

ICZM Participation and Implementation

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The increasing interest in and efforts towards an integrated approach in Coastal Zone management in Belgium, has been described in the National report on the implementation of the European Recommendation on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (2002/413/EC). The report was prepared by and approved by the North Sea and Oceans Steering Committee. The report was presented to the European Commission in February 2006, and gives a state-of-the art of ICZM implementation in Belgium.

For the Belgian situation two major issues are the setting-up of the Co-ordination centre on ICZM, and the focus on land-sea interactions. The Co-ordination centre on ICZM is a collaboration between three authority levels: the provincial, the regional (Flemish region) and the federal level. The Flanders Marine Institute is the partner providing the scientific backup. The main strategic objectives of the Co-ordination centre are:

- ❑ Implementing the European Recommendation on ICZM
- ❑ Stimulate integration of planning and policy in the coastal zone
- ❑ Awareness raising on ICZM

Other institutes which contribute to ICZM are described in chapter 2 of the above mentioned report. ICZM is not a task for one single organisation, but for all those bodies involved in coastal management.

Concerning the land-sea interactions, an analysis was dedicated to the mapping of all land-sea interactions, including a description of the current status, the existing legislation and policies and the consultation bodies. For five land-sea interactions major problems in the management were identified. These will be the focus for future action.

ICZM is a continues and slow process. However, since the mid 90ies, there clearly is a positive trend in moving towards a more integrated approach. The increase in the number of emerging co-operations at management level, and the increase in projects with an integrated approach are a good indicator to illustrate this.

Concerning participation in ICZM, two processes can be distinguished:

- (1) the official circuit –such as foreseen in the Environmental Impact Assessment, Strategic Impact Assessment, spatial planning procedures, in which public consultation is obligatory;

- (2) the informal circuit, where advisory committees or steering groups are set up in a voluntary way.

Recent research done by the Maritime Institute (University Ghent) in the frame of the COREPOINT project and by the Co-ordination centre on ICZM, indicates that especially coastal stakeholders would like to be involved more closely in coastal zone management. Their interest lies especially in being involved in case of specific themes or sites (64%), some 23% would like to be involved always and for coastal management topics in general. At the moment the possibilities and preferences for setting up a coastal forum for stakeholders is looked at. The stakeholders expressed the need for a clear mandate and objectives for the forum, and their wish to let it function as an advising and evaluating body.

The biggest challenge for ICZM lays in dealing with the still very sectoral oriented legislation and authority structures. Integrated working still needs a mental change, with all relevant bodies and actors.

Naturally, also science can help implementing ICZM and participate in this never ending process. BeNCoRe can help providing the link between scientists and managers. BeNCoRe can play a role in bringing scientists from different disciplines together, in identifying scientific stakeholders, in increasing awareness with scientific stakeholders and in improving the participation of scientists in management.