



# Implementing NATURA 2000 in the region of Szczecin Lagoon – PL/DE

## 1. Policy Objective & Theme

- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Preserving coastal environment (its functioning and integrity) to share space
- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Sound use of resources and promotion of less resource intensive processes/products
- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Balancing economic, social, cultural development whilst enhancing environment

## 2. Key approaches

- Integration
- Participation
- Ecosystems based approach

## 3. Experiences that can be exchanged

Private initiative backed by sufficient funding and local incentives can ensure long-term conservation and sustainable management of riparian NATURA 2000 habitats of the transitional waters.

## 4. Overview of the case

On the Polish side of Szczecin Lagoon, a number of medium to large grants running simultaneously and successively have been necessary for establishing a privately managed Szczecin delta nature park. Yet, further external funding and additional efforts are needed for progress in cross-border co-operation.

## 5. Context and Objectives

### a) Context

The trans-boundary area of Szczecin Lagoon lies in northwest Poland and northeast Germany. The area developed as a landscape combination of: coastal meadows, wetlands, forests (mostly wet) and waters of the lagoon. That is why area is usually classified as a complex of coastal ecosystems characteristic for inland sea water catchment. It is an extensive lagoon encompassing a trans-boundary area of Poland and Germany of approximately 13.000 km<sup>2</sup> of land understand as local catchment's and waters. The lagoon is surrounded by large wetlands areas consists of meadows and pastures, various types of forests, but also various scale of human settlements as small villages in an agrarian culture landscape with a very rich flora and fauna. Priority bird species important for NATURA 2000 designation include Aquatic Warbler, Common Kingfisher, Tawny Pipit, Bittern, Nightjar, Black Tern, Black Stork, White-tailed Eagle, Black Woodpecker, Corncrake and 25 more.

The nature conservation has been so far understood by (not only) local administrations as a group of restrictions which not allowed for any local development. The NATURA 2000 Network gives the possibilities to show that it is just not a true. The sustainable development of tourism and agriculture are the best example and for such attractive location as Szczecin

Lagoon can be the most “natural” way for development. As Szczecin Lagoon encompasses both, Polish and German parts, the challenge is to ensure the robust socio-economic development and maintenance of the NATURA 2000 areas comprising the most valuable natural and semi-natural habitats on both sides of the border.

Cross-border cooperation is, therefore, a pre-requisite for securing and maintaining the natural values and biodiversity of Szczecin Lagoon whilst ensuring socio-economic development.

## **b) Objectives**

Maintaining and strengthening the ecological integrity of the trans-boundary area by integrating socio-economic development with biodiversity conservation.

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

## **a) Management**

For NATURA 2000 implementation procedures and activities there are no created trans-boundary bodies. The separate individual nature conservation projects have been realised by Polish and German partners. The management methodology on the Polish part of Szczecin Lagoon is quite well recognized. The water surface is under jurisdiction of Maritime Office in Szczecin and this institution is responsible for all kind of management including nature conservation. There is no spatial plan or any NATURA 2000 management plan for the Polish part of Szczecin Lagoon yet. A privately managed Odra Delta nature park was established on the Polish side of Szczecin Lagoon in 2005 for the protection of the most valuable NATURA 2000 habitats.

The park is located in Stepnica Community comprising two sites designated to the European Ecological Network NATURA 2000 known as: Łąki Skoszewskie PLB 320007 (part) and Zalew Szczeciński PLB 320009 (part). The Odra Delta Nature Park covers app. 40 sq.km, of from which: 7.9 sq.km belongs to Society for The Coast (EUCC-Poland) as coastal meadows, wetlands, 4.2 sq.km belongs to National Forestry as mixed and pine forest, 26.7 sq.km belongs to Maritime Office in Szczecin as waters of the lagoon and 1.2 sq.km belongs to other owners including channels, roads, private lands.

## **b) ICZM tool**

Thanks to the financial support from EECNET Action Fund and cooperation with EUCC-Coastal & Marine Union, Society for The Coast (EUCC-Poland) was able to purchase or long-term lease more than 1.000 ha of extremely valuable grounds located on the east part of Szczecin Lagoon. Another project that provided support to the area, was “Odra Delta nature park – demonstration active nature management as a path to sustainable development”. It was supported by Dutch Government (PINMATRA/2002/026) and implemented in cooperation among Society for The Coast (EUCC-Poland), as well as EUCC – The Coastal & Marine Union (International Secretariat) and Vereniging Natuurmonumenten.

The first in such a scale privately managed nature park in Poland is dedicated to practical implementation of NATURA 2000. Management of the park mobilized stakeholders on different tiers comprising a local community, a local forestry unit, as well as regional water management and nature conservation bodies. The entire network is maintained and facilitated by a national NGO supported by an international coastal and marine cooperation network and international funding. Establishing Odra Delta Nature Park became quite an important in the light of new chances and challenges for Stepnica Local Community, where the bigger part of the area is located.

Society for The Coast has prepared the management plan for Odra Delta Nature Park aimed to develop it into a model coastal terrain for integration of nature conservation with sustainable tourism and extensive agricultural use. Special attention is given to local initiatives focusing on soft tourism development by supporting a network of individual local investors and Society for The Coast in tourism sector (B&B, pensions, campsites, horse tours) with special attention to ecological tourism and education. The herd of wild horses (Konik Polski) (about 105) and primitive meat cows (Scottish Highlander) (about 35) comprise a specific attraction, but also a very important tool for nature conservation. These grazers play a significant role in short grass keeping, what is crucial important for large group of wet meadows birds. For local farmers (also potential) is a good example local for possible development in agrarian sector.

## **7. Cost and resources**

Complete costing is not available

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

Finding the way for common implementation of NATURA 2000 for the both part of Szczecin Lagoon is a crucial important for proper realising the nature conservation and sustainable development aspects. The conception of model areas on both sites, where can be shown how this system is working gives guarantee for high effects in the broader contexts. As well as species and habitat management, tools for conservation and sustainability prepared in the common strategy documents, taking into consideration European legal context.

## **9. Success and Fail factors**

The described above report can give a general overview for new concept of practical implementation of NATURA 2000 in the scale of local community and as the model concept to sustainable development. It is at least very important on the long way of transformation from “post-kolkhoz landscape” to nature oriented developed region. The nature conservation has been so far understood by (not only) local administrations as a group of restrictions which hadn't allow for any local development. The NATURA 2000 Network gives the possibilities to show that it is just not a true. The sustainable development of tourism and agriculture are the best example and for such an attractive location as Stepnica Local Community can be the most “natural” way for development. The problems however are with the lack of knowledge, experience and because of serious and significant mistakes in public communication in previous years, unfortunately made by Polish government. The infrastructure of Stepnica Local Community is actually not prepared to these functions. The first concept of strategy for local tourism development has been undertaken in 2010, but still the concept of “using” nature as a very specific, but very valuable “product” is not underlined.

## **10. Unforeseen outcomes**

None as yet

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## **13. Sources**

No published sources available

## **14. Relevance for cross-border management of transitional waters**

Szczecin Lagoon is a very good example of a cross-border transitional water body where the reinforcement of the environmental integrity requires close trans-boundary cooperation of stakeholders on various tiers. The initiative of establishing the Odra Delta nature park could serve as a pattern to follow in other riparian areas on both sides of the Polish-German border, particularly taking into account local cooperation in offering nature tourism services along the cross-border tourist trails (nature guiding, hiking, biking and horse-riding tours, lodging, boating etc.).