

DEVELOPING A USER-FRIENDLY INTERFACE FOR CALCULATING THE BENTHIC ECOSYSTEM QUALITY INDEX (BEQI)

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The BEQI or Benthic Ecosystem Quality Index is a biological index that will be used assessing the state of the benthos of coastal and transitional waters for the Water Framework Directive. The BEQI methodology was designed at the Netherlands Institute of Ecology (NIOO), where in order to facilitate calculation of the BEQI at community level, a Fortran program was developed by prof. dr. Peter Herman.

Based on the existing Fortran program, VLIZ has built an interface that allows users to calculate the BEQI score in a user-friendly and easily accessible way. Users can upload their own benthic reference and assessment datasets and receive the calculated ecological quality scores for each of the represented ecotopes in response. For certain areas and waters, existing reference data will be available on the VLIZ servers. This will allow the user to perform an assessment based on generally accepted reference conditions. The BEQI calculation module will perform various checks on the uploaded data and provide the user with feedback on whether or not the data requirements are met. This will assist the user in getting the data in the supported data format and will help to avoid frustrating mistakes.

The BEQI website was set up with financial support of the Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment, Directorate General Environment, Marine Environment Service and will be available at www.vliz.be/projects/beqi

References

Van Hoey G., J. Drent, T. Ysebaert and P. Herman. 2007. The Benthic Ecosystem Quality index (BEQI), intercalibration and assessment of Dutch Coastal and Transitional Waters for the Water Framework Directive. NIOO rapport 2007-02