



Comprehensive management plan for Wadden Sea – NL/DE/DK

1. Policy Objective & Theme

- ADAPTATION TO RISK: Managing impacts of climate change and safeguarding resilience of coasts/coastal systems

2. Key approaches

- Integration
- Participation
- Knowledge-based
- Ecosystems based

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

The Trilateral Wadden Sea Plan constitutes the common trans-boundary policy and management plan for the Wadden Sea Area. It is an agreement of how the countries envisage the coordination and integration of management of the Wadden Sea Area and of the projects and actions that must be carried out to achieve the commonly agreed targets. It is very important, that the Wadden Sea Plan expresses a shared vision of the aspired ecological state of the Wadden Sea as a unique tidal transitional water body and its ecosystems. A very clear-cut vision is the biggest positive experience of the Management Plan for Wadden Sea that can be exchanged internationally. The vision of the Wadden Sea Plan is:

- A healthy environment which maintains the diversity of habitats and species, its ecological integrity and resilience as a global responsibility;
- Sustainable use;
- Maintenance and enhancement of values of ecological, economic, historical-cultural, social and coastal protection character, providing aspirations and enjoyment for the inhabitants and users;
- Integrated management of human activities which takes into account the socio-economic and ecological relationship between the Wadden Sea Area and the adjacent areas;
- An informed, involved and committed community.

4. Overview of the case

The Wadden Sea, stretching over 500 km along the North Sea coast of the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark, is the largest trans-boundary transitional water body in Europe. It is a shallow, semi-enclosed tidal flat, the largest tidal flat and barrier island system with extensive salt marshes. A severe deterioration of the Wadden Sea implies a biodiversity loss on a worldwide scale. In 1982, at the Trilateral Governmental Conference in Copenhagen, the “Joint Declaration on the Protection of the Wadden Sea” was signed. In this declaration, the governments recognized their responsibilities for the conservation of the ecosystem.

The Trilateral Wadden Sea Plan was adopted at the 8th Wadden Sea Conference in Stade, Germany in 1997. It constitutes the common trans-boundary policy and management plan for the Wadden Sea Area. WSP is a policy and management plan adopted by governments for a trans-boundary area and therefore has a wider perspective than a traditional management plan for a site in the sense that the WSP encompasses also the vision, principles, policies and measures and is a framework for the integrated protection and management of the Wadden Sea.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

About 3.7 million people live along the Wadden Sea coast, of which about 75,000 live inside the Wadden Sea Region. The Trilateral Wadden Sea Plan (1997) acknowledges this by stating that economic and social values should also be maintained and enhanced. A very essential principle is that unreasonable impairments of the interests of the local population and its traditional uses in the Wadden Sea Region have to be avoided. Any user interests have to be weighed on a fair and equitable basis in the light of the purpose of protection in general, and the particular case concerned. Therefore, a stakeholder forum, the WSF has been established in 2002 in an attempt to implement a sustainability concept to support the development of new social and economic perspectives for the region. This approach is also important with a view to maintain the support for a sound management of the coastal zone. Sustainable development is a key concept in a strategic approach to integrated coastal zone management. In its report “Breaking the Ice” (2005) WSF developed a vision, agreed upon by all its members, that supports the protection of the Wadden Sea Region.

b) Objectives

1. To coordinate trilateral activities and measures to implement a number of international legal instruments in the field of natural environmental protection for a comprehensive protection of the Wadden Sea region as a whole, including its flora and fauna.
2. To achieve, as far as possible, a natural and sustainable ecosystem of the Wadden Sea as the largest tidal flat and barrier island system with extensive salt marshes in which natural processes proceed in an undisturbed way.

6. Implementation of the ICZM Approach (i.e. management, tools, resources)

a) Management

The Wadden Sea Plan is a policy and management plan adopted by governments for a trans-boundary area and therefore has a wider perspective than a traditional management plan for a site in the sense that the Wadden Sea Plan encompasses also the vision, principles, policies and measures and is a framework for the integrated protection and management of the Wadden Sea. A very important precondition for the effectiveness of the implementation of the plan is a very clearly defined biogeographical scope and clear management targets. For the common management six habitat types are distinguished:

- offshore zone;
- beaches and dunes;
- tidal area;
- salt marshes;
- estuaries;
- rural area.

For the first five of these habitats ecological targets were adopted with the objective of maintaining and enhancing the area which is natural, dynamic and undisturbed, including targets for birds and marine mammals.

b) ICZM tool

The Wadden Sea Plan is a coherent approach to the protection and management of the Wadden Sea in a trans-boundary context. It includes the vision, shared principles, targets and policies and management measures combined with actions. The following management principles are fundamental for the common management of the Wadden Sea:

- Principle of Careful Decision Making, i.e. to take decisions on the basis of the best available information;
- Principle of Avoidance, i.e. activities which are potentially damaging to the Wadden Sea should be avoided;

- Precautionary Principle, i.e. to take action to avoid activities which are assumed to have significant damaging impact on the environment, even where there is no sufficient scientific evidence to prove a causal link between activities and their impact;
- Principle of Translocation, i.e. to translocate activities which are harmful to the Wadden Sea environment to areas where they will cause less environmental impact;
- Principle of Compensation, i.e. that the harmful effect of activities which cannot be avoided, must be balanced by compensatory measures; in those parts of the Wadden Sea, where the Principle has not yet been implemented, compensatory measures will be aimed for;
- Principle of Restoration, i.e. that, where possible, parts of the Wadden Sea should be restored if it can be demonstrated by reference studies that the actual situation is not optimal, and that the original state is likely to be re-established;
- Principles of Best Available Techniques and Best Environmental Practice, as defined by the Paris Commission.

7. Cost and resources

Complete costing is not available

8. Effectiveness (i.e. were the foreseen goals/objectives of the work reached?)

A critical precondition to achieve effectiveness is a close coherence of the plan to the EU regulations. Regarding the Habitats, Birds and Water Framework Directives, the Schiermonnikoog Declaration (2005) reaffirmed that the Wadden Sea Plan will be further developed into a trans-boundary management plan in accordance with the stipulations of the mentioned directives.

9. Success and Fail factors

a) Success factors

1. All three participating countries are the 'old' members of the European Union that have a long record of harmonizing the national environmental regulations with the EU requirements.
2. The professional Common Wadden Sea Secretariat is established, which ensures sharing of information, joint monitoring and evaluation of the progress in management, as well as timely elimination of any bottlenecks and conflict resolution.
3. There is a common Trilateral Monitoring and Assessment Program (TMAP) for the Wadden Sea carried out by the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark in the framework of the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation.

b) Fail factors

When the interests of the large business are at stake in a trans-boundary transitional water body, interests of local stakeholders and those of affected states are often played down by the potential hazard source state, which tends to apply the minimal possible environmental impact assessment procedures. Thus, neither one of three partner countries had carried out a trans-boundary strategic environmental assessment for the natural gas extraction projects in their national parts of the Wadden Sea area.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

None as yet

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13. Sources

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Stade Declaration (1997). Ministerial Declaration of the Eighth Trilateral Governmental Conference on the Protection of the Wadden Sea, Stade, October 1997. Common Wadden Sea Secretariat, Wilhelmshaven, Germany.

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UNESCO (2009). Thirty-third session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, Seville, Spain, 22-30 June 2009. Report of Decisions WHC-09/33.COM/20.

14. Relevance for cross-border management of transitional waters

The Wadden Sea, stretching over 500 km along the North Sea coast of the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark, is the largest trans-boundary transitional water body in Europe. A very clear-cut vision is the biggest positive experience of the Management Plan for Wadden Sea, which should be replicated in other trans-boundary transitional water bodies of Europe and worldwide. Therefore, the case study is highly relevant for cross-border management of transitional waters.