



Wadden Sea Forum – a trilateral stakeholder body for transitional water region – NL/DE/DK

1. Policy Objective & Theme

- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Preserving coastal environment (its functioning and integrity) to share space
- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Balancing economic, social, cultural development whilst enhancing environment

2. Key approaches

- Integration
- Participation
- Ecosystems based
- Socio-economic

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

The main positive experience of the WSF activity, which could be replicated in other areas, is effective involvement of stakeholders in the sustainable management of the trans-boundary transitional water bodies. It is one of the central efforts of WSF to enhance bottom-up processes compatible with the principles of democracy wherever possible. In order to create a sound basis for the implementation of sustainable development strategies, stakeholders must be actively involved in these processes.

Another positive experience of the WSF activity relies on the broad geographical scope. WSF stresses that there are many interactions between the Wadden Sea and the adjacent mainland and that a sustainable development strategy for the Wadden Sea Region must integrate policies for the Wadden Sea proper and the adjacent mainland.

4. Overview of the case

The Wadden Sea Forum (WSF) was established in 2002, following a decision at the 9th Trilateral Governmental Conference 2001 in Esbjerg as a cross-border stakeholder forum and an independent body consisting of representatives of the sectors Agriculture, Energy, Fisheries, Industry and Harbour, Nature Protection, Tourism, as well as local and regional authorities from The Netherlands, Germany (Niedersachsen and Schleswig-Holstein) and Denmark. The Ministerial Declaration of the 10th Trilateral Governmental Conference 2005 in Schiermonnikoog reinforced the importance of stakeholder participation and recognizes that the achievement of the Guiding Principle of the Cooperation “can only be obtained in cooperation with those who live, work and recreate in the area and are willing to endow its protection”. Geographically the WSF deals not only with the Wadden Sea Area but with the wider Wadden Sea Region. With the establishment of WSF as an independent stakeholder forum, the inhabitants of the Wadden Sea Region have been given an opportunity to get actively involved in the activities of the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation (TWSC). Based on the WSF report "Breaking the Ice" (Wadden Sea Forum, 2005) and new developments in the Region, WSF approved a profound work program, which is under implementation.

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 oversee, stimulate, support, facilitate and evaluate the implementation of the WSF strategies and action plan for sustainable development.
2. To exchange information on experiences and best practice with regard to and foster sustainable development in the Wadden Sea Region.
3. To bring together the sectoral interests of its members.
4. To exchange views on general themes and topical issues.
5. To prepare advice on issues related to sustainable development and integrated coastal zone management.
6. To initiate and implement projects and actions on topical issues.
7. To serve as consultation body for governments.

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

a) Management

The Steering Committee is responsible for the preparation of the WSF meetings and the coordination of the implementation of the Action Plan. The Secretariat of the WSF runs the daily activities of the WSF between the meetings. It also issues and distributes a bimonthly newsletter. The WSF delegates advisors for the Trilateral Wadden Sea Board. The technical preparation of the meetings is done in six Working Groups.

b) ICZM tool

The WSF "Breaking the Ice" was adopted in 2005. It outlines the starting points for sustainable development perspectives of the Wadden Sea Region. WSF was established in 2002, following a decision at the 9th Trilateral Governmental Conference of the TWSC in 2001. WSF is an independent platform of stakeholders from the Wadden Sea Region. It consists of 41 members, representing the sectors agriculture, energy, fisheries, industry and harbours, nature protection, tourism and recreation, as well as local and regional governments from the four Wadden Sea subregions in The Netherlands, Lower Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein and Denmark. The WSF process is guided by a plenary meeting, a Steering Committee and a chairman, in accordance with Rules of Procedure. The plenary meeting is the decision-making body.

7. Cost and resources

Complete costing is not available

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

The effectiveness of WSF relies upon the representativeness of its membership, clear and effective structure, clear-cut vision, goals, objectives and action plan as well as a thorough support from the trilateral governmental cooperation bodies of the Wadden Sea. In 2008 a Memorandum of Understanding was concluded between WSF and TWSC recognizing the importance of a close cooperation. It is based on the mutual acknowledgement by WSF and TWSC of the Shared Principles including the Guiding Principle, the Shared Vision and the Targets as laid down in the Wadden Sea Plan, respecting existing protection levels and ensuring sustainable economic development and quality of life.

The effectiveness of WSF is also fostered by joint cooperation projects with the governmental institutions providing relevant input to the regional Wadden Sea advisory bodies and submitting the results to the Trilateral Wadden Sea Conferences on a regular basis.

9. Success and Fail factors

a) Success factors

1. Wadden Sea Forum is acknowledged as independent trilateral advisory and consultation body to the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation which prepares relevant statements and background information.
2. The dedicated working groups of the Wadden Sea Forum comprised of the professionals in the field work on most relevant topical issues to find a balance between different interests in the Wadden Sea Region.
3. A step forward to a healthy and sustainable Wadden Sea Region was also the adoption of an Memorandum of Understanding between the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation and the Wadden Sea Forum in 2008. According to the Memorandum, the Wadden Sea Forum will be consulted and prepare advice on matters regarding sustainable development of the Wadden Sea Region and will be consulted in the framework of the further progress on the implementation of the Wadden Sea Plan, the national ICZM strategies and other issues of relevance for the Wadden Sea Region.

b) Fail factors

There is still insufficient or lacking cooperation between local, regional, national and EU authorities in the preparation, implementation, enforcement and coordination of rules and regulations in the Wadden Sea Region. A sustainable development perspective for the Region requires better and intensified cooperation between responsible authorities.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

None as yet

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13. Sources

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Wadden Sea Forum (2005). *Breaking the ice*. Final Report of the Wadden Sea Forum, February 2005, Wadden Sea Forum. Wilhelmshaven, Germany, 72 p.

De Jong F. and Vollmer M. (2005). *The first steps: Stakeholder participation and ICZM in the international Wadden Sea Region*. In: Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau- und Wohnungswesen und Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung (Hrsg.) (2005): Nationale IKZM-Strategien – Europäische Perspektiven und Entwicklungstrends. Konferenzbericht zur Nationalen Konferenz 28.02-01.03.2005 in Berlin, Bonn, pp. 27–32.

14. Relevance for cross-border management of transitional waters

Wadden Sea is the largest transitional water body of Europe stretching over in three countries. WSF activities encompass the entire Wadden Sea Area. Extending from the traditional nature protection focused approach of the trilateral cooperation WSF focuses on development issues and developed a range of development proposals which are expected to guide future development within the Wadden Sea Region. Therefore, the case study is highly relevant for cross-border management of transitional waters.