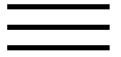


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Using historical data, expert judgement and multivariate analysis in assessing reference conditions and benthic ecological status, according to the European Water Framework Directive

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### Abstract

The European Water Framework Directive (WFD) establishes a framework for the protection and improvement of estuarine and coastal waters, trying to achieve “good surface water status at the latest 15 years after the date of entry into force of this Directive”™. One of the biological elements that should be analysed is the benthos and, as such, the WFD normative definitions describe the aspects of the benthic communities that must be included in the ecological status assessment of a water body. Therefore, it is essential to include, in the assessment, the different metrics that address those parameters identified in the normative definitions for each of the ecological status

classes. In this contribution the use of the AMBI, richness and diversity, combined with the use, in a further development, of factor analysis together with discriminant analysis, is presented as an objective tool (named here M-AMBI) in assessing ecological quality status. This assessment requires previous classification of water bodies and typologies, together with the definition of reference conditions; this is undertaken in this contribution using historical data, expert judgement and multivariate analysis. The study has been undertaken by examining changes in benthic communities in the Basque Country, over the last decade, as a case-study, to demonstrate the accuracy and potential of these methodologies.



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## Keywords

Water Framework Directive; Ecological Quality Status; Macrozoobenthos; AMBI; Richness; Diversity; Factor analysis; Discriminant analysis

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