

Nature conservation aspects of Szczecin Lagoon (southern Baltic Sea) in the context of transboundary location

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The aim of this presentation is to describe the need for cross-border action focused on nature protection in the whole area of Szczecin Lagoon and its surroundings. Szczecin Lagoon is located in central part of Europe within boundaries of Poland and Germany. Water quality in the Lagoon is critically important for Baltic Sea condition. These two reservoirs are linked by three narrow straits: Piana (located in Germany), Swina and Dziwna (located in Poland) which transport water from the Lagoon to the Baltic Sea. Periodically, sea storms cause infusions of saline waters, leading to the occurrence of brackish waters in the Lagoon.

Improvement of water transparency in the Lagoon is a very important issue. One from the practical proposals, based on scientific background promoted by German partners in ARTWEI Project is purification of the water by using mussel farms. ARTWEI Project (Action for the Reinforcement of the Transitional Waters' Environmental Integrity) is focused on the lagoons located in the southern area of the Baltic Sea. It is quite important that one of the main goals is to create and promote Good Practice Code of Conduct among the newly-founded Transitional Waters Stakeholder Bodies.

Nature conservation issues are extremely important for both maintaining ecological balance of nature and the life of local inhabitants. Transboundary location enforces the cross-border cooperation in the field of environmental protection. Natura 2000 area covers the entire surface of the Szczecin Lagoon and it can be expected that the rational methods of protection and planning of this unique area will be developed in the near future. It should be noted that both countries operate different systems of environmentally valuable land management. There are also other protected areas on both sides of the Lagoon, such as Wolin National Park in Poland and three nature parks: Stettin Lagoon, Island Usedom and Peene Valley Landscape in Germany. There is also a network of reserves. Undoubtedly, there are elements of the environment which should be put under special protection in both Little Lagoon (German side) and Big Lagoon (Polish side). These include elements of biotic and abiotic environment such as animals – like the white eagle and crane, morphological elements of postglacial landscape, cliffs characterized by high dynamics and islands of reverse (back) delta.

Presentation from the ARTWEI project