

## **Appendix VII**

### **REFERENCE CLASSIFICATION OF MARINE HABITAT TYPES FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

**as adopted by the Contracting Parties (Malta, 27-30 October 1999)**

#### **FOREWORD**

##### **Aims of this working document**

The present document includes the draft classification of benthic marine habitat types as it has been finalized by the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the National Focal Points for SPA (Tunis, 12-14 April 1999) and cleared by the Meeting of MAP National Focal Points (Athens, 6-9 September 1999). It is submitted to the 11<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties for adoption.

##### **Background information**

Section 2.1 of the Mediterranean Action Plan - Phase II and Articles 3.3 and 15 of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean contain provisions for the preparation of inventories of the elements of biological diversity important for its conservation and sustainable use. MAP Phase II also provides for such inventories to be prepared according to common criteria jointly established by the Contracting Parties.

Within this framework, the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA) was invited by the Extraordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties held in Montpellier, 1-4 July 1996, to prepare common criteria and guidelines for the preparation of inventories.

To carry out this mandate, RAC/SPA convened a Meeting of Experts on criteria for the preparation of inventories of the elements of biological diversity in the Mediterranean region (Athens, 8-10 September 1997). The meeting finalized criteria for the preparation of national inventories of natural sites of conservation interest. To guide the identification of sites to be inventoried, the criteria provide inter alia for the establishment of a reference list of marine and coastal habitat types. The criteria also indicate that the list should be elaborated taking into account a model classification of habitat types to be established by RAC/SPA.

The criteria were adopted by the 10<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (Tunis, 18-21 November 1997). The same meeting invited RAC/SPA to work on elaborating of the reference list of habitat types, as well as the model classification of habitat types for the Mediterranean region. It also decided that such tools will be finalized at the level of the meeting of the National Focal Points for SPA and adopted at the level of the Meeting of the Contracting Parties (Doc. UNEP(OCA)/MED IG.11/10, Annex IV).

With a view to providing input for the elaboration of the above-mentioned habitat classification and reference list, RAC/SPA convened a Meeting of Experts on marine habitat types in the Mediterranean region. The meeting, which received financial and technical support from France, was held in Hyères from 18 to 20 November 1998. The work of the meeting led to the elaboration of a draft classification of benthic marine habitat types for the Mediterranean region.

On the basis of the outcomes of the mentioned meeting of experts in Hyères, the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the National Focal Points for SPA (Tunis, 12-14 April 1999) finalized the classification of benthic marine habitat types for the Mediterranean region with a view to transmitting it to the 11<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties for adoption.

In addition to the classification of marine benthic habitats thus finalized, the meeting recommended to work on the elaboration of a classification of habitats for the pelagic environment, and invited RAC/SPA to organize to this end a working group of experts. Following the meeting, the members of the group were identified in consultation with the National Focal Points for SPA.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The present classification of the various marine habitats types for the Mediterranean region is being established within the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan of UNEP, with the primary aim of serving as a common reference for the establishment of national inventories of marine and coastal natural sites of conservation interest, to be compiled pursuant to the Mediterranean Action Plan - Phase II and art. 15 of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean.

The specificity of the Mediterranean Sea, its high level of diversity, and the density of the knowledge already acquired call for harmonisation and for a specific study to be carried out. The types of habitats taken into account constitute most often the general case, whereas the local specificities are dealt with within the framework of national studies.

Numerous initiatives, meetings, and reports enabled hierarchical lists of European marine habitats to be established. The main purpose of these initiatives (CORINE<sup>1</sup>-biotopes, EEC Habitat Directive 92/43 - Annex 1, Palaeartic Classification, EUNIS<sup>2</sup> habitat classification) was to establish valid lists of all the habitats in Europe.

As early as 1988, France published a zoning scheme covering the whole of the land and part of the coastal areas as Natural Zones of Fauna, Flora and Ecological Interest (ZNIEFF<sup>3</sup>). The classification of the biocenoses established by Peres and Picard (1964) was used for determining the sea-ZNIEFF (Anonymous, 1988) and was taken into account not only for the French coasts but also for the whole of the Mediterranean basin. For the Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur Region 107 Sea-ZNIEFF have been created, the main objective of which was to present a synthesis of the scientific data available on this environment to optimise its management.

The inventory of the ZNIEFFs concerns knowledge and is considered as a scientific instrument and not as a legal tool although it is used as a protection and management administrative decision making support tool.

The inventory of the ZNIEFFs is of primary importance for the French state as a basis for international programmes and obligations (inventory of Important Bird Areas, Special Protection Areas in keeping with the EEC "Bird" Directive, inventory as a prerequisite for the designation of Special Conservation Areas in keeping with the EEC "Habitats, Fauna, Flora" Directive, Alpine Convention, Statistics for the European Environment Agency, etc.).

As early as 1991, when the inventory of ZNIEFFs was widely used, a reflection process took place that involved the real estate developers, the users and the scientists in order to:

- learn from the utilisation of the existing inventory,
- improve the legibility of the forms established,
- include new data,
- harmonise and standardise information at national level and with foreign partners.

In 1993, a first list of Parameters and Biocenoses of the metropolitan French coasts (Dauvin *et al.*, 1993) was established by a working group composed of French Mediterranean and

---

<sup>1</sup> CORINE: Coordination of Information on the Environment

<sup>2</sup> EUNIS: European Nature Information System of the European Environment Agency, managed by its Topic Centre on Nature Conservation in Paris

<sup>3</sup> ZNIEFF: Zones Naturelles d'Intérêt Ecologique, Faunistique et Floristique: Inventory of natural sites in France

Atlantic experts on the benthos.

In 1994, a second updated and completed edition (Dauvin *et al.*, 1994) provided a detailed typology based on the CORINE-biotopes list for the metropolitan French coast.

At the European level, the document 'CORINE biotopes manual' (1988) updated in 1989 and edited in 1991 (Anonymous, 1991) and which is a reference for the EEC Directive 92/43 EEC proved to be of difficult use for maritime purpose and more so in the Mediterranean zone. Not only was it too schematic but it also contained several errors and some misleading information.

For the north-east part of the Atlantic coast, Connor *et al.* (1995), taking as a model the typology of the ZNIEFFs and after several meetings of European experts, could establish a classification of the benthic marine biotopes of the United Kingdom and of the Republic of Ireland. This activity was carried out within the BIOMAR programme.

The classification of Palaeartic habitats (Devilliers and Devilliers-Terschuren, 1996) is a development and a geographical extension of the CORINE biotopes which does not provide significantly more information for the Mediterranean Sea.

For the Mediterranean Sea several more or less complete documents suited to the problem can be used for the demarcation of zones of heritage or ecological interest, zones that require a certain level of protection or for which sensible management is sought:

- the definition of benthic biocenoses resulting from the works in the line of Peres and Picard (1964) and for which there are only few syntheses available (Gamulin Brida, 1967; Augier, 1982; Peres, 1982; Ros *et al.*, 1985; Bellan-Santini *et al.*, 1994);
- the CORINE biotopes classification which is too succinct;
- the classifications of Palaeartic and BIOMAR habitats, unsuitable for the Mediterranean Sea;
- the list of marine biocenoses for the French metropolitan coasts (Dauvin *et al.* 1994) which has been validated for France but which must be completed and reviewed for the Mediterranean Sea; this work is in progress within the framework of the French programme for the revision of ZNIEFFs started in 1995.

The list of marine biocenoses of the French metropolitan coasts (Dauvin *et al.*, 1994) is the result of a compilation made by scientists who worked on benthic populations (communities or biocenoses; habitats as defined by the EEC Directive) in the Mediterranean Sea and on the Atlantic and Channel coasts, followed by a common reflection of these scientists.

Biocenoses have been classified as a function of the zonation and granulometric nature of the sediment.

Priority environments are those that contribute to the identification of the zone either for their own value or for that of the species that dwell in them leaving aside any consideration about the surface. Most assemblages of plants and animals (biocenoses, facies) are fairly easy to identify but the sole mention of the biocenosis can justify the creation of a ZNIEFF in as much as it is sufficiently determinant and most of all accompanied with a list of significant priority species.

This document which concerns the Mediterranean Sea only is based on the document written by Dauvin *et al.* (1994), but since the homogeneity with the Atlantic coasts is no

longer necessary it has been completely revised and adapted to the specificities of the Mediterranean zone for the French coastlines (ZNIEFFs re-actualisation programme), and then extended to the whole of the Mediterranean Sea to meet the needs of RAC/SPA. This document has been revised and amended with the assistance of the "biotopi marini" group of the "Ministero dell Ambiente" (Italy).

The typology proposed for the Mediterranean Sea, elaborated from the CORINE biotopes nomenclature, is hierarchical, phytosociological and uses the following as bases of references:

- the zonation as defined by Peres and Picard in 1964 (Appendix I),
- the granulometric nature of the sea beds classified as per the model adopted by Dauvin *et al.* 1994 (Appendix II).

The levels of the facies and sub-facies are mainly limited to those most widely distributed since their number increases as a function of the number of works on benthic communities and they most often constitute a strictly local datum. The facies mentioned have indicative value only. Environments affected by human activity (polluted environments and harbours) are not considered in the text.

The terms used in this report may have appeared with rather different meanings in referenced documents. A lexicon (Appendix III) gives the meaning adopted herein.

## **2. TYPOLOGY: LIST OF MEDITERRANEAN BENTHIC MARINE BIOCENOSES**

### **I. SUPRALITTORAL**

#### **I. 1. MUDS**

- I. 1. 1. Biocenosis of beaches with slowly-drying wracks under glassworts

#### **I. 2. SANDS**

- I. 2. 1 Biocenosis of supralittoral sands

- I. 2. 1. 1. Facies of sands without vegetation, with scattered debris
- I. 2. 1. 2. Facies of depressions with residual humidity
- I. 2. 1. 3. Facies of quickly-drying wracks
- I. 2. 1. 4. Facies of tree trunks which have been washed ashore
- I. 2. 1. 5. Facies of phanerogams which have been washed ashore (upper part)

#### **I. 3. STONES AND PEBBLES**

- I. 3. 1. Biocenosis of slowly drying wracks

#### **I. 4. HARD BEDS AND ROCKS**

- I. 4. 1. Biocenosis of supralittoral rock

- I. 4. 1. 1. Association with *Entophysalis deusta* and *Verrucaria amphibia*
- I. 4. 1. 2. Pools with variable salinity (mediolittoral enclave)

## II. MEDIOLITTORAL

### II. 1. MUDS, SANDY MUDS AND SANDS

#### II. 1. 1. Biocenosis of muddy sands and muds

II. 1. 1. 1. Association with halophytes

II. 1. 1. 2. Facies of saltworks

### II. 2. SANDS

#### II. 2. 1. Biocenosis of mediolittoral sands

II. 2. 1. 1. Facies with *Ophelia bicornis*

### II. 3. STONES AND PEBBLES

#### II. 3. 1. Biocenosis of mediolittoral coarse detritic bottoms

II. 3. 1. 1. Facies of banks of dead leaves of *Posidonia oceanica* and other phanerogams

### II. 4. HARD BEDS AND ROCKS

#### II. 4. 1. Biocenosis of the upper mediolittoral rock

II. 4. 1. 1. Association with *Bangia atropurpurea*

II. 4. 1. 2. Association with *Porphyra leucosticta*

II. 4. 1. 3. Association with *Nemalion helminthoides* and *Rissoella verruculosa*

II. 4. 1. 4. Association with *Lithophyllum papillosum* and *Polysiphonia* spp.

#### II. 4. 2. Biocenosis of the lower mediolittoral rock

II. 4. 2. 1. Association with *Lithophyllum lichenoides* (= entablature with *L. tortuosum*)

II. 4. 2. 2. Association with *Lithophyllum byssoides*

II. 4. 2. 3. Association with *Tenarea undulosa*

II. 4. 2. 4. Association with *Ceramium ciliatum* and *Corallina elongata*

II. 4. 2. 5. Facies with *Pollicipes cornucopiae*

II. 4. 2. 6. Association with *Enteromorpha compressa*

II. 4. 2. 7. Association with *Fucus virsoides*

II. 4. 2. 8. *Neogoniolithon brassica-florida* concretion

II. 4. 2. 9. Association with *Gelidium* spp.

II. 4.2.10. Pools and lagoons sometimes associated with vermetids (infralittoral enclave)

II. 4. 3. Mediolittoral caves

- II. 4. 3. 1. Association with *Phymatolithon lenormandii* and *Hildenbrandia rubra*

**III. INFRALITTORAL**

III. 1. SANDY MUDS, SANDS, GRAVELS AND ROCKS IN EURYHALINE AND EURYTHERMAL ENVIRONMENT

III. 1. 1. Euryhaline and eurythermal biocenosis

- III. 1. 1. 1. Association with *Ruppia cirrhosa* and/or *Ruppia maritima*  
III. 1. 1. 2. Facies with *Ficopomatus enigmaticus*  
III. 1. 1. 3. Association with *Potamogeton pectinatus*  
III. 1. 1. 4. Association with *Zostera noltii* in euryhaline and eurythermal environment  
III. 1. 1. 5. Association with *Zostera marina* in euryhaline and eurythermal environment  
III. 1. 1. 6. Association with *Gracilaria* spp.  
III. 1. 1. 7. Association with *Chaetomorpha linum* and *Valonia aegagropila*  
III. 1. 1. 8. Association with *Halopithys incurva*  
III. 1. 1. 9. Association with *Ulva laetevirens* and *Enteromorpha linza*  
III. 1. 1. 10. Association with *Cystoseira barbata*  
III. 1. 1. 11. Association with *Lamprothamnium papulosum*  
III. 1. 1. 12. Association with *Cladophora echinus* and *Rytiphloea tinctoria*

III. 2. FINE SANDS WITH MORE OR LESS MUD

III. 2. 1. Biocenosis of fine sands in very shallow waters

- III. 2. 1. 1. Facies with *Lentidium mediterraneum*

III. 2. 2. Biocenosis of well sorted fine sands

- III. 2. 2. 1. Association with *Cymodocea nodosa* on well sorted fine sands  
III. 2. 2. 2. Association with *Halophila stipulacea*

III. 2. 3. Biocenosis of superficial muddy sands in sheltered waters

- III. 2. 3. 1. Facies with *Callianassa tyrrhena* and *Kellia corbuloides*

- III. 2. 3. 2. Facies with fresh water resurgences with *Cerastoderma glaucum* and *Cyathura carinata*
- III. 2. 3. 3. Facies with *Loripes lacteus*, *Tapes* spp.
- III. 2. 3. 4. Association with *Cymodocea nodosa* on superficial muddy sands in sheltered waters
- III. 2. 3. 5. Association with *Zostera noltii* on superficial muddy sands in sheltered waters
- III. 2. 3. 6. Association with *Caulerpa prolifera* on superficial muddy sands in sheltered waters
- III. 2. 3. 7. Facies of hydrothermal oozes with *Cyclope neritea* and nematodes

### III. 3. COARSE SANDS WITH MORE OR LESS MUD

- III. 3. 1. Biocenosis of coarse sands and fine gravels mixed by the waves
  - III. 3. 1. 1. Association with rhodolithes
- III. 3. 2. Biocenosis of coarse sands and fine gravels under the influence of bottom currents (also found in the Circalittoral)
  - III. 3. 2. 1. Maërl facies (= Association with *Lithothamnion corallioides* and *Phymatolithon calcareum*) (can also be found as facies of the biocenosis of coastal detritic).
  - III. 3. 2. 2. Association with rhodolithes

### III. 4. STONES AND PEBBLES

- III. 4. 1. Biocenosis of infralittoral pebbles
  - III. 4. 1. 1. Facies with *Gouania wildenowi*

### III. 5. POSIDONIA OCEANICA MEADOWS

- III. 5. 1. Posidonia oceanica meadows (= Association with *Posidonia oceanica*)
  - III. 5. 1. 1. Ecomorphosis of striped meadows
  - III. 5. 1. 2. Ecomorphosis of "barrier-reef" meadows
  - III. 5. 1. 3. Facies of dead "mattes" of *Posidonia oceanica* without much epiflora
  - III. 5. 1. 4. Association with *Caulerpa prolifera*



### III. 6. HARD BEDS AND ROCKS

#### III. 6. 1. Biocenosis of infralittoral algae<sup>4</sup>:

##### III. 6. 1. 1. **Overgrazed facies with encrusting algae and sea urchins**

III. 6. 1. 2. Association with *Cystoseira amentacea* (var. *amentacea*, var. *stricta*, var. *spicata*)

III. 6. 1. 3. Facies with Vermetids

III. 6. 1. 4. Facies with *Mytilus galloprovincialis*

III. 6. 1. 5. Association with *Corallina elongata* and *Herposiphonia secunda*

III. 6. 1. 6. Association with *Corallina officinalis*

III. 6. 1. 7. Association with *Codium vermilara* and *Rhodymenia ardissoni*

III. 6. 1. 8. Association with *Dasycladus vermicularis*

III. 6. 1. 9. Association with *Alsidium helminthochorton*

III. 6. 1. 10. Association with *Cystoseira tamariscifolia* and *Saccorhiza polyschides*

III. 6. 1. 11. Association with *Gelidium spinosum* v. *hystrix*

III. 6. 1. 12. Association with *Lobophora variegata*

III. 6. 1. 13. Association with *Ceramium rubrum*

III. 6. 1. 14. Facies with *Cladocora caespitosa*

III. 6. 1. 15. Association with *Cystoseira brachycarpa*

III. 6. 1. 16. Association with *Cystoseira crinita*

III. 6. 1. 17. Association with *Cystoseira crinitophylla*

III. 6. 1. 18. Association with *Cystoseira sauvageauana*

III. 6. 1. 19. Association with *Cystoseira spinosa*

III. 6. 1. 20. Association with *Sargassum vulgare*

III. 6. 1. 21. Association with *Dictyopteris polypodioides*

III. 6. 1. 22. Association with *Calpomenia sinuosa*

III. 6. 1. 23. Association with *Stypocaulon scoparium* (= *Halopteris scoparia*)

III. 6. 1. 24. Association with *Trichosolen myura* and *Liagora farinosa*

---

<sup>4</sup> the facies and associations of the biocenosis of infralittoral algae are presented in accordance with the two dominant factors affecting this biocenosis, namely hydrodynamics and light, in descending order.

- III. 6. 1. 25. Association with *Cystoseira compressa*
- III. 6. 1. 26. Association with *Pterocliadiella capillacea* and *Ulva laetevirens*
- III. 6. 1. 27. Facies with large Hydrozoa
- III. 6. 1. 28. Association with *Pterothamnion crispum* and *Compsothamnion thuyoides*
- III. 6. 1. 29. Association with *Schottera nicaeensis*
- III. 6. 1. 30. Association with *Rhodymenia ardissoni* and *Rhodophyllis divaricata*
- III. 6. 1. 31. Facies with *Astroides calycularis*
- III. 6. 1. 32. Association with *Flabellia petiolata* and *Peyssonnelia squamaria*
- III. 6. 1. 33. Association with *Halymenia floresia* and *Halarachnion ligulatum*
- III. 6. 1. 34. Association with *Peyssonnelia rubra* and *Peyssonnelia* spp.
- III. 6. 1. 35. Facies and Associations of Coralligenous biocenosis (in enclave)
- II. 6. 1. 36. Facies with *Chondrilla nucula*
- III. 6. 1. 37. Facies with *Microcosmus exasperatus*

#### IV. CIRCALITTORAL

##### IV. 1. MUDS

###### IV. 1. 1. Biocenosis of coastal terrigenous muds

- IV. 1. 1. 1. Facies of soft muds with *Turritella tricarinata communis*
- IV. 1. 1. 2. Facies of sticky muds with *Virgularia mirabilis* and *Pennatula phosphorea*
- IV. 1. 1. 3. Facies of sticky muds with *Alcyonium palmatum* and *Stichopus regalis*

##### IV. 2. SANDS

###### IV. 2. 1. Biocenosis of the muddy detritic bottom

- IV. 2. 1. 1. Facies with *Ophiothrix quinquemaculata*

###### IV. 2. 2. Biocenosis of the coastal detritic bottom

- IV. 2. 2. 1. Association with rhodolithes

- IV. 2. 2. 2. Maërl Facies (*Lithothamnion corallioides* and *Phymatholithon calcareum*)
- IV. 2. 2. 3. Association with *Peyssonnelia rosa-marina*
- IV. 2. 2. 4. Association with *Arthrocladia villosa*
- IV. 2. 2. 5. Association with *Osmundaria volubilis*
- IV. 2. 2. 6. Association with *Kallymenia patens*
- IV. 2. 2. 7. Association with *Laminaria rodriguezii* on detritic
- IV. 2. 2. 8. Facies with *Ophiura texturata*
- IV. 2. 2. 9. Facies with Synascidies
- V. 2. 2. 10. Facies with large Bryozoa

IV. 2. 3. Biocenosis of shelf-edge detritic bottom

- IV. 2. 3. 1. Facies with *Neolampas rostellata*
- IV. 2. 3. 2. Facies with *Leptometra phalangium*

IV. 2. 4. Biocenosis of coarse sands and fine gravels under the influence of bottom currents (biocenosis found in areas under specific hydrodynamic conditions - straits-; also found in the Infralittoral)

IV. 3. HARD BEDS AND ROCKS

IV. 3. 1. Coralligenous biocenosis

- IV. 3. 1. 1. Association with *Cystoseira zosteroides*
- IV. 3. 1. 2. Association with *Cystoseira usneoides*
- IV. 3. 1. 3. Association with *Cystoseira dubia*
- IV. 3. 1. 4. Association with *Cystoseira corniculata*
- IV. 3. 1. 5. Association with *Sargassum* spp. (indigenous)
- IV. 3. 1. 6. Association with *Mesophyllum lichenoides*
- IV. 3. 1. 7. Association with *Lithophyllum frondosum* and *Halimeda tuna*
- IV. 3. 1. 8. Association with *Laminaria ochroleuca*
- IV. 3. 1. 9. Association with *Rodriguezella strafforelli*
- IV. 3. 1. 10. Facies with *Eunicella cavolinii*
- IV. 3. 1. 11. Facies with *Eunicella singularis*
- IV. 3. 1. 12. Facies with *Lophogorgia sarmentosa*
- IV. 3. 1. 13. Facies with *Paramuricea clavata*
- IV. 3. 1. 14. Facies with *Parazoanthus axinellae*
- IV. 3. 1. 15. Coralligenous platforms

IV.3. 2. Semi-dark caves (also in enclave in upper stages)

IV. 3. 2. 1. Facies with *Parazoanthus axinellae*

IV. 3. 2. 2. Facies with *Corallium rubrum*

IV. 3. 2. 3. Facies with *Leptopsammia pruvoti*

IV. 3. 3. Biocenosis of shelf-edge rock

**V. BATHYAL**

V. 1. MUDS

V. 1. 1. Biocenosis of bathyal muds

V. 1. 1. 1. Facies of sandy muds with *Thenaea muricata*

V. 1. 1. 2. Facies of fluid muds with *Brissopsis lyrifera*

V. 1. 1. 3. Facies of soft muds with *Funiculina quadrangularis* and *Apporhais seressianus*

V. 1. 1. 4. Facies of compact muds with *Isidella elongata*

V. 1. 1. 5. Facies with *Pheronema grayi*

V. 2. SANDS

V. 2. 1. Biocenosis of bathyal detritic sands with *Grypheus vitreus*

V. 3. HARD BEDS AND ROCKS

V. 3. 1. Biocenosis of deep sea corals

V. 3. 2. Caves and ducts in total darkness (in enclave in the upper stages)

**VI. ABYSSAL**

VI. 1. MUDS

VI. 1. 1. Biocenosis of abyssal muds

## RECENT CASES OF HABITATS AFFECTED BY INTRODUCED AND/OR INVASIVE SPECIES

Two majors cases have been observed :

1. The species constitutes an individualized facies or association (eg. *Sargassum mutans*, *Brachydontes pharaonis*, *Styopodium shimperi*,...)
2. The species affects several habitats, possibly on several stages (eg. *Caulerpa taxifolia*, *Caulerpa racemosa*,...)

## ZONATION OF BIOCENOSES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION

(Bellan-Santini *et al.* 1994)

Two main systems can be distinguished as a function of the vertical light gradient:

- the phytal system which is the habitat of all types of flora;
- the aphythal system which is not the habitat of autotrophic flora except for certain algae in conditions still unclear.

Each of the two main systems comprises subdivisions or stages.

The phytal system comprises:

- the Supralittoral stage where organisms that require a high level of humidifying but that are never immersed are present. The upper limit corresponds to the zone splashed by the waves (including the spray of the waves);
- the Mediolittoral stage which corresponds to the zone affected by waves, submitted to sea level variations caused by the wind, atmospheric pressure and tides;
- the Infralittoral stage which is the immersed zone compatible with the life of the marine phanerogams and photophilous algae;
- the Circalittoral stage which stretches up to the survival boundary of autotrophic pluricellular algae (general case).

The aphythal system comprises:

- the Bathyal stage which stretches up to the boundary of the continental slope;
- the Abyssal stage, the presence of which is acknowledged in the Mediterranean sea (Pérès, 1984; Bellan-Santini, 1985; Laubier & Emig, 1993) and which corresponds to the plain that would start at about 2,000 m. A faunistic renewal is noticed there, the reasons of which are still unclear, and a high endemism rate.

The boundary between the last two stages is still insufficiently defined in the Mediterranean sea.

## TYPES OF SEDIMENTS SELECTED

(Dauvin *et al.*, 1993, modified)

- Mud: more than 75% of fine particles < 63µm
- Sandy mud: 25 to 75% fine particles < 63µm
- Fine sand with more or less mud: 5 to 25% of fine particles < 63µm
- Fine sand: less than 5% of fine particles, fraction larger than 2 mm < 15%, median smaller than 250µm
- Dune medium sand: about 0% of fine particles, fraction larger than 2 mm < 15%, median between 315 and 800 µm
- Heterogeneous muddy sand: fine particles between 10 and 30%, sand, coarse sand and gravel between 50 and 80%
- Coarse sand: less than 5% of fine particles, more than 50% of sand + fine particles, median smaller than 2 mm
- Muddy heterogeneous sediment: more than 5% of fine, median larger than 500 µm, high percentage of pebbles or shells
- Gravel: less than 5% of fine particles, less than 50% of pebbles + shells, median larger than 2 mm
- Small stones: less than 5% of fine particles, more than 50% of pebbles + shells.

Granulometry (as per Larsonneur, 1977, modified)

- . Rock chaos;
- . Blocks: larger than 10 cm;
- . Pebbles and shells: elements larger than 2 cm ;
- . Coarse gravel: elements between 1 and 2 cm ;
- . Medium gravel: elements between 5 and 10 mm ;
- . Small gravel and particles: elements between 2 and 5 mm ;
- . Coarse sand: elements between 1 and 2 mm ;
- . Medium sand: elements between 0.5 and 1 mm ;
- . Fine sand: elements between 0.2 and 0.5 mm ;
- . Finer sand: elements between 0.1 and 0.2 mm ;
- . Finest sand: elements between 0.063 and 0.1 mm ;
- . Fine particles: mud + clay: fraction smaller than 0.063 mm.
  
- . well sorted sediment ;
- . poorly sorted sediment, heterogeneous.

## LEXICON

- Association :** permanent aspect of a biocenosis with a vegetal physiognomic dominance where the species are linked by an ecological compatibility and a chorological affinity.
- Biocenosis :** grouping of living organisms, linked by relationships of interdependence within a biotope with relatively homogenous major characteristics; each biocenosis comprises mainly the phytocenosis, which includes flora, and the zoocenosis, which includes fauna. The notions of community or association in the phytosociological sense of the word are very close to the notion of biocenosis although they cannot exactly replace it.
- Biotope :** geographical area with variable surface or volume submitted to ecological conditions where the dominant elements are homogenous.
- Characteristics :** a species is considered as characteristic when it is exclusive or preferential for the biotope considered, whether it is represented widely or not, sporadic or not.
- Community :** grouping of living organisms linked by interdependence relationships within a biotope, typically characterized with respect to one or several dominant species.
- Ecomorphosis :** a particular morphology linked to local ecological conditions.
- Enclave :** local existence for microclimatic reasons of a habitat within a surface normally occupied by another habitat or another stage.
- Euryhaline :** which exhibits a large range of variation of the salinity.
- Facies :** aspect exhibited by a biocenosis when the local predominance of certain factors causes the prevalence of either one or a very small number of species, essentially animal ones.
- Habitat :** area distinguished by geographic, abiotic and biotic features (definition of EEC Directive 92/43). the definition of the habitat can be compared herein to that of a biocenosis, facies and association.



**Introduced species :** species whose remote (not marginal) extension of the range is linked, directly or indirectly, to human activity. Within its new area, populations of individuals are born *in situ*, without human assistance (it is naturalized).

**Invasive species :** is an introduced species which has become a key species, or which has a significant impact on key species, functional groups or landscape, and/or a species which has a negative economic impact.

**Stage :** vertical space of the marine benthic domain where the ecological conditions, as a function of its situation with respect to the sea level, are notably constant or fluctuate regularly between the two critical levels which indicate the boundaries of the stage.