FPS for Public Health, on a contractual basis. The Fleet Division also plays a crucial and central role in deploying vessels for general assistance at sea.

The Fleet Division is part of the Agency for Maritime and Coastal Services (MDK) together with the Shipping Assistance Division, Pilotage Division and Coastal Division.

"I fulfil the role of Operations Manager at the Fleet Division. Together with several Coast Guard partners, we carry out different tasks: supplying patrol vessels for the Maritime and River Police and Customs and Excise, piloting vessels for the Pilotage Division and sounding vessels for the Flemish Hydrography, ensuring that our Search and Rescue (SAR) vessels along the coast or the 'Zeehond' are ready to be deployed for rescue operations when so requested by the Maritime Rescue and Coordination Centre (MRCC), ... Partnerships and cooperation are the key words in my job. Together with all my colleagues, both at sea and on land, I work towards the best possible provision of services."

Captain Herman Van Driessche, Operations Manager at the Fleet Division



Emergency relief with the 'Zeehond'



Rescue vessel 'Tuimelaar'



Herman Van Driessche, Operations Manager

FPS for Public Health, Food Chain Safety and the Environment Marine Environment Division

The Marine Environment Division (part of the Directorate General for the Environment of the FPS for Public Health, Food Chain Safety and the Environment) manages the policy on the protection and sustainable use of the marine environment. They also supervise compliance with the environmental regulations in the busy marine areas of Belgium.

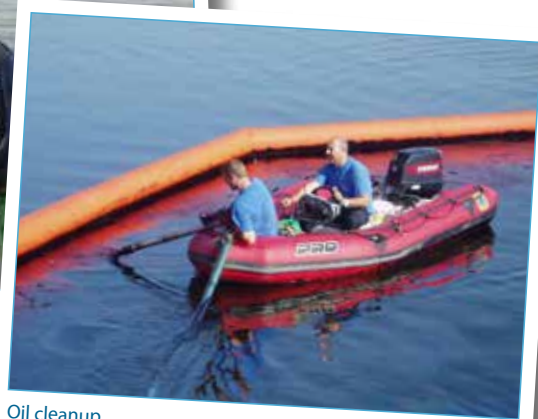
To that purpose, the Marine Environment Division carries out a number of regulatory tasks in cooperation with other Coast Guard partners such as the Management Unit of the North Sea Mathematical Models (MUMM), the Maritime and River Police, the Ministry of Defence, the Civil Protection, the Agency for Maritime and Coastal Services, etc.

Monitoring pollution at sea and establishing violations are two of the many tasks of the Marine Environment Division. Others include supervision on activities in environmentally protected areas and on activities at sea which require a permit.

The division furthermore manages and stores the equipment to combat pollution at sea. Spills are cleaned up with pollution treatment equipment and oil is prevented from spreading further. Staff are trained on how to use this equipment to clean up spills and to prevent pollution from spreading.



Oil barrier



Oil cleanup

"I am responsible for the purchase, maintenance and deployment of oil cleanup equipment. This includes oil skimmers (devices to remove oil from the water surface) and oil containment booms (floating barriers which are put in the water to prevent oil from spreading). Once or even twice a week we organise drill exercises so that we learn to quickly deploy the equipment. The Tricolor disaster has been the largest incident of my career up until now. More recently, a bunker ship was leaking heavy fuel oil in the port of Ostend. By acting fast and building a dam, we managed to prevent the oil from reaching the sea or the beach."

Jan Tavernier, expert in marine pollution control techniques at the Marine Environment Division of the FPS for Public Health





Sea Fisheries Service

The Sea Fisheries Service in Ostend is part of the Agriculture and Fisheries Department and assists in outlining policy objectives regarding Sea Fisheries topics as well as taking care of the follow-up and supervision on established measures.

The Sea Fisheries Service defines measures regarding quota and is authorised to close off fishing areas when necessary. It is also responsible for registering, analysing and publicising data on quota, market prices and gasoline prices. In addition, they publish an annual report on the catch and profits of the Belgian fishing fleet and other reports on sea fisheries.

They regulate and issue fishing permits. The permits are adapted to the engine power and tonnage (size) of the fishing vessels.

An inspection cell checks compliance with the regulations by means of a satellite positioning system for fishing vessels that is set up in Ostend. Inspections at sea are regularly carried out together with other Coast Guard partners. The fisheries inspections in the Belgian part of the North Sea are carried out in cooperation with the Belgian Navy, the Fleet Division and the surveillance aircraft of the Management Unit of the North Sea Mathematical Models (MUMM).

A social support system is run by a chaplain and a social worker, both attached to the Sea Fisheries Service, and the Fund for Cabin Boys offers financial support for the recruitment of cabin boys.

"When monitoring sea fisheries, we take up a 'hidden' position in the anchorage area between large cargo vessels. We keep a close eye on the radar to see if everyone abides by the law. We use a rhib (rigid hull inflatable boat) to board the fishing vessel we wish to inspect. We check if they have the required documents and fishing permits. We also take a look in the hold and measure the nets to make sure the meshes ('holes' in the net) are big enough."

Guy De Vleeschouwer, Fishery Watch Head Expert at the Sea Fisheries Service



Inspection of fish measurements



Guy De Vleeschouwer, Fishery Watch Head Expert

Science Policy Office Management Unit of the North Sea Mathematical Models (MUMM)

Ecology is a very important aspect within the Coast Guard. The Management Unit of the North Sea Mathematical Models (MUMM), a department of the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, studies the North Sea's ecosystems using specialist techniques. These studies allow scientists to research the state of the marine environment and to predict evolutions and developments.

Research is carried out aboard the Belgica, an oceanographic research vessel, a true sailing laboratory. Sometimes foreign teams take part in research projects aboard the Belgica. In case of oil pollution the Belgica can be used to take water samples. The samples enable scientists to determine how the marine environment is affected by the pollution.

Next to its vessels, MUMM also has a surveillance aircraft at its disposal to detect illegal oil discharges on the North Sea. The aircraft can also be mobilised to inspect sand extraction vessels or to observe sea mammals and sea birds. MUMM also undertakes action to help stranded whales or other sea mammals and carries out scientific research on these animals.

"We collect dead sea mammals such as porpoises and dolphins that have washed ashore and stock them in a giant freezer. We then carry out an autopsy with the help of an expert of Liege University. We want to find out why the animal has died and how its health was before it died. When large whales wash ashore, we carry out the examination on site and perform the autopsy on the beach."

Jan Haelters, Coordinator of Scientific Research on Whales and Dolphins at MUMM



Jan Haelters, Coordinator of Scientific Research on Whales and Dolphins



Surveillance aircraft





The governor of the province of West Flanders

The governor of West Flanders chairs the Coast Guard's consultation body. He is responsible for drawing up the province's emergency response and intervention plans and for organising emergency response exercises.

In addition, the governor is responsible for coordinating the "North Sea Contingency Plan". This means that he coordinates the emergency response operations, the communications and the aftercare when disaster strikes on the North Sea.

"Risks cannot be avoided, but you can make sure that you are prepared. That is why we draw up several contingency plans. In the case of the sea we have the 'North Sea Contingency Plan', describing procedures for the warning and deploying the services involved (MRCC, Fleet Division, Ministry of Defence, Maritime and River Police, etc.). Cooperation and transparent communications are of the utmost importance when addressing a disaster."

Vicky Boerjan, director of security and the North Sea



Governor coordinating the emergency plan



Emergency exercise





Civil Protection



Crisis Centre



Maritime and River Police



Ports and Water Policy



Foreign Affairs



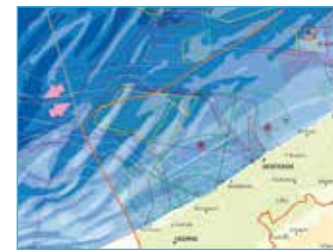
International Environmental Policy



Defence



Coastal Division



Sustainable Development



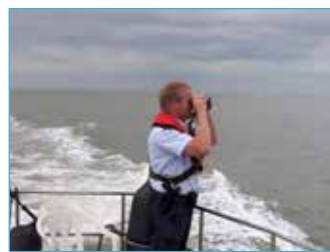
Pilotage Division



Economy



Maritime Access Division



Finance



Shipping Assistance Division



Mobility and Transport



Fleet Division



Public Health



Sea Fisheries Service



Science Policy



Governor of West Flanders

Explanation abbreviations

DG: Directorate General

EEZ: Exclusive Economic Zone

FPS: Federal Public Service

LNG: Liquefied Natural Gas

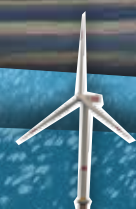
MIK: Maritime Security Centre Belgium

MRCC: Maritime Rescue and Coordination Centre

SAR: Search and Rescue

VHF: Very High Frequency

VTS: Vessel Traffic Services





coast guard

Emergency numbers (only to be used in case of incidents!)

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