



Life FLANDRE - FLEMISH AND NORTH-FRENCH  
DUNES RESTORATION

LIFE12 NAT/BE/000631



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#### Project description:

##### Background

The coastal dunes between Dunkirk in France and Westende in Belgium make up one of the most famous dune systems in continental Europe. The area is characterised by broad sandy beaches, carved foredunes, megaparabolic dunes with large humid dune slacks and low, gently undulating older 'fossil' dunes that were formed between 3 000 BC and 800 AD. Atlantic salt marshes also occur in the Yzer estuary, at Nieuwpoort. The dune soils have a high lime content, except for those of the 'fossil' dunes, which are heavily decalcified. During the 20th Century, the dunes on both sides of the border became strongly degraded as a result of urbanisation, water extraction, recreational use, the fixation of sand drift, invasion by alien species, intensification of agriculture in the transitions between dunes and polders, and the decline of traditional agro-pastoral activities on the remaining dune area, resulting in scrub encroachment. Most of the remaining dune sites in both Member States have been included in the Natura 2000 network.

##### Objectives

The project aims to consolidate the Natura 2000 network in both countries by restoring habitats that are typical for the sedimentary coasts of the Atlantic biogeographical region, and by boosting the populations of species of Community interest. It aims to achieve these goals through land purchase,

management planning, nature restoration, public awareness raising and by strengthening cooperation between the Belgian and French public authorities that are competent for the acquisition and management of protected sites. The project will also establish an Advisory Committee (to be continued after the end of the project) as a transnational management board, and draw up a cross border directive management plan and a legal basis for cross border cooperation for the management of the dune belts. In this way, the project aims to be a first step in the establishment of a transnational 'European' natural park, which will serve as an example of cross border cooperation for other Member States.

Expected results: Belgium:

- Management plans for at least 93 ha of dunes that were purchased by the Agency for Nature and Forests between 2005 and 2010 and are scattered over five different sites. These sites will receive the legal status of a Flemish nature reserve;
- The acquisition of 30 ha of dunes to expand the publically owned and actively managed dune area;
- Restoration of 2 ha of humid dune slack habitat, the creation of three ponds, and the restoration of three ponds as aquatic habitat for the great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) and the natterjack toad (*Epidalea calamita*, formerly *Bufo calamita*);

France:

- The acquisition of 58.3 ha of dunes that will be added to the managed, publically-owned sites (Dune Dewulf, Dune Marchand, Dune du Perroquet and Dune fossile de Ghyvelde);
- Restoration of 65.1 ha of humid dune slacks and grey dunes;
- Optimisation of 3.6 ha of habitat of the narrow-mouthed whorl snail (*Vertigo angustior*);
- The creation of ten ponds as aquatic habitat for the great crested newt and the natterjack toad;
- A new walking path in the Dune Dewulf, to reduce the negative impact on biodiversity of uncontrolled recreational use;

Both countries:

- A common directive management plan for the cross-border dune belts between Dunkirk and Westende, and a legal basis for the cooperation between French and Belgian authorities for the management of coastal dunes as a transnational European natural park;
- Improved ecological cohesion and connectivity of the network of dune sites on both sides of the border;
- Improved public awareness of the natural heritage value of the fragile dune area between Westende and Dunkerque;
- A flyer with a map of the cross border project area and a description of the landscape, fauna, flora and its legal protection within the Natura 2000 network;
- A book of abstracts from the international workshop on the management of coastal dune habitats.

Results

Environmental issues addressed:

Themes

Habitats - Coastal

Keywords

protected area, coastal area, restoration measure

Target species

*Apium repens* *Bufo calamita* *Liparis loeselii* *Triturus cristatus* *Vertigo angustior* *Vertigo moulinsiana*

Target Habitat types

- 1310 - Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand
- 1330 - Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*)
- 2110 - Embryonic shifting dunes
- 2120 - Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* ("white dunes")
- 2130 - Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation ("grey dunes")
- 2150 - Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (*Calluno-Ulicetea*)
- 2160 - Dunes with *Hippophaë rhamnoides*
- 2170 - Dunes with *Salix repens* ssp. *argentea* (*Salicion arenariae*)
- 2180 - "Wooded dunes of the Atlantic, Continental and Boreal region"
- 2190 - Humid dune slacks

Natura 2000 sites

SCI	BE2500001	Duingebieden inclusief Ijzermonding en Zwin.
SCI	FR3100474	DUNES DE LA PLAINE MARITIME FLAMANDE
SCI	FR3100475	Dunes flamandaises décalcifiées de Ghyvelde
SPA	BE2500121	Westkust

Beneficiaries:

Coordinator

Agentschap voor Natuur en Bos

Type of organisation	Regional authority
Description	The Agency for Nature and Forests of the Flemish ministry of the environment, nature and energy is the competent public authority in the Flemish region for nature conservation and forestry policy, as well as for the management of nature reserves and public-owned forests (total surface: 42 300 ha). It is also responsible for the implementation of the Natura 2000 network in Flanders. The agency was created in 2006 through a merger of former nature and forests and parks divisions.
Partners	Département du Nord, France Conservatoire du Littoral et des Rivages Lacustres, France

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#### Administrative data:

Project reference	LIFE12 NAT/BE/000631
Duration	02-SEP-2013 to 01-MAR -2020
Total budget	4,066,454.00 €
EU contribution	2,033,226.00 €
Project location	Vlaams Gewest(België - Belgique) Nord-Pas-De-Calais(France)

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#### Read more:

Brochure	Title: "De Dunkerque à Westende, un des systèmes dunaires les plus remarquables d'Europe" (930 KB) Editor: Agence Nature et Forêts No of pages: 7
Project web site	<a href="#">Project's website</a>

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