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A Marine Biotic Index to Establish the Ecological Quality of Soft-Bottom Benthos Within European Estuarine and Coastal Environments

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In this paper, a marine Biotic Index (BI) for soft-bottom benthos of European estuarine and coastal environments is proposed. This is derived from the proportions of individual abundance in five ecological groups, which are related to the degree of sensitivity/tolerance to an environmental stress gradient. The main difference with previously published indices is the use of a simple formula that produces a continuous Biotic Coefficient (BC) – which makes it more suitable for statistical analysis, in opposition with previous discreet biotic indices – not affected by subjectivity. Relationships between this coefficient and a complementary BI with several environmental variables are discussed. Finally, a validation of the proposed index is made with data from systems affected by recent human disturbances, showing that different anthropogenic changes in the environment can be detected through the use of this BI. © 2000 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: biotic index; ecological quality; diversity; benthos; soft-bottom; European coastal environments.

Introduction

Marine environmental quality control is undertaken usually by means of monitoring different parameters in water, sediment and sentinel organisms (i.e. Mussel Watch), as in the USA (O'Connor, 1992), France (RNO, 1998) or Great Britain (Franklin and Jones, 1994). This control is centred on physico-chemical and ecotoxicological variables and, less usually, on biological variables. Dauer (1993) stated that biological criteria are considered important components of water quality because: (i) they are direct measures of the condition of the biota, (ii) they may uncover problems undetected or underestimated by other methods; and (iii) such criteria provide measurements of the progress of restoration efforts.

New European rules (see Directive Proposal 1999/C 343/01, Official Journal of the European Communities 30/11/1999) emphasize the importance of biological indicators, in order to establish the ecological quality of European coasts and estuaries. Benthic invertebrates are used frequently as bio-indicators of marine monitoring, because various studies have demonstrated that macrobenthos responds relatively rapidly to anthropic and natural stress (Pearson and Rosenberg, 1978; Dauer, 1993).

River ecology has an established long tradition in applying macrobenthos as bio-indicators; likewise some biotic indices have been proposed (Woodiwiss, 1964; Cairns *et al.*, 1968; Chandler, 1970; ISO-BMWP, 1979, etc.). On the other hand, some attempts to provide useful 'tools' to measure ecological quality in the marine environment have been developed in Europe and North America (Hily, 1984; Majeed, 1987; Dauer, 1993; Grall and Glémarec, 1997; Weisberg *et al.*, 1997).

All the aforementioned studies utilize soft-bottom communities to construct the indices, because macrobenthic animals are relatively sedentary (and cannot avoid deteriorating water/sediment quality conditions), have relatively long life-spans (thus, indicate and integrate water/sediment quality conditions, with time), consist of different species that exhibit different tolerances to stress and have an important role in cycling nutrients and materials between the underlying sediments and the overlying water column (Hily, 1984; Dauer, 1993).

In this contribution, a marine Biotic Index (BI) is designed to establish the ecological quality of European coasts. This explores the response of soft-bottom communities to natural and man-induced changes in water quality, integrating long-term environmental conditions.

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Methods

Sampling

The Department of Land Action, Housing and Environment of the Basque Government has established a network of monitoring stations along the Basque coast-line (North of Spain). This provides water, sediment and biological quality information from 30 sampling stations (Fig. 1). The benthic sampling has been carried out every February, from 1995 to 1998 using the research vessel '*Ortze*'.

At each of these stations, three replicates of benthos were collected with a Van Veen grab (1215 cm^2). The samples were filtered immediately, using a sieve of mesh size of 1 mm and fixed in a solution of 4% formalin (Holme and McIntyre, 1971).

Sediment data

At each station, a sediment sample was obtained to determine redox potential, organic matter content and contaminant levels (heavy metals and organic compounds). The redox potential was measured, on board, by means of an Orion 977800 platinum electrode which was connected to a Crison 501 pH-meter-milivoltimeter.

A 200 g sediment sample was dried at 80°C for 24 h, then it was washed with freshwater on a mesh of 63 μm. The dried residue was sieved on a column of eight sieves (size 31 μm to 4 mm). The percentages of gravel, sand and mud were calculated as: >2 mm fraction, 63 μm – 2 mm and <63 μm, respectively (Holme and McIntyre, 1971).

The organic matter content was calculated by the loss on ignition method: drying at 105°C, 24 h; then combusting at 520°C, 6 h (Kristensen and Anderson, 1993).

Metal concentrations (As, Cd, Cu, Cr, Hg, Ni, Pb and Zn) were analysed on the <63 μm fraction. Extraction was made first with nitric acid, during 15 h, at ambient temperature; and second, with nitric and hydrochloric acids (1:3 in volume), using a microwave oven (130 W, 4 min; 0 W, 1.5 min; 250 W, 5 min; 0 W, 2 min; 400 W, 4 min). Detection was made by atomic absorption, using flame, graphite furnace and cold vapour techniques. The analytical procedure was checked with reference material (BCR marine sediment-harbour PACS-1); differences with this material were lower than 10%.

For PCB (eight congeners), DDT and HCH determination a portion of the original sample was desiccated with anhydrous sodium sulphate and extraction was made with iso-octane, after conditioning and clean-up of the extract the analysis was made with an HP-5890 gas chromatograph. On the other hand, for PAH (10 compounds) determination, the extraction was made with ether, and the analysis was made by means of HPLC.

Water quality data

The mean bottom oxygen concentration was measured with a CTD Sea-Bird 25, or with a portable YSI-55 oxymeter. Salinity was measured with the same CTD, or with a Kahlsico SR10 induction salinometer.

Biological data

The identification was undertaken in the laboratory by means of a binocular microscope (4–40×). After computing the mean abundance of each taxon, at each sampling station, the macrobenthic community structure was described calculating the following descriptors (Washington, 1984): richness (number of identified taxa); abundance (N: ind m^{-2}); numerical diversity (Shannon Wiener H'_n: bits ind^{-1}); biomass (Dry Weight, B: g m^{-2}); and biomass diversity (Shannon Wiener H'_b: bits g^{-1}).

BI model

The model here developed is based on that first used by Glémarec and Hily (1981) and then by Hily (1984), which utilizes soft-bottom benthos to construct a BI.

Soft-bottom macrobenthic communities respond to environmental stress (i.e. the introduction of organic matter in the system) by means of different adaptive strategies. Gray (1979) summarizes these strategies into three ecological groups: *r* (*r*-selected: species with short life-span, fast growth, early sexual maturation and larvae throughout the year); *k* (*k*-selected: species with relatively long life, slow growth and high biomass); and *T* (stress tolerant: species not affected by alterations).

Salen-Picard (1983) has proposed four progressive steps relating to stressed environments: (i) initial state (in an unpolluted situation, there is a rich biocenosis in individuals and species, with exclusive species and high diversity); (ii) slight unbalance (regression of exclusive species, proliferation of tolerant species, the appearance of pioneering species, decrease of diversity); (iii) pronounced unbalance (population dominated by pollution indicators, very low diversity); and (iv) azoic substrata.

Following these four steps, Hily (1984) and Glémarec (1986) have stated that the soft-bottom macrofauna could be ordered in five groups, according to their sensitivity to an increasing stress gradient (i.e. increasing organic matter enrichment). Their concept is similar to that developed for the Infaunal Index for Southern California, described by Mearns and Word (1982) and Ferraro *et al.* (1991). These groups have been summarized by Grall and Glémarec (1997), as outlined below.

Group I. Species very sensitive to organic enrichment and present under unpolluted conditions (initial state). They include the specialist carnivores and some deposit-feeding tubicolous polychaetes.

Group II. Species indifferent to enrichment, always present in low densities with non-significant variations with time (from initial state, to slight unbalance). These include suspension feeders, less selective carnivores and scavengers.

Group III. Species tolerant to excess organic matter enrichment. These species may occur under normal conditions, but their populations are stimulated by

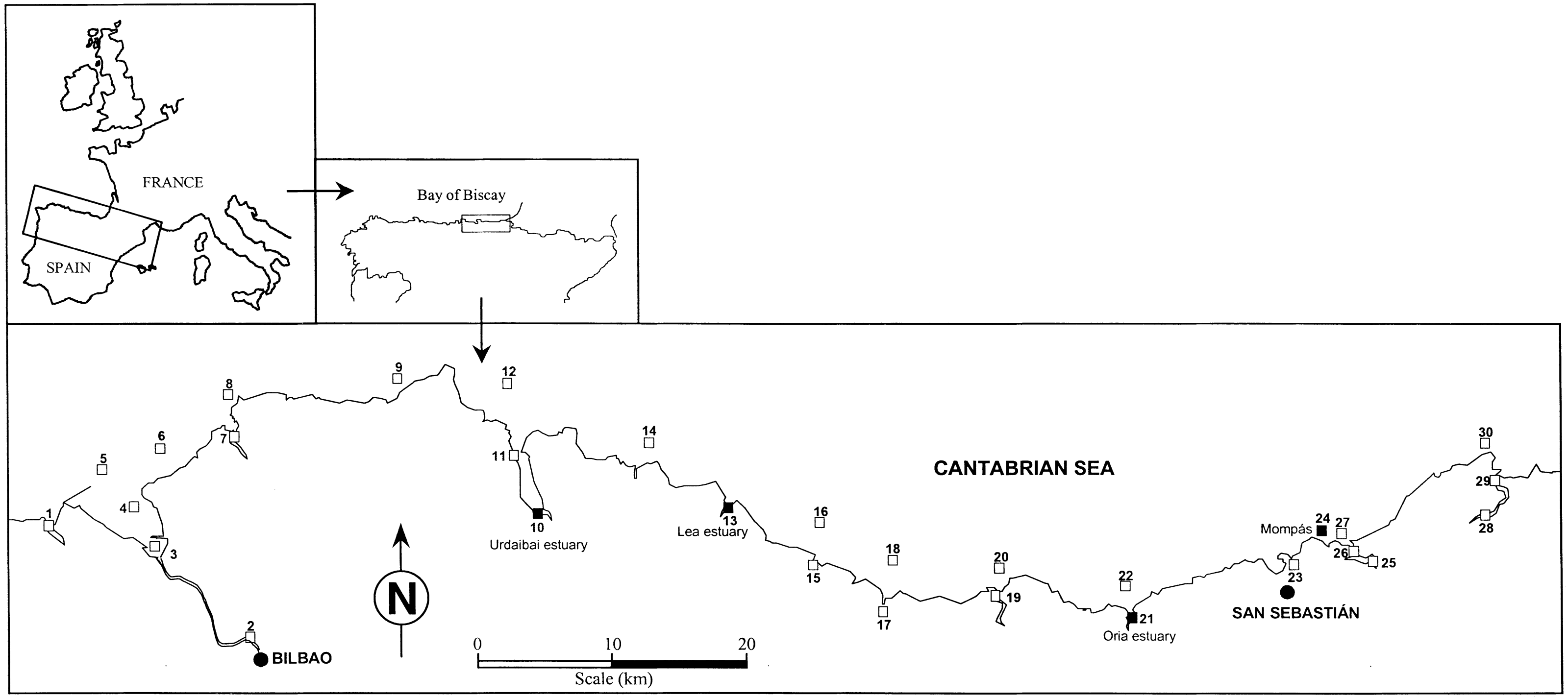

Fig. 1 Position of the 30 stations monitored along the Basque coastline (North of Spain), from 1995 to 1998. The stations used to validate the model are shown in black.

organic richment (slight unbalance situations). They are surface deposit-feeding species, as tubicolous spionids.

Group IV. Second-order opportunistic species (slight to pronounced unbalanced situations). Mainly small sized polychaetes: subsurface deposit-feeders, such as cirratulids.

Group V. First-order opportunistic species (pronounced unbalanced situations). These are deposit-feeders, which proliferate in reduced sediments.

The distribution of these ecological groups, according to their sensitivity to pollution stress, provides a BI with eight levels, from 0 to 7 (Hily, 1984; Hily *et al*., 1986; Majeed, 1987).

In the aforementioned monitoring network of sampling stations, together with other studies developed by AZTI along the Basque coastline within the last five years (Borja *et al*., 1995, 1999a,b), more than 900 taxa have been identified. These species are representative of the most important soft-bottom communities present at European estuarine and coastal systems. The taxa have been classified (list in Appendix A) according to the above ecological groups, following Majeed (1987), Dauer (1993), Weisberg *et al*. (1997), Grall and Glémarec (1997) and Roberts *et al*. (1998). Only about

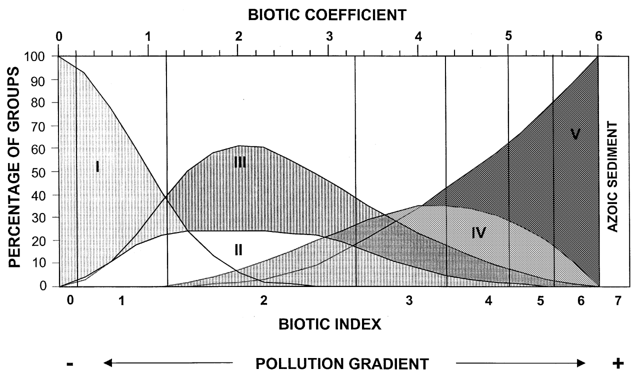

Fig. 2 Theoretical model, modified from Hily (1984), Hily *et al*. (1986) and Majeed (1987), which provides the ordination of soft-bottom macrofauna species into five ecological groups (Group I: species very sensitive; Group II: species indifferent; Group III: species tolerant; Group IV: second-order opportunistic species; Group V: first-order opportunistic species), according to their sensitivity to an increasing pollution gradient. The relative proportion of abundance of each group in a sample provides a discreet BI with eight levels (0–7) and an equivalent continuous BC (values between 0 and 6).

12% of the taxa have not been possible to be assigned to an ecological group.

Based upon Hily's model (Hily, 1984; Hily *et al*., 1986; Majeed, 1987), Fig. 2 shows the theoretical distribution of relative abundance of each ecological group, along a pollution gradient.

A possible limitation in the utilisation of the model of Hily is that each BI has a discreet value and its calculation is not systematized. In order to improve the index, a single formula is proposed here. This is based upon the percentages of abundance of each ecological group, within each sample, to obtain a continuous index (the Biotic Coefficient (BC)), where

$$\text{Biotic Coefficient} = \{(0 \times \%\,\text{GI}) + (1.5 \times \%\,\text{GII}) + (3 \times \%\,\text{GIII}) + (4.5 \times \%\,\text{GIV}) + (6 \times \%\,\text{GV})\}/100.$$

The above-mentioned ecological groups (GI, GII, GIII, GIV and GV) are summarized in Table 1. Species not assigned to a group were not taken into account. These species represent only a mean abundance of 1.4%, for the total number of samples.

In this way, use of the BC can derive a series of continuous values, from 0 to 6, being 7 when the sediment is azoic. Nonetheless, the BC can be compared to the Grall and Glémarec (1997) BI, as adapted in this paper (Table 1). The result obtained is a 'pollution classification' of a site which is a function of the BC. Consequently, this represents the benthic community 'health', represented by the entire numbers of the BI.

Results

The mean and standard error values of grain size and physical characteristic associated with each of the sampling stations (17 estuarine and 13 littoral) are listed in Table 2. The water depth range is very large at each of the stations (under Mean High Water Neap to 24 m in the estuaries and 30–35 m associated with the littoral samples). Mean salinity, at bottom water, ranges from 16.2 to 35.3 in estuaries, but is restricted within the coastal areas (35.3–35.5).

The range in the percentage of oxygen saturation is very high within the estuaries (43–119%), but ranges in the littoral stations from 92% to 97%. The organic

TABLE 1
Summary of the BC and BI (modified from Grall and Glémarec, 1997).

Site pollution classification	Biotic Coefficient	Biotic index	Dominating ecological group	Benthic community health
Unpolluted	$0.0 < BC \leq 0.2$	0	I	Normal
Unpolluted	$0.2 < BC \leq 1.2$	1		Impoverished
Slightly polluted	$1.2 < BC \leq 3.3$	2	III	Unbalanced
Meanly polluted	$3.3 < BC \leq 4.3$	3		Transitional to pollution
Meanly polluted	$4.5 < BC \leq 5.0$	4	IV–V	Polluted
Heavily polluted	$5.0 < BC \leq 5.5$	5		Transitional to heavy pollution
Heavily polluted	$5.5 < BC \leq 6.0$	6	V	Heavy polluted
Extremely polluted	Azoic	7	Azoic	Azoic

TABLE 2

Physico-chemical characterisation of sampling stations, showing mean and standard error (SE) values of some sedimentological and water parameters.[a]

Station number	Station type	Depth (m)	Salinity	Dissolved oxygen (ml l^{-1})	% Oxygen saturation	% Sand	% Mud	% Organic matter	Redox potential (mV)
		Mean	Mean ± SE	Mean ± SE	Mean ± SE	Mean ± SE	Mean ± SE	Mean ± SE	Mean ± SE
1	E	I	23.5 ± 2.3	6.1 ± 0.2	101 ± 3.8	95.1 ± 3.8	4.6 ± 4.0	5.2 ± 0.2	296 ± 41.7
2	E	3	16.2 ± 2.0	3.1 ± 0.5	43 ± 6.0	38.5 ± 6.3	47.7 ± 6.2	8.7 ± 1.0	−101 ± 38.2
3	E	14	35.1 ± 0.1	5.0 ± 0.1	87 ± 1.7	19.6 ± 2.1	80.1 ± 2.1	13.0 ± 0.3	−53 ± 37.7
4	E	24	35.3 ± 0.1	5.4 ± 0.1	94 ± 1.3	80.7 ± 4.6	18.3 ± 4.8	6.0 ± 0.4	153 ± 45.2
5	L	34	35.3 ± 0.1	5.6 ± 0.1	96 ± 1.7	96.3 ± 0.8	3.3 ± 0.9	3.9 ± 0.3	248 ± 45.5
6	L	32	35.3 ± 0.1	5.5 ± 0.1	95 ± 1.7	94.8 ± 3.2	0.4 ± 0.2	6.8 ± 1.7	405 ± 18.2
7	E	I	29.5 ± 1.6	6.1 ± 0.2	105 ± 3.3	85.3 ± 2.4	0.5 ± 0.2	2.3 ± 0.1	388 ± 18.7
8	L	34	35.4 ± 0.0	5.5 ± 0.1	95 ± 1.5	81.5 ± 6.7	0.7 ± 0.5	3.8 ± 0.8	389 ± 7.2
9	L	33	35.4 ± 0.0	5.5 ± 0.1	96 ± 2.0	98.4 ± 0.2	1.1 ± 0.2	3.4 ± 0.4	322 ± 26.9
10	E	I	25.7 ± 2.5	6.1 ± 0.2	102 ± 3.3	27.4 ± 2.9	64.8 ± 4.2	7.7 ± 0.4	25 ± 20.2
11	E	I	34.8 ± 0.1	6.6 ± 0.2	119 ± 3.3	97.6 ± 1.3	0.3 ± 0.3	3.4 ± 0.5	410 ± 45.0
12	L	31	35.5 ± 0.0	5.6 ± 0.1	97 ± 1.8	95.6 ± 0.8	3.6 ± 0.8	3.6 ± 0.7	268 ± 43.8
13	E	I	26.3 ± 3.0	6.5 ± 0.2	111 ± 3.1	82.4 ± 4.8	12.5 ± 3.9	4.6 ± 0.7	167 ± 50.4
14	L	34	35.5 ± 0.0	5.6 ± 0.1	96 ± 2.0	93.8 ± 2.3	5.4 ± 2.3	3.7 ± 0.3	299 ± 34.5
15	E	I	28.9 ± 1.6	5.0 ± 0.3	87 ± 3.9	38.6 ± 3.1	16.7 ± 2.6	6.1 ± 0.5	0 ± 32.3
16	L	34	35.4 ± 0.1	5.3 ± 0.3	94 ± 3.4	94.3 ± 3.5	0.1 ± 0.1	3.7 ± 0.6	336 ± 11.5
17	E	I	17.5 ± 2.7	5.9 ± 0.2	89 ± 3.7	55.8 ± 5.8	40.3 ± 6.8	6.7 ± 0.6	63 ± 48.9
18	L	32	35.4 ± 0.1	5.4 ± 0.1	94 ± 1.8	95.1 ± 1.0	3.3 ± 1.0	4.2 ± 0.1	264 ± 37.2
19	E	I	23.3 ± 2.2	5.8 ± 0.2	96 ± 2.9	40.1 ± 5.2	51.3 ± 5.6	9.0 ± 0.7	24 ± 21.3
20	L	32	35.4 ± 0.0	5.3 ± 0.1	93 ± 2.0	84.8 ± 6.5	8.7 ± 6.7	5.5 ± 1.2	286 ± 39.0
21	E	I	21.1 ± 2.2	6.0 ± 0.2	97 ± 3.0	85.3 ± 5.0	7.4 ± 4.8	4.0 ± 0.6	313 ± 38.0
22	L	32	35.4 ± 0.1	5.4 ± 0.1	95 ± 2.0	86.2 ± 2.9	11.0 ± 2.7	3.8 ± 0.2	83 ± 18.1
23	E	I	21.1 ± 3.1	5.7 ± 0.3	92 ± 5.2	84.2 ± 5.8	5.4 ± 4.1	4.2 ± 1.3	210 ± 49.3
24	L	34	35.4 ± 0.0	5.5 ± 0.1	95 ± 2.3	81.6 ± 4.2	17.3 ± 4.3	5.0 ± 0.6	−84 ± 45.4
25	E	9	34.0 ± 0.2	3.2 ± 0.3	55 ± 4.9	36.7 ± 7.6	59.9 ± 8.8	28.2 ± 2.8	−185 ± 8.0
26	E	8	33.3 ± 0.4	5.0 ± 0.2	88 ± 3.7	46.8 ± 6.7	36.0 ± 7.6	9.4 ± 1.0	−71 ± 21.9
27	L	32	35.4 ± 0.0	5.3 ± 0.1	92 ± 2.2	89.1 ± 4.7	3.4 ± 2.2	3.4 ± 0.5	240 ± 53.0
28	E	I	19.3 ± 2.3	5.2 ± 0.3	83 ± 4.4	80.8 ± 5.0	13.7 ± 5.2	5.0 ± 1.0	102 ± 35.1
29	E	I	26.2 ± 1.6	5.6 ± 0.2	91 ± 4.6	91.9 ± 2.2	0.7 ± 0.3	2.7 ± 0.1	285 ± 32.0
30	L	33	35.3 ± 0.1	5.5 ± 0.1	97 ± 2.1	89.0 ± 5.7	6.4 ± 5.5	5.8 ± 1.8	232 ± 61.4

[a] E: estuarine site; L: littoral site; I: intertidal site.

matter content in the sediments is higher in the estuaries (2.3–28.2%) than in littoral zone (3.4–6.8%). This corresponds to a higher range of the mud content within the sediments (0.3–80.1% and 0.1–17.3%, respectively). The redox potential ranges from −185 to 410 mV within the estuaries, and from −84 to 405 mV within the littoral samples.

From 30 stations, some 114 samples of benthos have been obtained over a 4 year period. These samples correspond to different environments (estuarine, littoral, intertidal, subtidal) and physico-chemical characteristics (reduced and oxidized sediments, hypoxia and oversaturation in the bottom waters, poor organic matter proportion and enrichment, etc.).

After the application of the BC, considering its correspondence with the BI (Table 1), the results were: 2 samples with a BI = 0; 23 samples of BI = 1; 48 samples of BI = 2; 15 samples of BI = 3; 7 samples of BI = 4; 6 samples of BI = 5; 6 samples of BI = 6; and 7 samples of BI = 7.

Fig. 3 shows the results obtained by comparing different biological parameters, on samples having the same biotic indices. The BI = 7 is equivalent to an azoic site, so all the biological parameters are equal to 0 in these particular samples.

The mean abundance increases from 36.7 ind m^{-2} (BI = 0) to 2 559 ind m^{-2} (BI = 6), with the exception of BI = 5, with a value of 456 ind m^{-2} (Fig. 3(a)). Within the lowest of the Biotic Indices (0, 1 and 2), the standard error of the mean is very small; it is progressively larger in the highest.

Statistical analyses were made considering the BC because, as this coefficient can derive continuous values, it is more suitable for this purpose than the BI. Taking into account all the samples analysed, the non-parametric Spearman rank correlation between the abundance and the BC is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$).

On the other hand, biomass (Fig. 3(b)) increases from 0.1 g m^{-2} (BI = 0) to 14.3 g m^{-2} (BI = 4). However for Biotic Indices 5 and 6, dominated by small opportunistic species, the biomass is lower than 4 g m^{-2}. There is no a statistically significant correlation between biomass and BC (Spearman rank correlation).

Fig. 3(c) shows the mean richness of the samples. Except in the case of BI = 0, with a mean richness of 2, in the other biotic indices the richness decreases progressively from 26 to 27 species (BI = 1 and 2) to 0 species (BI = 7). Richness and BC are highly correlated ($p < 0.001$, Spearman rank correlation).

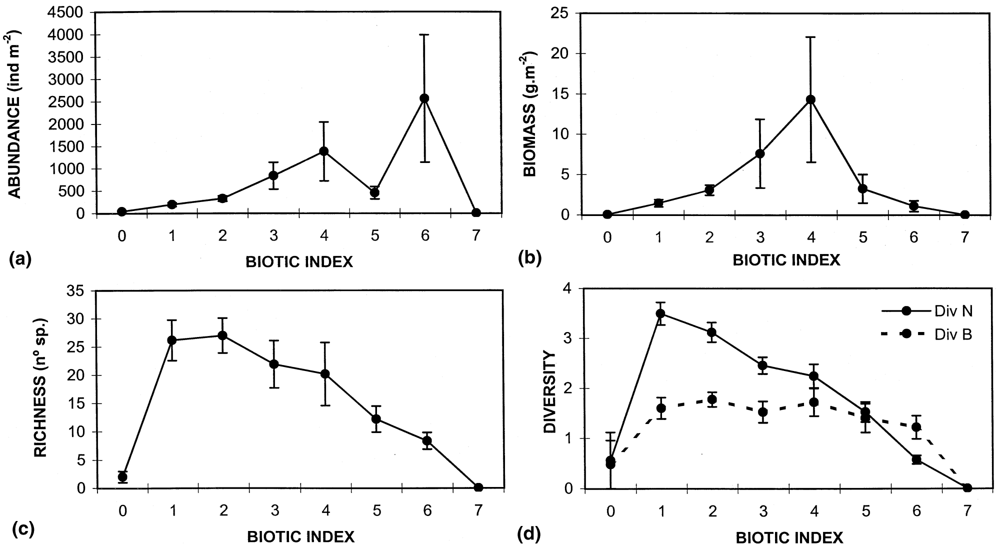

Fig. 3 Mean and standard error values of different biological parameters obtained on samples having the same biotic indices. (a) abundance; (b) biomass; (c) richness; and (d) diversity (derived from number of individuals *N* and biomass *B*).

Numerical diversity (Fig. 3(d)) shows a similar pattern to that of richness. There is a progressive decrease in the mean values, from 3.5 bits ind^{-1} (BI = 1) to 0 bits ind^{-1} (BI = 7), with the exception of BI = 0 which is associated with a low value (0.6 bits ind^{-1}). Biomass diversity has values of about 1.6 bits g^{-1}, between BI = 1 to 4; then, it decreases to 0 (BI = 7). Both variables are correlated with BC ($p < 0.001$ and $p < 0.05$ for numerical and biomass diversities, respectively), using Spearman rank correlation.

The relationships between some of the sedimentological and water quality parameters and biotic indices are shown in Fig. 4. BI = 0 is associated with the highest mean redox potential (Fig. 4(a): 360 mV). This parameter becomes progressively lower, with BI = 7 having a mean potential which is very reduced (–125 mV). Samples with low biotic indices (0 and 1) are associated with less than 2% of mud (Fig. 4(b)) and the values increase to 63% (BI = 7). Some anomalies were detected in BI = 5 and 6, which present 10–20% of mud. The organic matter content has a similar pattern of distribution to that of granulometry (Fig. 4(c)). Data on the mean bottom dissolved oxygen content are presented in Fig. 4(d). The highest value corresponds to BI = 0

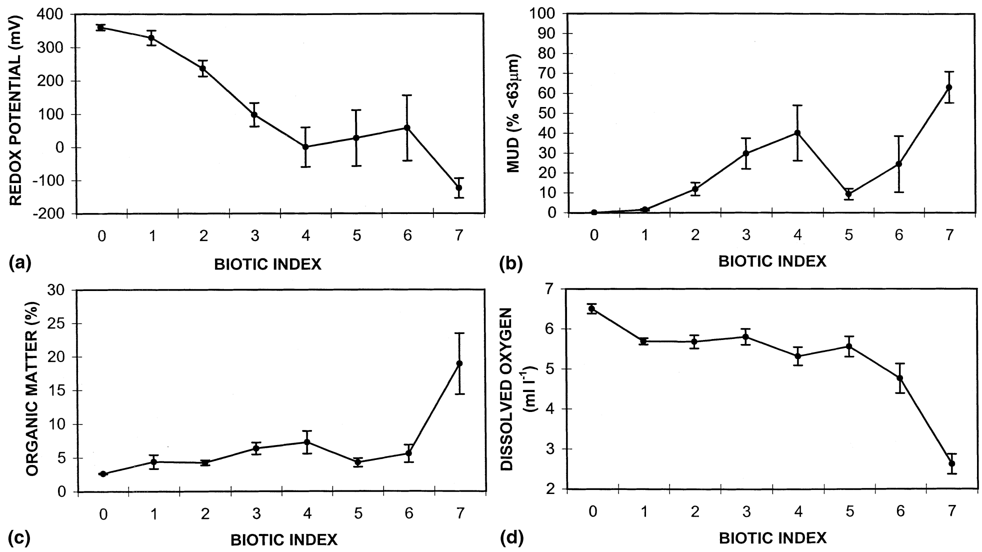

Fig. 4 Mean and standard error values of different sedimentological and water quality parameters obtained on samples having the same biotic indices. (a) redox potential; (b) percentage of mud; (c) organic matter content; and (d) bottom dissolved oxygen content.

(6.5 ml l^{-1}), decreasing to 2.6 ml l^{-1} at BI = 7. The Spearman rank correlations between these variables and BC are highly significant ($p < 0.001$).

The mean concentrations relating to some of the heavy metals in the sediments associated to each BI are shown in Fig. 5. Arsenic and mercury contents do not reveal any clear pattern of distribution with the BI. Other metals present increasing concentrations from BI = 0 to BI = 7, with the exception of some specific peaks (BI = 3, for chromium and nickel; and BI = 6, for lead and copper) and troughs (BI = 4 and 5, for cadmium, nickel and zinc). Except arsenic and mercury all the metals are positively correlated with BC ($p < 0.01$, Spearman rank correlations).

On the other hand, the organic compounds (Fig. 6) do not show a similar pattern to that of the metals. Only PCB increase in their concentrations from BI = 0 to BI = 7; however the differences are very small. PAH is at their smallest concentrations in BI = 5 and 6. The only significant correlation is found between BC and PCB ($p < 0.05$, Spearman rank correlation).

Comparing the percentage of samples of each BI that goes beyond the ER-L (or Effects Range-Low, representing concentrations below which adverse effects to fauna are expected to occur rarely (Long *et al.*, 1995)), the data presented in Fig. 7 shows that BI = 0 does not include samples that surpass these limits for metals and organic compounds. Normally, the other biotic indices

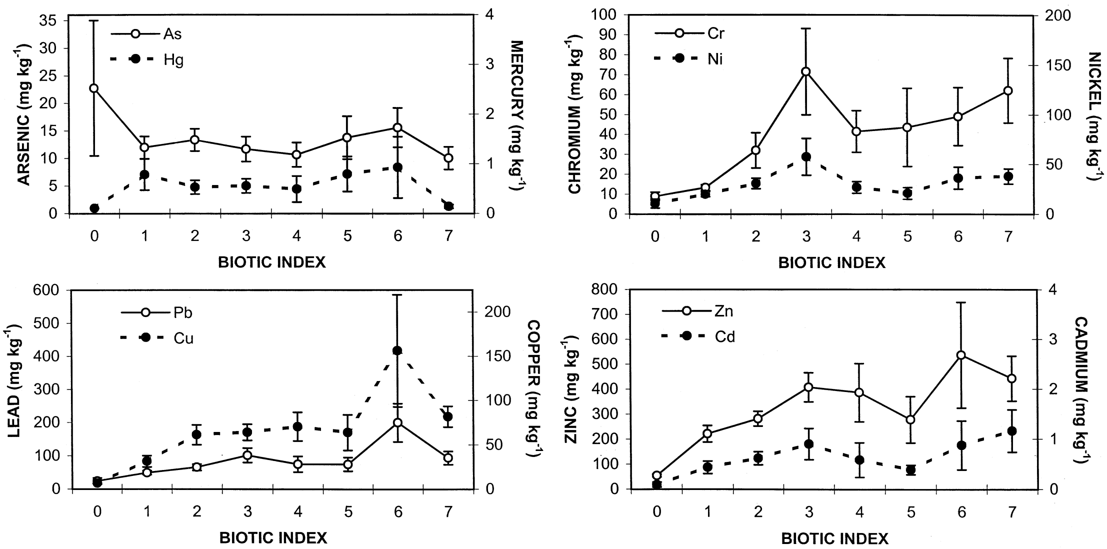

Fig. 5 Mean and standard error values of eight heavy metal contents in sediments obtained on samples having the same biotic indices.

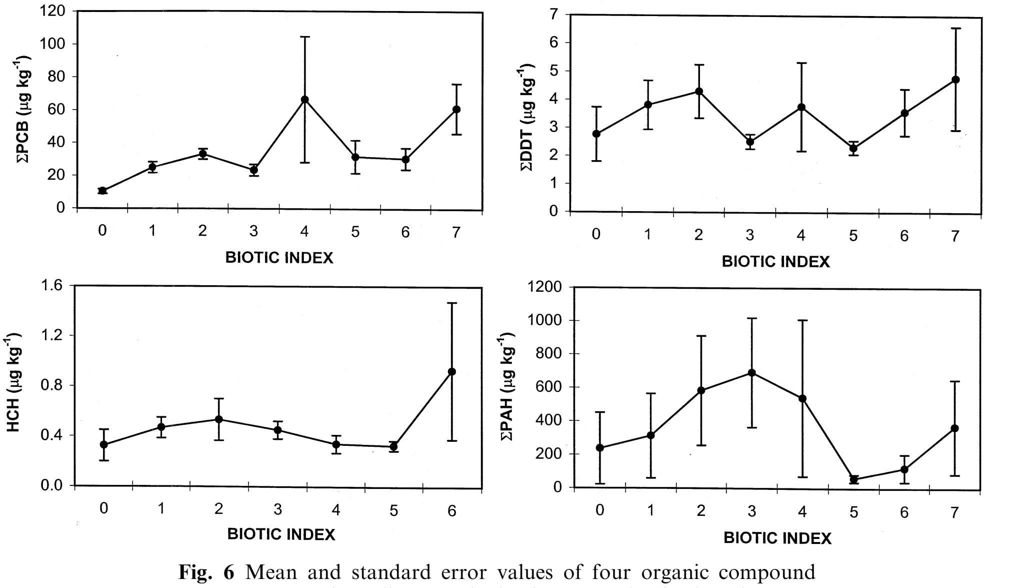

Fig. 6 Mean and standard error values of four organic compound contents in sediments obtained on samples having the same biotic indices.

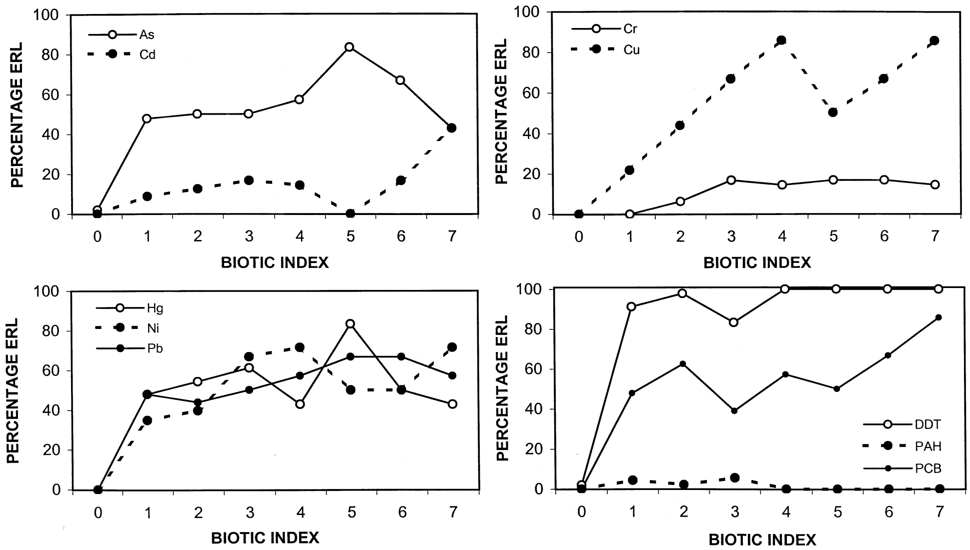

Fig. 7 Percentage of samples of each biotic index that goes beyond the ER-L (or Effects Range-Low, representing concentrations below which adverse effects are expected to occur rarely), for seven heavy metals and three organic compounds.

increase progressively in the percentage of samples surpassing these limits (see data presented for arsenic, mercury, nickel, lead, copper, chromium, PCB and DDT).

Discussion

Many of the biotic indices developed in the literature (Clements *et al.*, 1992; Mouthon, 1993; Stark, 1993; Grall and Glémarec, 1997; Roberts *et al.*, 1998, etc.) have been based on the paradigm of Pearson and Rosenberg (1978), as stated by Weisberg *et al.* (1997) in developing their own index. The paradigm states that benthic communities respond to improvements in habitat quality in three progressive steps: the abundance increases; species diversity increases; and dominant species change from pollution-tolerant to pollution-sensitive species.

This generally accepted paradigm has been adapted from Grall and Glémarec (1997) in this contribution, in order to obtain an European BI. This should be able to distinguish easily estuaries and coastal reference sites from polluted sites, with different levels of anthropogenic or natural degradation.

The index derived provides a semi-quantitative measurement of the degree of impact on soft-bottom macrofauna, which is reflected by changes in the qualitative and quantitative community composition.

As the BI has been established on the basis of analysis of samples obtained from a monitoring network, with a prevalence of polluted sites, there are only two unpolluted samples (BI = 0) which correspond to a 'normal' community (*sensu* Grall and Glémarec, 1997). The diversity results do not correspond to those expected from the aforementioned paradigm, because the richness is very low. Conversely, samples with BI = 1 (also unpolluted in the present proposal, corresponding to an impoverished community) or higher, BI = 2–6 (corresponding to slightly to heavily polluted sites) have well-defined values of biological parameters; this is as might be expected from the results of Pearson and Rosenberg (1978).

Some biotic indices, or Coefficients of Pollution (i.e. Bogdanos and Satsmadjis, 1985) do not appear to be suitable for application in some cases. This is due to the lack of sensitivity of these indices to intermediate pollution levels (MAFF, 1993), corresponding with slightly polluted areas. Hily (1984) and Grall and Glémarec (1997) have described similar difficulties.

The above limitation appears to be due to a general under-estimation of the faunal abundance in comparison with unpolluted areas. This is because faunal abundance will increase under slight to moderate pollution, but numbers of species can either stay constant or show only a slight increase. In the present proposal, this problem appears to be eliminated because the approach has a high sensitivity at these levels, with well-defined values in the biological parameters.

Organic enrichment and muddy bottoms, associated with subsequent low redox potential and hypoxia, are related with opportunistic species (Majeed, 1987) in 'heavily polluted' levels, according to the BI (BI = 5–7). Diaz and Rosenberg (1995) have suggested that benthic infaunal mortality could be initiated when the oxygen concentration falls below 2 ml l^{-1}. Ritter and Montagna (1999) have recently proposed that 3 mg l^{-1} (= 2.14 ml l^{-1}) defines the breakpoint between normoxic and hypoxic benthic communities. The mean oxygen concentration obtained for BI = 7 indicates that life could be very limited in those sites. However, within BI = 6, there are some situations of very low oxygen concentration which explain the presence of species which are resistant to severe or moderate hypoxia. These species are classified within ecological Groups IV and V.

Samples with BI = 6 and 7 are associated with sites that experience periodic hypoxia, consisting of repeated brief periods (days or weeks, in the case of BI = 6) or seasonal hypoxia (months, in the case of BI = 7), that generate mass mortality or complete elimination of the macrofauna. Some of the samples with BI = 7 are located within the Bilbao estuary, for which Sáiz-Salinas (1997) and González-Oreja and Sáiz-Salinas (1998) have demonstrated that the oxygen limitation represents the key factor in the estuarine defaunation of sampling stations within the estuary.

Physico-chemical results related to the BI (see Fig. 4) have some unexpected results at the level of BI = 5 and 6. The trend of increasing percentages of mud and organic matter, together with decreasing redox potential, break-down at these particular levels. BI = 5 and 6 correspond to high percentages of ecological Group V (with a mean of 77.5% of species in BI = 5, together with 92.7% in BI = 6). These species are mainly deposit-feeders. As such, they could modify the proportion of organic matter in the sediments on which they feed and, subsequently, modify the grain size composition of the sediments. The optimal grain size may be different for the settling larvae, juveniles and adults of a variety of deposit-feeders (Snelgrove and Butman, 1994), changing their physico-chemical properties. For example, Hall (1994) has stated that faecal pellets of benthic invertebrates modify the grain size of the surficial sediments.

In spite of the fact that hypoxia seems to control the presence of the groupings with BI = 7 and that organic matter content is very important in ascribing samples to the BI, ecotoxicological effects appear to play only a secondary role in the analyses; however it may have had an effect in the longer time, as cited by Sáiz-Salinas (1997) for the Bilbao Estuary.

In order to validate the derived BI, for more general application, four stations from the 30 stations sampled have been selected for more detailed analysis. The evolution of the percentage of ecological grouping, the BI and the BC, derived for between 1995 and 1998, at these stations is shown in Fig. 8.

Within the Urdaibai estuary (Figs. 1 and 8(a)) the results obtained from a single station, in the inner part of the estuary, shows a dominance of ecological Group III. This is characteristic of estuarine communities located at sites with organic matter inputs. The derived BI shows that, in 1995 and 1996, the site is slightly polluted (BI = 2) due mainly to the aforementioned organic matter enrichment. In 1997 and 1998, the BI increases progressively (BI = 3 and 4); as such classifying this station as 'meanly polluted'. Such a trend is caused by the increasing dominance of ecological Group V, which indicates the presence of opportunistic species. On the other hand, the BC increases gradually with time, which indicates a rising contamination in this site during the last years.

The increase in the BI could be the result of dredging activities undertaken along this particular estuary, within the last few years. At the same time, there are changes in the sediment composition, the abundance of suspended matter, etc. These provide the basis for an increase in the opportunistic species at this particular location.

In February 1995, the station in the Oria estuary (Figs. 1 and 8(b)), was located some 500 m landward of the mouth. Group I was dominant and the BI (2) provides a classification of the site as 'slightly polluted'. In 1995 and 1996, some channelling works were under-

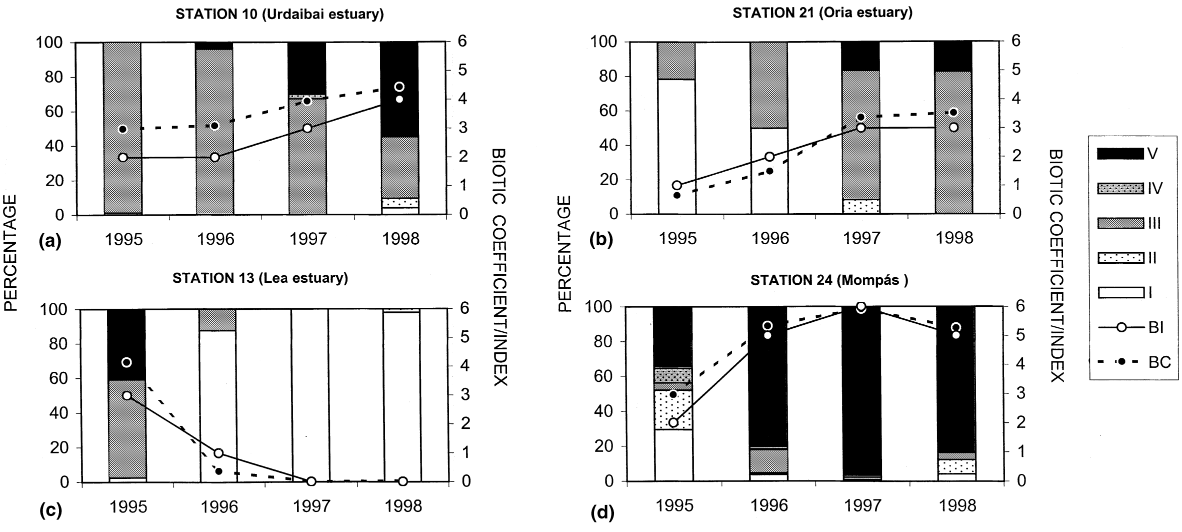

Fig. 8 Evolution of the percentage of ecological groups (I–V), the BI and the BC, derived for between 1995 and 1998, for the stations showed in Fig. 1: Station 10; Station 21; Station 13; and Station 24.

taken in this estuary, extending the mouth of the estuary some 500 m offshore. This development has led to an increase in the distance from the mouth of the estuary to the sampling station, with a subsequent change in the physico-chemical conditions (Borja *et al.*, 1999a). This change resulted in an increase in the mud and organic matter content, together with a decrease in dissolved oxygen. This change in the physical setting provides an explanation for the increase in the dominance of ecological Groups III and V (more characteristic at the inner part of the estuary), modifying the BI to 'meanly polluted' (3). The BC increased during this period, from 1.4 to 3.5.

The Lea is a small estuary within the Basque Country (Figs. 1 and 8(c)) which, in the past 4 years, has been subjected to a sewerage plan, eliminating urban and industrial effluent discharges into the estuarine waters. The estuary was dominated by the opportunistic Group V in 1995, with a BI of 3 (meanly polluted). Following the introduction of the sewerage scheme, the ecological Group I, composed of species that are sensitive to pollution, increased in its dominance. This represented, in 1997 and 1998, nearly 100% of the community. Throughout these two last years, the BI is 0. The BC decreases from 4.2 in 1995 to 0.4 in 1996 and near 0 in 1997 and 1998. So, in the last two years this station can be classified as an unpolluted site.

Finally, within the coastal area of Mompás, near San Sebastián (Figs. 1 and 8(d)), there is an important change in the ecological group composition between 1995 and 1996. At the beginning of this period, there is a co-dominance of Groups V, I and II. However, there is a clear dominance of Group V from 1996 to 1998. At the same time, the BI changes from 2 (slightly polluted) to 5–6 (heavily polluted). The BC, which was 3.0 in 1995, increased to values between 5.3 and 5.9 during the last three years. This particular coastal area has received large amounts of domestic and industrial waste from the San Sebastián area since the 1970s. Further, in 1995 and 1996, some sewerage works were constructed and an important volume of urban and industrial polluted waters, derived from nearby areas such as Pasajes or Tximistarri, were diverted to Mompás. The waste includes contaminants (heavy metals and organic compounds) and a high amount of organic matter originating from the paper manufacturers (Franco *et al.*, 1999).

Conclusions

The BC, proposed here as a BI to establish the ecological quality of the soft-bottom benthos within the European coastal environments, takes into account the faunal composition. As such, it ascribes each species to an ecological grouping, according to their sensitivity to an increasing stress gradient.

The different composition, in terms of the abundance of the various ecological groups in these samples provides a continuous BC (with values between 0 and 6). This is referenced to a BI, representing quality of bottom conditions in a discreet range from 0 (unpolluted) to 7 (extremely polluted). This composition is governed by the physico-chemical factors within the sediments and the overlying water column in terms of: organic matter content; percentage of mud within the sediments; dissolved oxygen content within the bottom waters; and the concentration of pollutants.

Biological parameters (such abundance, richness, biomass or diversity) provide a useful (and more broadly applicable) description of each level of the BI. It is considered (as described by Dauer, 1993) that biological criteria may complement toxicity and chemical assessment methods, to serve as independent evaluations of the ecological quality of marine and estuarine ecosystems.

Validation of the model developed shows that different anthropogenically changes in the environment can be detected through the use of the BI, including alterations to the natural system such as dredging, engineering works, sewerage plans and the dumping of polluted waters. On the other hand, the BC provides a more accurate view of the evolution of the ecological status of a particular location. Further, the fact that this particular coefficient can derive continuous values makes it more suitable for application to statistical analysis than the BI (i.e. temporal trend analysis).

The BI proposed here is relatively simple and can, meaningfully, be applied when attempting to determine the ecological status of European coastlines. Although this index has been developed in the Bay of Biscay, the methodology can be applied for other European coastal areas, only conditioned by the assignation of the species to the ecological groups described here. In fact, many of the species compiled in the Appendix A are present in North Sea and Mediterranean. So, the index may be improved with the contributions of newly assigned species from these seas and further examples of its more general application and validation.

Finally, this index facilitates the understanding of complex benthic data, summarizing a considerable amount of ecological information into a single representative value.

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Appendix A

See Table 3.

TABLE 3

List of species and taxa (in alphabetical order) that have been found in all the stations along the whole studied period (the assigned ecological groups (see text) are also shown).[a]

Species	Group	Species	Group	Species	Group	Species	Group	Species	Group
Abarenicola claparedi	I	*Angulus tenuis*	I	*Bela powisiana*	I	*Chone infundibuliformis*	II	*Diastylis rugosa*	I
Abarenicola sp.	I	*Anomia ephippium*	I	*Bela* sp.	I	*Chone* sp.	II	*Diastylis* sp.	I
Abissoninoe hibernica	II	*Anoplodactylus petiolatus*	N.A	*Bittium reticulatum*	I	*Chthamalus stellatus*	I	*Diastylis tumida*	I
Abra alba	III	*Anoplodactylus pygmaeus*	N.A	*Boccardia chilensis*	I	*Circe minima*	I	*Diodora apertura*	I
Abra nitida	III	*Antenella* sp.	I	*Boccardia polybranchia*	I	*Circulus striatus*	I	*Diogenes pugilator*	II
Abra prismatica	III	*Anthozoa* sp.	I	*Boccardia* sp.	I	*Cirratulus chrysoderma*	IV	*Diopatra neapolitana*	I
Abra sp.	III	*Anthura gracilis*	I	*Bodotria arenosa*	II	*Cirratulus cirratus*	IV	*Diplocirrus glaucus*	I
Abra tenuis	III	*Aonides oxycephala*	III	*Bodotria scorpioides*	II	*Cirriformia tentaculata*	IV	*Dispio uncinata*	III
Acanthocardia aculeata	I	*Aora gracilis*	I	*Brada villosa*	N.A	*Cirripedo* sp.	I	*Divaricella divaricata*	I
Acanthocardia echinata	I	*Aora typica*	I	*Branchiomma vesiculosum*	I	*Clausinella fasciata*	I	*Donax trunculus*	I
Acanthocardia paucicostata	I	*Aphelochatea multibranchiis*	N.A	*Branchiostoma lanceolata*	I	Clavidae	I	*Doris* sp.	I
Acanthocardia sp.	I	*Apherusa cirrus*	I	*Brania oculata*	II	*Clymene* cf. *praetermisa*	I	*Dosinia exoleta*	I
Acanthocardia tuberculata	I	*Apherusa ovalipes*	I	*Brania pusilla*	II	*Clymene lumbricoides*	I	*Dosinia juv. indet.*	I
Acanthochitona critinus	I	*Aphonupis grubei*	I	*Bugula* sp.	I	*Clymene modesta*	I	*Dosinia lupinus*	I
Acanthochitona fascicularis	I	*Aphrodite aculeata*	N.A	*Callianassa* sp.	III	*Clymene oerstedii*	I	*Dosinia* sp.	I
Achelia hispida	I	*Apicularia guerini*	I	*Callianassa subterranea*	III	*Clytia* sp.	I	*Drilonereis filum*	II
Achelia simplex	I	*Apistobranchus tullbergi*	I	*Callianassa truncata*	III	*Cnidaria* sp.	I	*Ebalia* sp.	N.A
Aclis gulsonae	N.A	*Aponuphis bilineata*	II	*Calliostoma papillosum*	I	*Cochlodesma praetenue*	N.A	*Ebalia tuberosa*	N.A
Acronida brachiata	I	*Aporrhais pespelecani*	I	*Calliostoma zizyphinum*	I	*Copepoda indet.*	N.A	*Echinocardium cordatum*	I
Acteon sp.	I	*Aporrhais* sp.	I	*Calyptraea sinensis*	I	*Copépodo* sp.	N.A	*Echinocyamus pusillus*	I
Actinia equina	I	*Apseudes latreillei*	III	*Campylaspis glabra*	N.A	*Corbula gibba*	III	*Echinoidea* sp.	I
Aglaophamus rubella	N.A	*Arcturella* sp.	N.A	*Capitella capitata*	V	*Corophium acherusicum*	III	*Echiuroidea* sp.	I
Aglaophamus sp.	N.A	*Arenicola marina*	N.A	*Capitella* sp.	V	*Corophium acutum*	III	*Echiurus echiurus*	I
Aiptasia mutabilis	N.A	*Aricia latreilli*	I	*Capitellides giardi*	V	*Corophium arenarium*	III	*Edwardsia* sp.	II
Alcyonacea indet	N.A	*Aricidea catherinae*	I	*Capitomastus minimus*	IV	*Corophium insidiosum*	III	*Ehlersia ferrugina*	N.A
Alkmaria romijni	III	*Aricidea cerruti*	I	*Caprella fretensis*	N.A	*Corophium multisetosum*	III	*Ensis* sp.	I
Alpheus glaber	N.A	*Aricidea* cf. *assimilis*	I	*Caprella linearis*	N.A	*Corophium* sp.	III	*Eocuma dimorpha*	II
Alvania crassa	I	*Aricidea fragilis*	I	*Caprella penantis*	N.A	*Corophium volutator*	III	*Eocuma dollfusi*	II
Alvania semistriata	I	*Aricidea jeffreysii*	I	*Carcinus maenas*	III	*Coryne pusilla*	I	*Epilepton clarkiae*	I
Alvania sp.	I	*Aricidea minuta*	I	*Caryophyllia smithi*	I	*Corystes cassivelaunus*	I	*Epithonium clathrus*	I
Amatea trilobata	I	*Aricidea* sp.	I	*Caulleriella alata*	III	*Cossura longocirrata*	N.A	*Epitonium turtoni*	I
Amathia pruvot	I	*Armandia cirrosa*	I	*Caulleriella bioculata*	III	*Cossura pygodactylata*	N.A	*Ericthonius brasilensis*	N.A
Ampelisca brevicornis	I	*Armandia* spp	I	*Caulleriella* sp.	III	*Cossura* sp.	N.A	*Eteone longa*	II
Ampelisca cf. *spooneri*	I	*Aspidosiphon muelleri*	I	*Caulleriella zetlandica*	III	*Crangon allmani*	I	*Eteone picta*	II
Ampelisca heterodactyla	I	*Astacilla longicornis*	I	*Cavernularia pusilla*	I	*Crangon crangon*	I	*Euclymede praetermissa*	I
Ampelisca juv. indet.	I	*Astarte* sp.	I	*Ceradocus semiserratus*	I	*Crassostrea angulata*	III	*Euclymene affinis*	I
Ampelisca sarsi	I	*Astarte sulcata*	I	*Cerastoderma edule*	III	*Crepidula fornicata*	III	*Euclymene oerstedii*	I
Ampelisca sp.	I	*Astarte triangularis*	I	*Cerastoderma lamarcki*	III	*Cucumaria elongata*	I	*Euclymene* sp.	I
Ampelisca spinifer	I	*Asterina gibosa*	I	*Ceratostoma erinaceum*	I	*Cucumaria* sp.	I	*Euclymenidae indet.*	I
Ampelisca spinimana	I	*Astropecten irregularis*	I	*Cerebratulus marginatus*	III	*Cultellus pellucidus*	I	*Eudorella truncatula*	N.A
Ampelisca tenuicornis	I	*Astropecten irregularis typicus*	I	*Cerebratulus* sp.	III	*Cumopsis fagei*	II	*Eulalia bilineata*	II
Ampelisca toulemonti	I	*Athanas nitescens*	I	*Cereus pedunculatus*	I	*Cumopsis* sp.	II	*Eulalia mustela*	II
Ampharete finmarchica	I	*Athecata* sp.	I	*Ceriantario* sp.	I	*Cyathura carinata*	III	*Eulalia sanguinea*	II
Ampharete grubei	I	*Atylus falcatus*	I	*Cerianthus lloydii*	I	*Cyclope neritea*	I	*Eulalia* sp.	II
Ampharete juv. indet.	I	*Atylus guttatus*	I	*Cerianthus membranaceus*	I	*Cylichna cylindracea*	I	*Eulalia tripunctata*	II
Ampharete lindstroemi	I	*Atylus* sp.	I	*Cerianthus* sp.	I	*Cylichna* sp.	I	*Eulalia viridis*	II
Ampharete sp.	I	*Atylus swammerdami*	I	*Cestopagurus timidus*	I	*Cylichnina subcylindrica*	I	*Eulimella acicuta*	I
Amphicteis gunneri	III	*Atylus vedlomensis*	I	*Chaetopterus variopedatus*	I	*Cymodoce truncata*	I	*Eulimella* sp.	I
Amphipholis squamata	I	*Audouinia tentaculata*	IV	*Chaetozone B* spp	IV	*Cythara attenuata*	I	*Eumida bahusiensis*	II
Amphitrite johnstoni	I	*Autolytus longeferiens*	N.A	*Chaetozone* cf. *gibber*	IV	*Cythara costata*	I	*Eumida sanguinea*	II
Amphiura brachiata	I	*Autolytus* sp.	N.A	*Chaetozone gibber*	IV	*Dardanus arrosor*	N.A	*Eumida* sp.	II

Amphiura chiajei	I	Axionice maculata	N.A	Chaetozone setosa	IV	Demonax sp.	N.A	Eunice harassii	II
Amphiura filiformis	I	Bachycuma brevicornis	N.A	Chaetozone sp.	IV	Demospongia sp.	I	Eunice sp.	II
Amphiura juv. indet.	I	Balcis alba	I	Chamelea gallina	I	Dentalium novemcostatum	I	Eunice vittata	II
Amphiura sp.	I	Barleeia rubra	II	Chamelea gallina striatula	I	Dentalium sp.	I	Euphrosyne foliosa	I
Anaitides lineata	II	Bathyporeia elegans	I	Chamelea striatula	I	Desdemona cf. ornata	II	Eurydice affinis	I
Anaitides maculata	II	Bathyporeia nana	I	Chauvetia brunnea	I	Desdemona ornata	II	Eurydice pulchra	I
Anaitides mucosa	II	Bathyporeia pelagica	I	Cheirocratus sundevallii	I	Devonia perrieri	I	Eurydice sp.	I
Anaitides sp.	II	Bathyporeia pilosa	I	Cheriocratus sp.	I	Diastylis bradyi	I	Eurydice spinigera	I
Anapagurus hyndmani	I	Bathyporeia sarsi	I	Chironomida	IV	Diastylis cf. tumida	I	Eurynome aspera	I
Anapagurus laevis	I	Bathyporeia sp.	I	Chlamys varia	I	Diastylis cornuta	I	Eurynome spinosa	I
Anapagurus sp.	I	Bathyporeia tenuipes	I	Chone collaris	II	Diastylis laevis	I	Eurysyllis tuberculata	II
Anguilla anguilla	II	Bela nebula	I	Chone filicaudata	II	Diastylis lucifera	I	Exogone naidina	II
Exogone sp.	II	Hesionura elongata	II	Leucothoe spinicarpa	I	Marphysa fallax	II	Nephtys cirrosa	II
Fabricia sabella	N.A	Heterocirrus bioculatus	IV	Levinsenia gracilis	N.A	Marphysa sanginea	II	Nephtys hombergi	II
Fabulina fabula	I	Heterocirrus spp	IV	Lilleborjia pallida	I	Marphysa sp.	II	Nephtys hystricis	II
Filograna implexa	N.A	Heteromastus filiformis	III	Liocarcinus arcuatus	I	Marphysa sp. (belli?)	II	Nephtys incisa	II
Galathea intermedia	I	Hexacorallia sp.	I	Liocarcinus arcuatus	I	Martastherias glacialis	I	Nephtys juv. spp	II
Galathea sp.	I	Hiatella artica	I	Liocarcinus depurator	I	Mediomastus fragilis	III	Nephtys kersivalensis	II
Galathea squamifera	I	Hinia incrassata	II	Liocarcinus holsatus	I	Megaluropus agilis	I	Nephtys paradoxa	II
Galathowenia oculata	I	Hinia juv. indet.	II	Liocarcinus marmoreus	I	Megamphopus cornutus	I	Nephtys sp.	II
Galeomna turtoni	I	Hinia pygmaea	II	Liocarcinus pusillus	I	Melinna cristata	III	Nephtys sp. juv.	II
Gammarella fucicola	III	Hinia reticulata	II	Liocarcinus sp.	I	Melinna palmata	III	Nephtys spp	II
Gammaridea	I	Hippolyte varians	I	Liocarcinus vernalis	I	Melinna sp.	III	Nereimyra punctata	III
Gammaropsis palmata	I	Hippomedon denticulatus	I	Liocarcinus zariquieyi	I	Melita gladiosa	I	Nereiphylla rubiginosa	N.A
Gammaropsis shophiae	I	Hyala vitrea	I	Listriella picta	I	Melita palmata	III	Nereis caudata	IV
Gammaropsis sp.	I	Hyale nilssoni	I	Loripes lucinalis	I	Merceriella enigmatica	II	Nereis cf. lamellosa	III
Gammarus insensibilis	I	Hyalinoecia bilineata	N.A	Lucinoma borealis	I	Metaphoxus fultoni	I	Nereis diversicolor	III
Gammarus sp.	I	Hyalinoecia fauveli	N.A	Lucinoma borealis	I	Metaphoxus pectinatus	I	Nereis longissima	III
Gari costulata	I	Hyalinoecia sp.	N.A	Lumbrinerides sp.	II	Metazoea de porcellanidae	N.A	Nereis sp.	III
Gari depressa	I	Hydrobia ulvae	III	Lumbrineriopsis paradoxa	II	Microdeutopus anomalus	I	Nothria geofiliformis	II
Gari fervensis	I	Hydroides norvegica	N.A	Lumbrineris cf. gracilis	II	Microdeutopus damnoniensis	I	Nothria lepta	II
Gari tellinella	I	Idotea linearis	N.A	Lumbrineris emandibulata	II	Microdeutopus sp.	I	Nothria sp.	II
Gariidae indet.	I	Idunella picta	N.A	Lumbrineris emandibulata mabiti	II	Microdeutopus stationis	I	Notirus irus	I
Gattyana cirrosa	N.A	Inachus dorsettensis	I	Lumbrineris gracilis	II	Microdeutopus versiculatus	I	Notocirrus sp.	N.A
Gibbula magus	I	Inachus sp. larva	I	Lumbrineris impatiens	II	Microphthalmus sczelkowii	N.A	Notomastus latericeus	III
Glycera alba	II	Iphimedia obesa	I	Lumbrineris latreilli	II	Microspio sp.	N.A	Notomastus lineatus	III
Glycera capitata	II	Iphinoë serrata	I	Lumbrineris latreilli	II	Micrura sp.	N.A	Notomastus sp.	III
Glycera convoluta	II	Iphinoe sp.	I	Lumbrineris sp.	II	Modiolula phaseolina	I	Nucula nitida	I
Glycera lapidum	II	Jaera albifrons	I	Lunatia alderi	II	Modiolus barbatus	I	Nucula nitidosa	I
Glycera rouxii	II	Jaera sp.	I	Lutraria angustior	I	Modiolus gallicus	I	Nucula nucleus	I
Glycera sp.	II	Janira maculosa	N.A	Lutraria lutraria	I	Modiolus modiolus	I	Nucula sp.	I
Glycera tesselata	II	Jasmineira elegans	N.A	Lutraria lutraria	I	Monoculodes carinatus	I	Nucula sulcata	I
Glycera tridactyla	II	Jupiteria minuta	N.A	Lutraria sp.	I	Monopylephorus irroratus	V	Nucula turgida	I
Glycera unicornis	II	Kefersteinia cirrata	N.A	Lyonsia norvegicum	I	Montacuta ferruginosa	II	Ocenebra erinacea	II
Glycinde nordmani	II	Kellia suborbicularis	I	Lysianassa ceratina	I	Musculus discors	I	Odostomia sp.	II
Glycinde nordmanni	II	Labidoplax cf. thomsoni	I	Lysianassa insperata	I	Mya arenaria	II	Oligochaeta	V
Gnathia oxyurea	I	Labidoplax digitata	I	Lysidice ninetta	II	Myrtea spinifera	I	Onuphidae juvenil	II
Gobius niger	III	Labidoplax spp	I	Lysippe labiata	N.A	Mysella bidentata	I	Onuphis cf. geophiliformis	II
Goniada maculata	II	Lacydonia miranda	N.A	Macoma baltica	I	Mysia undata	I	Onuphis conchylega	II
Goniada sp.	II	Lagisca extenuata	II	Macropodia rostrata	I	Mysidacea	II	Onuphis eremita	II
Goodallia triangularis	I	Lanice cirrata	III	Mactra corallina	I	Mystides elongata	II	Ophelia bicornis	I
Gouldia minima	I	Lanice cirrata	III	Mactra stultorum	I	Mystides limbata	II	Ophelina acuminata	N.A
Gregariella barbatella	I	Lanice conchilega	II	Mactracea indet.	I	Mytilaster minimun	I	Ophiocentrus brachiatus	I
Guernea coalita	N.A	Lanice conchilega	II	Maera grossimana	I	Mytilus edulis	III	Ophiocomina nigra	I
Gymnammodytes semisquamatus	N.A	Lanice spp	II	Maera othonis	I	Nassarius incrassatus	II	Ophiodromus flexuosus	II
Gyptis capensis	II	Laonice sp.	N.A	Maera sp.	I	Nassarius reticulatus	II	Ophiopsila aranea	I

TABLE 3 (CONTINUED)

Species	Group	Species	Group	Species	Group	Species	Group	Species	Group
Gyptis rosea	II	*Leanira yhleni*	N.A	*Magelona alleni*	I	*Natantia* sp.	N.A	*Ophiotrix fragilis*	I
Halcampa sp.	I	*Lembos* sp.	N.A	*Magelona filiformis*	I	*Natica alderi*	II	*Ophiura albida*	II
Haminoea navicula	II	*Lepidonotus clava*	II	*Magelona minuta*	I	*Natica catena*	II	*Ophiura ophiura*	II
Harmothoe antilopes	II	*Lepidonotus squamatus*	II	*Magelona mirabilis*	I	*Neanthes caudata*	III	*Ophiura* sp.	II
Harmothoe cf. *lunulata*	II	*Leptocheirus pectinatus*	III	*Magelona papillicornis*	I	*Neanthes irrorata*	III	*Ophiura texturata*	II
Harmothoe glabra	II	*Leptocheirus pilosus*	III	*Magelona* sp.	I	*Neanthes juv. indet.*	III	*Ophiura texturata (juv.)*	II
Harmothoe imbricata	II	*Leptochelia savignyi*	N.A	*Magelona wilsoni*	I	*Neanthes* sp.	III	*Ophryotrocha labronica*	II
Harmothoe impar	II	*Leptochiton asellus*	I	*Malacoceros ciliata*	III	*Nebalia bipes*	V	*Ophryotrocha puerilis*	II
Harmothoe lunulata	II	*Leptochiton cancellatus*	I	*Malacoceros fuliginosus*	V	*Nebalia* sp. *indet.*	V	*Ophryotrocha* sp.	II
Harmothoe sp.	II	*Leptochiton inhaerens*	I	*Malacoceros girardi*	III	*Nebalia thyphlops*	II	*Opistodonta pterochaeta*	N.A
Harmothoe sp.*(antilopes?)*	II	*Leptoneris glauca*	III	*Malacoceros* sp.	III	*Nematoda*	III	*Orbinia cuvieri*	N.A
Harmothoe spinifera	II	*Leptosynapta* cf. *gallienei*	I	*Malacoceros vulgaris*	III	*Nematonereis unicornis*	II	*Orchomene nana*	N.A
Harpinia antennaria	I	*Leptosynapta gallienei*	I	*Maldane glebifex*	I	*Nemertea*	III	*Orchomene similis*	N.A
Harpinia pectinata	I	*Leptosynapta inhaerens*	I	*Manayunkia aestuarina*	II	*Neoamphitrite affinis*	N.A	*Oriopsis armandi*	N.A
Harpinia sp.	I	*Leucothoe incisa*	I	*Mangelia attenuata*	I	*Neoamphitrite* cf. *affinis*	N.A	*Oriopsis* sp.	N.A
Haustorius arenarius	I	*Leucothoe incisa*	I	*Mangelia nebula*	I	*Neoamphitrite* sp.	N.A	*Ostrea edulis*	I
Hediste diversicolor	III	*Leucothoe lilljeborgi*	I	*Mangelia smithi*	I	*Nephtys assimilis*	II	*Ovatella myosotis*	N.A
Hermione hystrix	II	*Leucothoe richiardii*	I	*Mangelia* sp.	I	*Nephtys caeca*	II	*Owenia filiformis*	I
Hesione pantherina	II	*Leucothoe* sp.	I	*Marphysa bellii*	II	*Nephtys* cf. *paradoxa*	II	*Owenia fusiformis*	I
Pachygrapsus marmoratus	II	*Phyllodoce rosea*	II	*Protodrilus* sp.	N.A	*Sphaerosyllis hystrix*	II	*Tholarus cranchii*	I
Paguroidea indet.	I	*Phyllodoce* sp.	II	*Psamechinus miliaris*	I	*Sphaerosyllis pyrifera*	II	*Thracia phaseolina*	I
Pagurus bernhardus	I	*Phylocheras bispinosus*	I	*Psammobia costulata*	I	*Sphaerosyllis* sp.	II	*Thracia villosiuscula*	I
Pagurus prideauxi	I	*Phylocheras monacantus*	I	*Psammolyce arenosa*	II	*Sphaerosyllis taylori*	II	*Thyasira flexuosa*	III
Pagurus sp. *larva*	I	*Phylocheras trispinosus*	I	*Pseudobrania* sp.	II	*Sphenia binghami*	I	*Thyone fusus*	I
Palaemon serratus	I	*Pilargis verrucosa*	I	*Pseudocuma longicornis*	II	*Spio armata*	III	*Timoclea ovata*	I
Pandora albida	I	*Pilumnus hirtellus*	I	*Pseudocuma similis*	II	*Spio decoratus*	III	*Tonicella marmorea*	I
Pandora inaequivalvis	I	*Pinnotheres pisum*	N.A	*Pseudocuma* sp.	II	*Spio filicornis*	III	*Tricolia pullus*	I
Pandora pinna	I	*Pionosyllis serrata*	II	*Pseudopolydora antennata*	IV	*Spio martinensis*	III	*Triphora adversa*	I
Panoploea minuta	I	*Pisidia longicornis*	I	*Pseudopolydora paucibranchiata*	IV	*Spio* sp.	III	*Triphora aspera*	I
Paradoneis armata	III	*Pisidium* sp. *indet.*	I	*Pseudopolydora pulchra*	IV	*Spiochaetopterus costarum*	III	*Triphora perversa*	I
Paradoneis lyra	III	*Pisione remota*	II	*Pseudopolydora* sp.	IV	*Spiochaetopterus* sp.	III	*Trivia monacha*	I
Paragnathia formica	III	*Pista cristata*	I	*Pseudoprotella phasma*	N.A	*Spiochaetopterus typicus*	III	*Trophonopsis muricatus*	I
Paramphitrite tetrabranchia	N.A	*Plakosyllis brevipes*	II	*Pseudosyllis brevipennis*	II	*Spiophanes bombyx*	III	*Tryphosella nanoides*	I
Paraonis fulgens	N.A	*Plathelmintes*	II	*Pseudosyllis* sp.	II	*Spiophanes kroyeri*	III	*Tryphosella sarsi*	I
Paraonis gracilis	N.A	*Platynereis dumerilii*	III	*Pygospio elegans*	III	*Spirobranchus polytrema*	N.A	*Tryphosites longipes*	II
Paraonis lyra	N.A	*Pleuronectidae* sp.	II	*Quadrans serratus*	I	*Spisula elliptica*	I	*Tubificoides benedii*	V
Parapionosyllis cf. *gestans*	II	*Podoceus variegatus*	N.A	*Raphitoma purpurea*	I	*Spisula solida*	I	*Tubificoides pseudogaster*	V
Parapionosyllis gestans	II	*Poecilochaetus serpens*	I	*Raphitoma* sp.	I	*Spisula subtruncata*	I	*Tubulanus polymorphus*	II
Parapionosyllis labronica	II	*Poecilochaetus serpens*	I	*Retusa truncatula*	I	*Staurocephalus rudolphii*	IV	*Tubulanus* spp	II
Parapionosyllis minuta	II	*Polycirrus aurantiacus*	IV	*Retusa umbilicata*	I	*Stenothoe monoculoides*	II	*Turbelario* sp.	N.A
Parapionosyllis sp.	II	*Polycirrus* cf. *medusa*	IV	*Rhizorus acuminatus*	N.A	Stenothoidae	II	*Turboella parva*	I
Parathelepus sp.	I	*Polycirrus medusa*	IV	*Ringicula auriculata*	I	*Sternaspis scutata*	III	*Turbonilla acuta*	I
Pariambus typicus	III	*Polycirrus* sp.	IV	*Ringicula conformis*	I	*Sthenelais boa*	II	*Turbonilla elegantissima*	I
Pariambus typicus varinermis	III	*Polycirrus tenuisetis*	IV	*Ringicula* sp.	I	*Sthenelais* cf. *minor*	II	*Turbonilla lactea*	I

Parvicardium exiguum	I	*Polydora antennata*	IV	*Sabella pavonina*	I	*Sthenelais limicola*	II	*Turbonilla rufa*	I
Parvicardium minimum	I	*Polydora caeca*	IV	*Sabella* sp.	I	*Sthenelais minor*	II	*Turbonilla* spp	I
Parvicardium ovale	I	*Polydora ciliata*	IV	*Sabellaria alveolata*	I	*Sthenelais* sp.	II	*Turritella communis*	I
Parvicardium papillosum	I	*Polydora flava*	IV	*Sabellaria spinulosa*	I	*Streblosoma bairdi*	N.A	*Turritella triplicata*	I
Parvicardium scabrum	I	*Polydora juv.* spp	IV	*Scalibregma inflatum*	III	*Streblospio dekhuyzeni*	III	*Unciola crenatipalma*	N.A
Pectinaria auricoma	I	*Polydora ligerica*	IV	*Scaphander lignarius*	I	*Streblospio shrubsolii*	III	*Upogebia* cf. *tipica*	I
Pectinaria koreni	I	*Polydora ligni*	IV	*Schistomeringos caeca*	II	*Stremblosoma intestinalis*	N.A	*Upogebia deltaura*	I
Pectinaria sp.	I	*Polydora polybranchia*	IV	*Schistomeringos rudolphi*	IV	*Striarca lactea*	I	*Upogebia pusilla*	I
Perinereis cultrifera	III	*Polydora pulchra*	IV	*Scionella lornensis*	N.A	*Sycon ciliatum*	I	*Upogebia* sp.	I
Perioculodes longimanus	I	*Polydora* sp.	IV	*Sclerocheilus minutus*	N.A	*Sycon raphanus*	I	*Upogebia stellata*	I
Pharus legumen	I	*Polygordius apendiculatus*	I	*Scolaricia* sp.	I	*Syllis cornuta*	II	*Upogebia typica*	I
Phascolion strombi	I	*Polymnia nebulosa*	III	*Scolaricia typica*	I	*Syllis gerlachi*	II	*Urothoe brevicornis*	I
Phascolion strombus	I	*Polynoe scolopendrina*	II	*Scolelepis fuliginosa*	V	*Syllis gracilis*	II	*Urothoe elegans*	I
Phascolosoma elongatum	I	*Polyophthalmus pictus*	I	*Scolelepis* sp.	III	*Syllis prolifera*	II	*Urothoe poseidonis*	I
Phascolosoma granulatum	II	*Pomatoceros lamarckii*	N.A	*Scolelepis squamata*	III	*Syllis* sp.	II	*Urothoe pulchella*	I
Phascolosoma vulgare	I	*Pomatoceros triqueter*	N.A	*Scoloplos armiger*	I	*Syllis variegata*	II	*Vauthompsonia cristata*	N.A
Phaxas pellucidus	I	*Pontocrates altamarinus*	I	*Scrobicularia plana*	III	*Synchelidium haplocheles*	I	*Veneracea*	I
Pherusa monilifera	I	*Pontocrates arenarius*	I	*Scrupocellaria scrupea*	N.A	*Synchelidium maculatum*	I	*Venerupis aurea*	I
Pherusa plumosa	I	*Portumnus latipes*	I	*Semivermilia* sp.	N.A	*Tanais dulongii*	N.A	*Venerupis pullastra*	I
Pherusa sp.	I	*Potamilla reniformis*	N.A	*Sertulariidae*	I	*Tapes decussata*	I	*Venerupis rhomboides*	I
Philine aperta	II	*Potamilla* sp.	N.A	*Sextonia longirostris*	II	*Telepsavus costarum*	I	*Venerupis senegalensis*	I
Philine loweni	II	*Potamilla torelli*	N.A	*Sigalion* cf. *mathildae*	II	*Telina tenuis*	I	*Venus casina*	I
Philine spp	II	*Potamopyrgus jenkinsi*	II	*Sigalion mathildae*	II	*Tellimya ferruginosa*	II	*Venus fasciata*	I
Pholoe minuta	II	*Praxillea oerstedi*	N.A	*Sigalion squamatum*	II	*Tellina compressa*	I	*Venus gallina*	I
Pholoe synopthalmica	II	*Prionospio caspersi*	IV	*Siphonoecetes kroyeranus*	I	*Tellina donacina*	I	*Venus juv.* sp.	I
Phoronis psammophila	I	*Prionospio cirrifera*	IV	*Siphonoecetes* sp.	I	*Tellina fabula*	I	*Venus ovata*	I
Photis longicaudata	I	*Prionospio ehlersi*	IV	*Siphonoecetes striatus*	I	*Tellina pusilla*	I	*Venus striatula*	I
Phoxocephalus rudolphii	I	*Prionospio fallax*	IV	*Sipuncula*	I	*Tellina pygmaea*	I	*Venus verrucosa*	I
Phthisica marina	I	*Prionospio malmgreni*	IV	*Skenea* sp.	III	*Tellina* sp.	I	*Veretillum cynomorium*	I
Phyllochaetopterus sp.	N.A	*Prionospio multibranchiata*	IV	*Skenia serpuloides*	N.A	*Tellina squalida*	I	*Veretillum* sp.	I
Phyllodoce groelandica	II	*Prionospio* sp.	IV	*Socarnes erythrophthalmus*	N.A	*Tellina tenuis*	I	*Verruca stromia*	I
Phyllodoce lamelligera	II	*Prionospio steenstrupi*	IV	*Solen marginatus*	I	*Terebella lapidaria*	I	*Vituperis esribosa*	V
Phyllodoce laminosa	II	*Processa canaliculata*	I	Solenacea	I	*Terebellides stroemi*	I	*Xantho pilipes*	N.A
Phyllodoce lineata	II	*Processa modica*	I	*Sphaerodoropsis* sp.	N.A	*Terebellomorpha* sp. *indet*	II	*Xenosyllis scabra*	II
Phyllodoce longipes	II	*Processa nouveli*	I	*Sphaeroma monodi*	II	*Thalassema neptuni*	I	*Zenobiana prismatica*	II
Phyllodoce maculata	II	*Processa parva*	I	*Sphaeroma rugicaudata*	II	*Tharyx marioni*	N.A	*Zoantharia* sp.	I
Phyllodoce mucosa	III	*Processa* sp.	I	*Sphaeroma serratum*	II	*Thelepus setosus*	N.A		
Phyllodoce paretti	II	*Protodorvillea kefersteini*	II	*Sphaerosyllis bulbosa*	II	*Thia scutellata*	II		

[a] N.A. – not assigned.

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