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Tourism and recreation

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Europe is the most visited tourist¹ region in the world with the highest number of international visitors. Moreover, about half of the tourist overnight stays are booked in coastal areas ([Eurostat Regional Yearbook 2017](#) and COM (2014) 86), making coastal and maritime tourism (including the cruise sector) the biggest maritime sector in Europe in regard to added value and employment ([Ecorys 2013](#)). Furthermore, European coastal tourism provides jobs for 3.2 million people, generating over 183 billion euro of added value a year ([DG MARE](#)).

The Belgian coast is a popular holiday destination as well. Residential tourism accounted for more than 5 million arrivals and nearly 28 million overnight stays in 2018. The number of day trippers varies between 16 and 19 million annually. The total spending of coastal tourists amounts to approximately 2.9 billion euro ([Westtoer, Trendrapport Kust 2017-2018](#), [Dagtoeristen aan de kust \(2018\)](#), [Toerisme in cijfers XL 2017](#)).

Besides coastal tourism, tourism in the hinterland also accounts for a considerable number of arrivals and overnight stays. The tourist and recreational regions of Bruges Woodland and Westhoek area accounted for nearly 600,000 arrivals and over 1.3 million overnight stays in 2018 ([Westtoer, Trendrapport Brugse Ommeland 2017-2018](#), [Westtoer, Trendrapport Westhoek 2017-2018](#)). Furthermore, the Westhoek region welcomes through its war history a large number of commemorative tourists with a peak of 800,000 war tourists in 2014 during the centennial commemoration of the Great War (figures [Westtoer](#)). It should be noted, that the borders of these regions extend beyond the hinterland communities (the strategic policy plans for tourism and recreation in [het Brugse Ommeland 2013-2018](#) and [De Westhoek 2018-2024](#)).

12.1 Policy context

At the European level, the policy relating to tourism is stipulated by [DG GROW](#) of the European commission. However, coastal and maritime tourism is included in the so-called 'Blue Growth' policy (COM (2012) 494) established by [DG MARE](#). In this context, a strategy was developed to increase growth and employment in sustainable coastal and maritime tourism (COM (2014) 86), with a strong focus on cooperation between EU Member States.

Considering that the coast constitutes a 'macro product' within Flemish tourism but is completely located in the province of West Flanders, it has been decided to have a policy plan ([Strategisch beleidsplan voor toerisme en recreatie aan de kust 2015-2020](#)) drafted jointly by 'Tourism Flanders' ([Toerisme Vlaanderen](#)), under the supervision of the Flemish minister for Tourism (Flemish level, [beleidsnota toerisme 2014-2019](#), and [Westtoer](#) (provincial level). Every year, the Flemish Parliament also issues 'tourism policy letters' ([beleidsbrieven toerisme](#)) ([Weyts 2016](#)) which formulate strategic and operational objectives with a thematic or regional emphasis. The policy of the Westhoek area and the Bruges Woodland region has been defined on a provincial level by [Westtoer](#) in the strategic policy plans for tourism and recreation of the Bruges Woodland ([het Brugse Ommeland 2013-2018](#)) and the Westhoek ([de Westhoek 2018-2024](#)).

In the past, the Government of Flanders and the minister for Tourism provided funding in the framework of the Coastal Action Plan I ([Kustactieplan](#)) (1997-2002), II (2000-2004) and III (2005-2009) and the 'Flemish Coastal Impulse Programme' ([Impulsprogramma Vlaamse Kust](#)) (2010-2014) to invest in certain coastal-related projects. Since 2015, the impulse programmes focus on tourism leverage projects ([toeristische hefboomprojecten](#)) and cycling and walking network projects that apply to the whole of Flanders. A first thematic call for subsidies, the 'Everyone deserves a holiday' ([Iedereen verdient vakantie](#)) impulse programme, was launched in the spring of 2017. Furthermore, a permanent measurement and monitoring system has been developed which provides numbers on coastal tourism twice a year. These statistics are annually compiled in a trend report ([Westtoer, Trendrapport Kust 2017-2018](#)) and a key figures overview ([Kerncijfers toerisme Kust](#)). More information on the sectoral legislation on tourism can be found on the website of Tourism Flanders ([Toerisme Vlaanderen](#)) and the [Codex Coastal Zone, theme Tourism and recreation](#).

For water recreation on the coast, the RD of 4 August 1981 regarding the police and shipping regulations for the Belgian territorial sea, coastal ports and beaches is of interest (more information: [website FPS Mobility and Transport, oplijsting vaarregels](#)). Furthermore, the law of 20 January 1999 and the associated royal decrees stipulate a number of restrictions for recreational activities in marine protected areas. The regulation with regard to boating and water recreation on the fairways has been developed by [DG Shipping](#) (FPS Mobility and Transport) and is discussed in the following documents: [Vademecum van de pleziervaart in België \(2017\)](#), [De pleziervaart op de bevaarbare waterwegen in Vlaanderen \(2017\)](#) and [Wijzer op het water \(2010\)](#). The FPS Mobility and Transport, in cooperation with the secretary of state for the North Sea and the minister for Mobility, is currently working on a revision of the current legislation on recreational boats.

¹ Here we follow the statistical definition of 'tourism', which includes not only private visits but also business visits.

With regard to bathing along the coast, the European directive concerning the management of bathing water quality (2006/7/EC) is of importance as it stipulates the bathing water quality standards (more information: [De nieuwe zwemwaterrichtlijn, VMM 2006](#) and the [website kwaliteit zwemwater](#)).

The policy concerning outdoor recreation is described in the strategic policy plan for outdoor recreation for the province of West Flanders 2009-2018 ([Strategisch beleidsplan openluchtrecreatie voor de Provincie West-Vlaanderen 2009-2018](#)). The legislative framework of recreation and sport activities along the coast has been extensively elaborated in the [Codex Coastal Zone](#) (themes [Tourism and recreation](#), [Coastal Zone Management](#) and [Local legislation](#)) and is also discussed by [Derous \(2005\)](#) and [De Wachter and Volckaert \(2005\)](#) ([GAUFRE project BELSPO](#)).

12.2 Spatial use

The areas for tourism and recreation are primarily steered by spatial planning (see theme **Social and economic environment**). Instruments such as the spatial structure plans, spatial implementation plans (SIPs) and regulations, on a Flemish, provincial and municipal level, indicate the possibilities for future tourist-recreational developments in a specific area.

In the Flemish spatial structure plan ([RSV](#)), the coast is identified as an urban network which is a defining structure on the Flemish level. Because of its tourist-recreational facilities, the coast is also recognised as a tourist-recreational network which requires a policy on a Flemish level. This policy is *inter alia* developed within the framework of initiatives and studies such as the Masterplan for Coastal Safety ([Masterplan Kustveiligheid](#)), Ecosystem vision for the Flemish coast (Ecosysteemvisie Kust, 2017) (part [1](#), [2](#)), Complex Project Coastal Vision ([Complex Project Kustvisie](#), previously Flemish Bays ([Masterplan Vlaamse Baaien 2014](#))) and Metropolitaan Kustlandschap 2100 ([phase 1 / phase 2 / phase 3 part 1, 2 and 3](#)) (see theme **Safety against flooding**), where phase 1 describes the historical context of coastal tourism. Furthermore, the designation of Ostend and Bruges as regional urban areas (*regionaal stedelijke gebieden*) and Blankenberge and Knokke-Heist as local urban areas (*kleinstedelijke gebieden*) in the [RSV](#) is important for the tourism sector as this designation has consequences for the potential 'highly dynamic functions' that may be developed in the coastal region. Tourism Flanders drafted a study on the spatial use of tourism and recreation in Flanders ([Ruimte voor Toerisme en Recreatie in Vlaanderen \(WES 2007\)](#)) (RuiTER) where the question concerning space for the different aspects of tourism was raised in order to provide input for the large reconsideration of the [RSV](#) of 2011. In addition to the RSV, the regional spatial implementation plans (RSIPs) can be consulted on [www.ruimtelijkeordening.be](#). Besides the further implementation of the Flemish spatial structure plan, the Government of Flanders is preparing a new [spatial policy plan](#) (see [Groenboek. Vlaanderen in 2050: mensenmaat in een metropool? Beleidsplan ruimte Vlaanderen \(2012\)](#), [Witboek Beleidsplan Ruimte Vlaanderen](#)). Within this new spatial policy plan, a Territorial Development Programme for the coastal zone ([T.OP Kustzone](#)) has been developed. In this programme, the Environment Department of the Government of Flanders cooperates with the province of West Flanders and local authorities on short- and medium-term spatial development projects. T.OP Kustzone builds on the revised spatial structure plan of the province of West Flanders ([Provinciaal Ruimtelijk Structuurplan-WV](#)), local partner consultations and studies such as [CCaSPAR](#), [MKL2100](#), [Complex project coastal vision](#), [STADSMonitor](#), etc.

The Government of Flanders is the owner of almost all beaches along the Belgian coast (with the exception of the military base (beach) at Lombardsijde). The Coastal Division grants concessions for the development, maintenance and exploitation of the marinas for water recreation and sports along the Flemish Coast ([website Coastal Division](#)). Furthermore, the Coastal Division is responsible for providing safe coastal protection measures (see also theme **Safety against flooding**) and an integrated sustainable coastal management and is in the position to grant beach and sea dike concessions for private use in consultation with municipal authorities, other public authorities, utility companies, contractors, private individuals, etc. ([website Coastal Division](#)).

Important regional policies for the coast have been formulated in the spatial structure plan of the province of West Flanders ([PRS-WV](#)). In the PRS-WV, several coastal municipalities have been selected as population centres (*woonkernen*) with opportunities for development under specific conditions. The PRS-WV has also defined outdoor recreational green areas, amusement parks and tourism-recreational linear elements (watercourses, railway beds, dykes and road infrastructure). In addition, a number of strategic project areas were selected where tourism and recreation should be given an important place ([PRS-WV](#), [Strategisch beleidsplan voor toerisme en recreatie aan de Kust 2015-2020](#)). These are the Yser Estuary in Nieuwpoort, the area to the east of Blankenberge, the area to the south of the station in Knokke, the military base of Koksijde and the east bank of Ostend. Furthermore, the [provincial spatial implementation plans](#) (in particular the provincial SIPs (PSIPs) for beach and dike) are of significant importance for organising the tourist-recreational functioning of each coastal zone area because of the zoning that outlines a number of preconditions for future developments. Our coastal zone, for example, already has a well-developed cycling and hiking network and development zones have been designated for the construction of cycle 'highways' between the seaside towns.

At municipal level, processes are under development that create new opportunities for tourism and recreation within the municipal structural plans. These possibilities are elaborated in more detail for the possible spatial developments for tourism and recreation on a local level in the implementation plans. As a guideline, one can call on research by [Grujthuijsen \(2015\)](#) into the needs and wishes of tourists in Belgian and Dutch seaside resorts, in which, among other things, the demand for a modernisation of the public space was recorded.

12.3 Societal interest

12.3.1 Coastal tourism

The tourist-recreational sector is crucial for the coastal economy. In 2018, there were 5,420,604 arrivals at the coast in the residential tourism sector, representing a total of 27,780,223 overnight stays (figure 1). Commercial accommodation constitutes 42% of these stays and second home tourism 58%. In addition, 17,912,000 day-trippers arrived at the coast in 2018 ([Westtoer, Trendrapport Kust 2017-2018](#)), more information: study [Vakantieganger in commercieel logies Kust \(2017\)](#). The presence of the International Airport of Ostend - Bruges and the seaports of Ostend and Zeebrugge are also important for the inflow of foreign tourists to the Belgian coastal area. Figures on the number of passengers in the aforementioned ports are available on the website of the [Vlaamse Havencommissie](#). Traffic figures for Ostend-Bruges International Airport are available on the following web page www.ostendbruges-airport.com/figures.

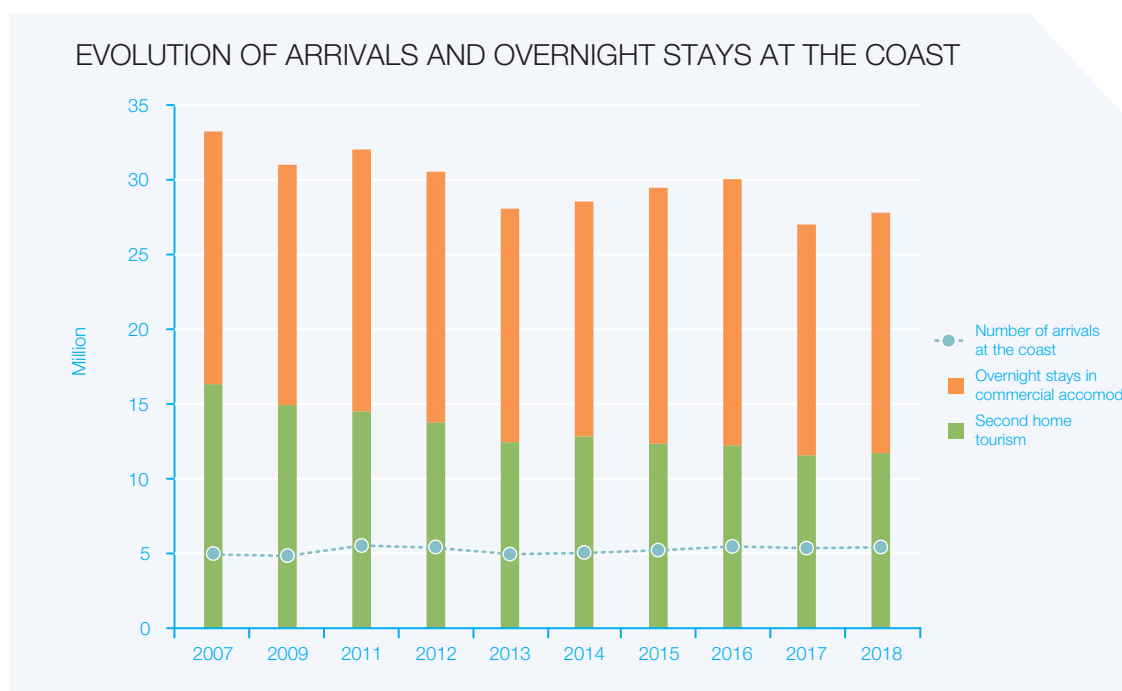


Figure 1. Evolution of the overnight stays in commercial accommodation, second home tourism and arrivals at the coast ([Westtoer, Trendrapport Kust 2012-2013](#), [Westtoer, Trendrapport Kust 2015-2016](#), [Westtoer, Trendrapport Kust 2017-2018](#)).

The total direct spending generated by residential tourism (commercial accommodation, second home tourism and mooring in marinas) and day trippers amounted to almost 3 billion euro in 2018 (table 1 and figure 2). Overnight tourism represented 2.1 billion euro in direct spending and day tourism 811 million euro ([Westtoer, Trendrapport Kust 2017-2018](#), more information: [Vakantieganger in commercieel logies kust 2017](#)). When visiting the coast, the average day tripper spends approximately 45 euro a day, a resident in commercial accommodation 68 euro a night and a second home owner in a holiday house 42 euro a night ([Dagtoeristen aan de kust 2018](#), [Vakantieganger in commercieel logies kust 2017](#)). Direct turnover in the construction sector due to the construction of second homes amounted to 367 million euro in 2007 ([IDEA consult 2009](#)). Recent research on the meeting industry at the coast reveals that this sector generates a turnover of 60 million euro (2013) ([Westtoer, onderzoek Meeting aan Zee 2015](#), [Westtoer, Trendrapport Kust 2017-2018](#)).

Table 1. Direct expenditures from coastal tourism by type of tourism in 2018 (Westtoer, Trendrapport Kust 2017-2018).

Type of Tourism	Direct spending of tourists in million euro	Percentage
Commercial accomodation	796	26.7
Second home tourism	1,287.5	43.3
Mooring in marinas	22.1	0.7
Day trippers	811	27.2
Meeting Industry	60.0	2.0
Total	2,976.6	100

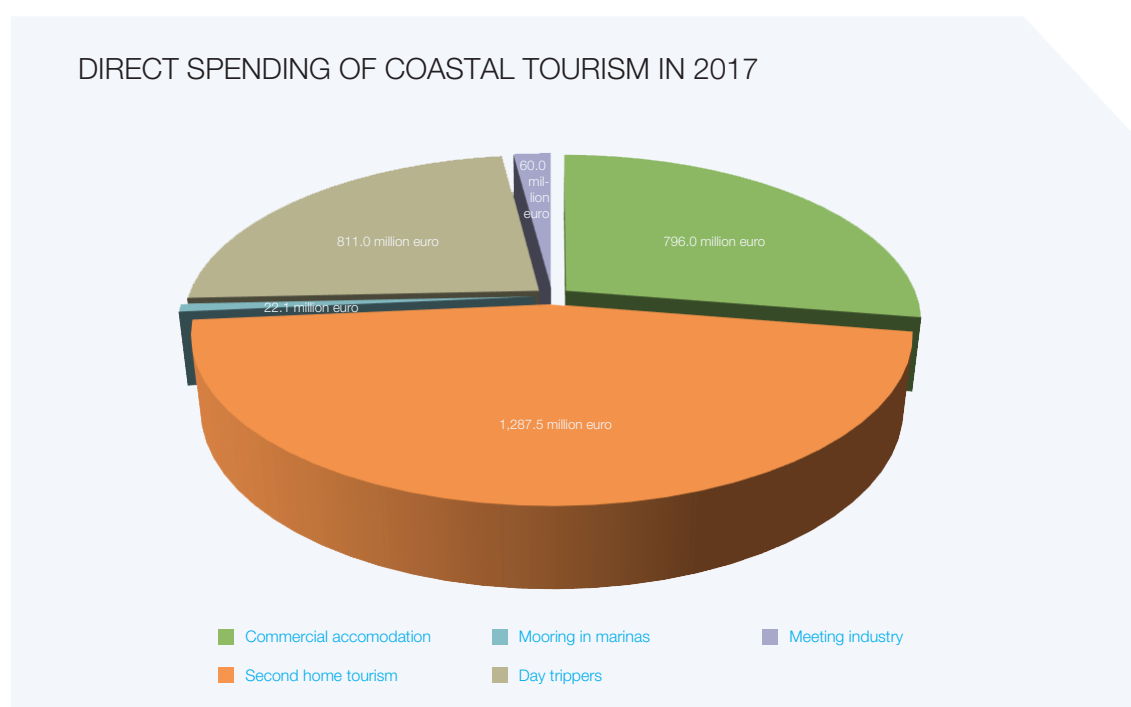


Figure 2. The total direct spending of coastal tourism per type of tourism in 2018 (Westtoer, Trendrapport Kust 2017-2018).

The activities of the Belgians during day trips (including to the coast) have been examined in detail in *pilootonderzoek naar daguitstappen van de Belg (2010-2011)* and more recently in *Dagtoeristen aan de kust (2018)*. These reports show that over 80% of the tourists mainly get to the coast by car. In terms of activities, strolling on the dike (73%), visiting cafes, tearooms, terraces (51%) and visiting restaurants (47%) are very popular. According to the *Westtoer, Trendrapport Kust 2017-2018*, there were 26 water sports clubs and 13 yacht clubs (3,553 berths) active along the coast in 2017, with spending in marinas amounting to 22.1 million euro. The economic benefits of sports and recreation activities along the coast (without indirect effects) are also listed by *De Wachter and Volckaert (2005) (GAUFRE project BELSPO)*. The *Seaconomics project (2010-2014)* further investigated the economic importance of the marinas (*Westtoer, onderzoek gebruikers kustjachthavens 2013*). Based on this research, the average annual turnover generated by all users of the Flemish yacht clubs is estimated at 25.3 million euro.

According to statistics of the research department of the Government of Flanders (based on data from the National Social Security Office (NSSO) and the National Institute for the Social Security of the Self-Employed (NISSE)), the total employment of employees in the tourism industry at the coast in 2010 amounted to 11,253 jobs. The employment of the self-employed and helpers at the coast totaled 2,286 jobs (*Weekers 2013*). According to another calculation, based on the return from coastal tourism in 2018 a total of 21,431 fulltime equivalents are estimated (assuming 1 million euro equals 7.2 direct FTE and 3.4 indirect FTE) (*Westtoer, Trendrapport Kust 2017-2018*) with a total employment (direct and indirect) of 31,551 full-time equivalents. Employment in the construction sector as a result of second home tourism was estimated at 1,814 jobs in 2007 (*IDEA consult 2009*).

12.3.2 Hinterland tourism

In addition to coastal tourism, tourism in the Westhoek area, Bruges Woodland and Bruges is of significant importance. Bruges Woodland accounted for 151,527 visitors and 317,292 overnight stays in 2018 ([Westtoer, Trendrapport Brugse Ommeland 2017-2018](#)). The arrivals and overnight stays in the Westhoek area amounted to 429,160 and 949,741 respectively ([Westtoer, Trendrapport Westhoek 2017-2018](#)). Bruges accounted for 1.25 million arrivals and 2.19 million overnight stays in 2018. These are arrivals and overnight stays in commercial accommodations (excl. second home tourism) ([Westtoer, Kerncijfers Toerisme West-Vlaanderen](#)). In these trend reports, spending and employment are discussed as well.

12.4 Impact

As mentioned above, coastal tourism has a significant economic and societal value and creates a number of facilities such as the coastal tram and marinas. However, tourism in the coastal area also has a number of effects on the social and ecological environment. On the social level, the amount of second homes has an impact on the quality of life along the coast: higher real estate prices, weakened social cohesion, mobility problems, etc. (Coudenys 2012 and Keunen and Hoornaert 2012 in [Maelfait et al. 2012](#), [Meire and Bracke 2005](#), [Goffin et al. 2007](#), [De West-Vlaamse kansarmoedeatlas, 2017](#) (see theme **Social and economic environment**)).

The large amount of second homes also affects the cultural heritage at the coast ([IDEA consult 2009](#)) (see theme **Maritime and coastal heritage**), although clear synergies between tourism and the coastal heritage are present, such as the touristic function of cultural-historical buildings along the coast ([De Baerdemaeker et al. 2011](#)).

On an ecological level, the rise of mass tourism towards the coast since the 1930s with the massive construction of tourist-recreational accommodation (holiday homes, camping grounds, holiday parks, second homes, etc.), has played an important role in the urbanisation of coastal areas, fragmentation of valuable open space and the disappearance of habitats ([PRS-WV](#), [Goffin et al. 2007](#), Boone 2012 in [Maelfait et al. 2012](#), [Henkens et al. 2012](#), [Provoost et al. 2014](#)). Especially the dune area underwent a strong fragmentation, *inter alia* caused by spatial planning ([Welkom in de duinen 2008](#)) (see theme **Nature and environment**). Furthermore, the high concentration of tourists and residents in the coastal area during the peak season has some direct and indirect ecological effects (see table 2).

Table 2. An overview of the direct and indirect ecological effects caused by the high concentration of tourists and residents in the coastal area.

Impact	Literature
Increased consumption of energy and water	Vanlerberghe and Vanhoutte 2001 , Goffin et al. 2007 (see theme Agriculture, salinisation), Lenders et al. 2013
Problems with waste processing	Goffin et al. 2007 , De Groof in Maelfait et al. 2012 , Kustactieplan OVAM, Actieplan Marien Zwerfvuil 2017
Litter on the beach	Lescauwaet et al. 2006 , Goffin et al. 2007 , Maelfait 2008 , Doomen et al. 2009 , André et al. 2010 , Claessens et al. 2013 , Devriese and Janssen 2017 (for marine litter, see theme Maritime transport, shipping and ports and theme Nature and environment)
Mechanical cleaning of the beaches	Belpaeme 2003 , Dominguez 2006 , Goffin et al. 2007 , Doomen et al. 2009 , Vanhooren et al. 2011
Contribution of coastal tourism to the eutrophication of the coastal waters	Maes et al. 2004 (MARE-DASM project BELSPO) (see theme Agriculture)
Pollution caused by traffic	Goffin et al. 2007
Trampling and disruption of the beach and dune ecosystem	Vincx et al. 2001 , Maes et al. 2004 (MARE-DASM project BELSPO) , Provoost et al. 2004 , Goffin et al. 2007 , Deros 2005 (GAUFRE project BELSPO) , Welkom in de duinen 2008 (see theme Nature and environment), Krijgsveld et al. 2008
Pollution by recreational boating	Maes et al. 2004 (MARE-DASM project BELSPO) , De Wachter en Volckaert 2005 (GAUFRE project BELSPO) , Lescauwaet et al. 2006 , Goffin et al. 2007
Sport fisheries	See theme Fisheries

12.5 Sustainable use

12.5.1 Sustainable development of coastal tourism

In order to ensure the protection of coastal ecosystems, the *Natura 2000 network* of marine protected areas was established by Europe under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EC). The *management plans* for the BNS for the period 2018-2023 are already adopted (see the theme **Nature and environment**). At European level, the sustainable integration of the different users and sectors (including tourism and recreation) of the coastal zones is included in the European Recommendation on the implementation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM, 2002/413/EC). More recently, as part of the European Commission's Blue Growth strategy, fourteen actions have been identified to promote jobs and develop the European marine and maritime tourism sector within a sustainable framework (COM (2014) 86). Europe also provides a series of funding channels for this (*Guide on EU funding for the tourism sector 2014-2020*). Some specific applications for Belgium are the expansion of the Zwinvlakte, the *Life+ natuurproject FLANDRE* and the *Interreg project Vedette*, which carry out nature restoration in the coastal dunes with attention to the different target groups, and the *EMAS Easy MOVE-IT! project* that helps small and medium-sized enterprises in the tourism sector in terms of efficiency and sustainability.

Maelfait et al. (2012) published, in the context of ICZM, a number of indicators and measures have been proposed that promote the sustainable development of tourism and recreation at the coast. The relation between tourism and the social and economic aspects of the coast is discussed in more detail in the theme **Social and economic environment**.

In the strategic policy plan for coastal tourism (*Strategisch beleidsplan voor toerisme en recreatie aan de kust 2015-2020*), *Tourism Flanders* and *Westtoer* have formulated 12 strategic objectives in order to further develop tourism at the Belgian coast:

- Strategic projects in light of the international potential (leverage projects and strategic project areas);
- Further investments in basic infrastructure and public space;
- Weather independent facilities in view of a four-season destination;
- Space for recreation;
- An accessible coast;
- The development of tailor-made vacations with integrated customer service;
- Innovation and differentiation in the accommodation sector;
- Enforcement and competitiveness in the hospitality industry;
- A modern welcoming policy in the context of a broad hospitality;
- An integrated marketing policy;
- Knowledge-driven coastal tourism;
- Policy and organisation.

For the implementation of some of the strategic guidelines mentioned above, tourism leverage projects (*toeristische hefboomprojecten*) can be used within the impulse programmes (see **12.1 Policy context**). It should be mentioned that these projects apply to Flanders (and not only the coastal region). The further development of tourism at the coast is also strongly steered by spatial planning (see **12.2 Spatial use**). *Vanden Eede et al. (2014)* developed biological valuation maps for the Belgian coastal zone, which can be used as a decision-making tool by local policymakers in orienting spatial projects and allowing tourism activities.

In addition, there are a number of policy initiatives and studies (table 3) which address the issue of working towards sustainable coastal tourism in Belgium, e.g. Metropolaan Kustlandschap 2100 (*phase 1/ phase 2/ phase 3 part 1, 2 and 3*), *T.OP Kustzone*, Masterplan Coastal Safety (*Masterplan Kustveiligheid*), *CLIMAR project BELSPO*, Long-term vision North Sea 2050 (*Langetermijnvisie Noordzee 2050*), Ecosystem vision for the Flemish Coast (part *1, 2*) (*Ecosysteemvisie Kust*), Complex Project Coastal Vision (*Complex Project Kustvisie*) (previously Masterplan Flemish Bays 2014), *the Blue Cluster* (see also theme **Safety against flooding**).

In addition, various labels (e.g. *Blue Flag* of Bond Beter Leefmilieu, *the Q-label* for tourism entrepreneurs, *green key*, *the accessibility label* of the non-profit association *vzw inter*, etc. (more information: *website Toerisme Vlaanderen*)) are trying to contribute to sustainable (coastal) tourism.

Table 3. Overview of a number of studies that address sustainable coastal tourism.

Sustainable coastal tourism	
Child-friendliness on the Flemish coast (<i>Kindvriendelijkheid aan de Vlaamse Kust</i>)	Study on how to make the Flemish coast more attractive for families with children.
Interreg project 120 km Coastal quality (<i>Interreg project 120 km Kustkwaliteit</i>) (2008-2012)	Project to develop a sustainable beach and coastal management. See, <i>inter alia</i> , studies of van Meenen 2009 , Pijpers 2009 , kansen aan de kust 2009
Climate change as an incentive for renewed coastal tourism? (<i>De Waegemaeker 2012</i>)	Examines the impact of a compartmentalised coast (<i>CcASPA</i>) on coastal tourism

12.5.2 Tourism and nature

In [Goffin et al. \(2007\)](#), [Maelfait et al. \(2012\)](#) and *Strategisch beleidsplan voor toerisme en recreatie aan de kust 2015-2020* measures have been formulated in order to achieve a balance between the maintenance of the natural system and the needs of recreationists and tourists. In this regard, policy instruments such as the decree of the Dunes and spatial planning play an important role and are discussed in more detail in the theme **Nature and environment**. The compatibility of recreation and nature is also discussed in publications such as [Belpaeme \(2003\)](#), [Zwaenepoel et al. \(2005\)](#), *De Uitkerkse polder, een recreatieve meerwaarde voor de Vlaamse kust (2007)*, *Welkom in de duinen (2008)*, [Doomen et al. \(2009\)](#), [Henkens et al. \(2012\)](#), [Cosyns et al. \(2014\)](#) and [Provoost et al. \(2014\)](#).

The (bathing) water quality of the coastal zone (within 1 nautical mile) is managed on the European level within the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) by Directive 91/271/EC concerning urban waste-water treatment and Directive 2006/7/EC concerning the bathing water quality. On the federal level, these European measures are implemented by the RD of 23 June 2010 concerning the status of surface waters. On the Flemish level, the following decrees are important: the decree of 18 July 2003 (integrated water policy) (more information: [website Coordination Committee on Integrated Water Policy \(CIW\)](#)) and the decree of 8 December 1998 concerning the bathing water quality.

The quality of the bathing water of the coast is frequently sampled by the Flemish Environment Agency ([VMM](#) and the [website kwaliteit zwemwater](#)) ([Goffin et al. 2007](#), Pelicaen 2012 in [Maelfait et al. 2012](#), [VMM 2017](#)). The [Flemish Agency for Care and Health](#) is competent for the health aspect of the bathing water quality. The eutrophication of the coastal waters and the problem of salinisation are discussed in more detail in the theme **Agriculture**.

Legislation reference list

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

European legislation		
Title	Year	Number
COM: Recommendation concerning the implementation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management in Europe	2002	413
COM: Communication from the Commission (COM): Blue Growth opportunities for marine and maritime sustainable growth	2012	494
COM: Communication from the Commission (COM): A European strategy for more growth and jobs in coastal and maritime tourism	2014	86
Council Directive concerning urban waste-water treatment	1991	271
Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (Habitats Directive)	1992	43
Directive establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy (Water Framework Directive)	2000	60
Directive concerning the management of bathing water quality and repealing Directive 76/160/EEC (Bathing Water Directive)	2006	7

Belgian and Flemish legislation		
Abbreviation	Title	File number
Decision of the Government of Flanders of 8 December 1998	Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering tot aanduiding van de oppervlaktewateren bestemd voor de productie van drinkwater categorieën A1, A2 en A3, zwemwater, viswater en schelpdierwater, ter omzetting van Richtlijn 2006/7/EG van het Europees Parlement en de Raad van 15 februari 2006 betreffende het beheer van de zwemwaterkwaliteit en tot intrekking van Richtlijn 76/160/EEG	1998-12-08/51
Decree of 18 July 2003	Decreet betreffende het integraal waterbeleid	2003-07-18/72
RD of 4 August 1981	Koninklijk besluit houdende politie- en scheepvaartreglement voor de Belgische territoriale zee, de havens en de stranden van de Belgische kust	1981-08-04/31
RD of 23 June 2010	Koninklijk besluit betreffende de vaststelling van een kader voor het bereiken van een goede oppervlaktewatertoestand	2010-06-23/04
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

