

Wadden Sea Board

WSB 13
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Wilhelmshaven



Agenda Item:	7
Subject:	Wadden Sea Forum, Progress report
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Proposal: The meeting is invited to note the information and to discuss as appropriate.

Wadden Sea Forum

Overview of the Activities of the Wadden Sea Forum

WSF plenary and Steering Committee

The 24th meeting of the Wadden Sea Forum took place on 13-14 May on Rømø and the 25th meeting was held on 20-21 November in Heide, Schleswig-Holstein. At the Rømø meeting, Henk Staghouwer from the province of Groningen was elected as new WSF chair. The post of a vice-chair is still vacant. Contentwise, the emphasis was laid on climate change in the Wadden Sea Region and on risk management due to climate change (see further below). The meeting in Heide addressed besides the implementation of the ICZM strategy the integration of natural and cultural landscapes, the implementation of LNG in short sea shipping and, in a second workshop partnerships in risk management.

Preparing Steering Committee meetings took place on 10 April in Hamburg, and 29 September in Bremen.

Working Groups

In the following, brief summaries of the working group activities are given.

1. ICZM

The working group met several times in 2014 and elaborated on a work program which covers the issues ICZM strategy implementation, risk management, indicator tool, Planning Portal as well as communication and partnership.

a) ICZM strategy for the Wadden Sea Region:

The aim of the strategy is to achieve the formulated objectives and recommendations. The recommendations refer to policy and planning, management, transnational integration and partnership, monitoring programs and awareness. The WSF should be better involved in planning and management processes, which concerns the WSR. Responsible bodies will be made aware of the WSF interests and the WSF will proactively take part in these processes.

b) Risk management:

The sectors and stakeholders are confronted with many uncertainties and risks with regard to future developments, also in the context of climate change. The aim is being prepared to face the risks. With the involvement of the WSF in the EU ENHANCE project (see further below), risk management will play an important role in the future work. A set of actions will be integrated in the implementation of the strategy.

c) Sustainability Indicator Tool:

The indicator tool contains data of several indicators since 2002 and shows on the main level the overall trends of the social, economic and ecologic dimensions. The data base consists of thousands of entries and is a source of fundamental information. In order to make the instrument more valuable and useful, it is envisaged to analyze the data due to the requirements of the target groups, which still have to be defined. This also means, the instruments has to be adapted to specific needs.

The overall graphs of sustainable development as well as some specific developments like age structure, population growth and migration in the WSR are available on the WSF website

<http://www.waddensea-forum.org/index.php/wsr-indicator-tool>

d) WSR Planning Portal:

The portal has been developed by the EUCC-D for the WSF. Currently, the portal consists of more than hundred different layers reading uses and protection schemes in the WSR. Many stakeholders and public bodies do benefit from the information and on European level, a request was addressed to extend the portal North Sea wide.

An integration of the indicator tool data has started and will be continued. Furthermore, an integration of cultural historic data would be under discussion, but a budget has to be found.

e) Communication and partnership:

A sound awareness among the politicians, stakeholders and wider society about Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the WSR is vital in working towards a sustainable and climate friendly Region. Awareness and understanding is a precondition for managing developments in a sustainable way. Following, a targeted communication scheme including tools for promotion and awareness rising will be elaborated and implemented.

2. Energy

At the April 2014 meeting, the working group nominated Martin Döring from the University of Hamburg as new chair of the energy group.

A draft work program encompasses five main themes, which are climate friendly Wadden Sea Region, energy transition, energy storage, best practice examples/demonstration projects in the WSR and communication and transnational partnership. An inventory is going to be carried out in cooperation with stakeholders and the sub-regions of the WSR. This will provide an overview of recent developments and concepts due to emission reduction, energy transitions and partnerships. In a second step, concrete actions and measures will be elaborated and implemented to developing the WSR into a climate friendly region and to support sustainable energy production and distribution.

3. Shipping & Harbour

No meeting took place so far. The former work group members were informed that it is still envisaged to install a joint group together with the representatives of the shipping authorities. There are signs that the group can be established under the responsibility of the WSF with an independent chair. A decision of the WSB regarding collaboration is expected soon.

4. Agriculture

The goose management group has met in August and elaborated concrete steps for the implementation of the adopted goose management scheme. A first step will be implementing a project group under the responsibility of the regional governments to define concrete aims to accommodate wild geese and to work on implementation strategies. This should be done in close collaboration with the experts and members of the Wadden Sea Forum working group. Negotiations about the composition of the group have started.

5. Cultural Identity

The working group is in favor to continue the work and to contribute to activities in the view of Leeuwarden being European cultural capital 2018. Still, a meeting date to discuss the work contents and procedure has to be settled.

Topical Issues

Besides the work in the different working groups, the WSF elaborated on topical issues, which had an overarching character and concerned different stakeholders and authorities.

1. Risk management

The Wadden Sea Region (WSR) is affected by natural forces as much as by human activities. Both have generated the current appearance of the region – and some of these forces and activities not the least put the coastal societies at risk. Risks and uncertainties represent a challenge for different short and long-term processes including social, economic and the environmental issues.

“Risk management” commonly represents the fields of assessing and action taking with regard to risks and uncertainties. Within this field both, creation of new risk management structures or measures and evaluation or enhancement of existing risk management structures demand for a continuous examination: Who is responsible for which process? Are improvements necessary with regard to responsibilities? Who is in charge for strategic planning processes? Who is responsible for implementing measures? Who might be additionally included in these processes?

Increased risks and uncertainties in the WSR demand for a comprehensive and improved risk management. These risks are not limited to storm surges and coastal protection, but also concern health care of the society, agricultural production due to changes in temperature and water levels as well as due to shifts in growing seasons. Also perceptions of risks vary among stakeholders and within the society.

Besides the contribution to the ENHANCE project (see below), particularly the ICZM group is dealing with this topic and an inventory of risk scenarios will build the basis of the work. The different perceptions of risks would also be of great importance to work towards a better communication about future risks as well as prevention and adaptation measures. This will lead to better risk information and to minimizing the deficits in risk perception. Finally, elements of being prepared coping and living with risks will be elaborated.

The ICZM group is working on guidelines and recommendations regarding risk management in the Wadden Sea Region, taking into account the expertise and measures available today. As a first step, an inventory of existing plans is going to be elaborated. Further steps will be defined on the basis of the inventory.

Projects

1. ENHANCE

In cooperation with the Helmholtz-Zentrum Geesthacht (HZG), the WSF is part in the European research project ENHANCE that is focusing on "enhancing risk management partnerships for catastrophic natural hazards in Europe". Cooperative activities are concentrated in a case study on risk management in the Wadden Sea Region (WSR). The common goal is to foster a common discussion and cross-sectoral sensitization of stakeholders towards different risks in the WSR and to enhance the transnational exchange of knowledge and experiences.

Up to now, two stakeholder workshops on risk management have been held. The main focus of the first workshop was laid on the different perspectives of the stakeholders as well as on assessments of risks and uncertainties in the Wadden Sea Region.

Main findings were:

- With regard to climate change, changes in storm surge patterns and an increasing sea level rise are expected; moreover, climate change is seen as a major risk for increasing inland flooding events, as well as for higher temperatures and changes in precipitation patterns.
- Demographic changes within the WSR could lead to an aging society and strategies have to be developed to meet future needs in order to keep the Region vivid; climate change will have impacts on the healthiness by introduction of new diseases or by an increase of diseases.
- Emigration of young people is expected to become a larger issue; risks on maintaining services are of special public interest; increased migration from other regions and countries to the WSR may have an impact on the regional cultural identity.
- Conflicting spatial uses between different user interest and especially with conservation issues will cause problems.

The second workshop focused on risk and uncertainties with regard to demographic changes. Main objectives were:

- Increasing the understanding of the process of risk management and interrelationships between the various risks and concerns;
- Increasing your understanding of current risk management strategies regarding the existing management measures and potential gaps;
- To find out involvement and the responsibilities in risk management;
- To find out openness and to discuss new ways to handle risks;
- To work with the "bow-tie-analysis" on threats and consequences regarding climate change, imbalance in developments and demographic changes. (The bow-tie analysis clearly displays the links between the potential causes, preventative and mitigative controls and consequences of major hazards.)

2. ARCH

The WSF is also involved in a second project under the EU FP7 framework program (through the secretariat). This project is about managing multiple pressures on lagoons and estuaries. The WSF benefits from the experiences of stakeholder involvement in different case studies across Europe.

Communication

The WSF web site is continuously updated and maintained. The province of Groningen offered support by communication experts to better promote the WSF.

As an on-going task, several presentations about the WSF have been given on events, and to other organizations. The WSF contributed to events on climate change, coastal management and cultural history of the WSR (e.g. ICZM expert workshop of the EU Commission, Littoral 2014 conference, ARCH workshops).

Furthermore, the WSF newsletter has been reactivated as part of the EUCC-D newsletter which is published two-monthly. Up to now, 4 issues have been published. The newsletter is available at <http://www.eucc-d.de/newsletter.html>