

Workshop on European Coastal Indicators and Data

The European Topic Centre on Terrestrial Environment (ETC-TE) of the European Environment Agency (EEA), together with the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) organized a workshop on coastal indicators and data in the framework of the European Commission's working group on ICZM indicators. The meeting, held in La Valette, was supported by COASTWATCH, a GMES/GSE project. The MEPA in Malta kindly hosted the workshop.

The meeting gathered a small number of experts and decision makers that work on coastal reporting and indicators from different perspectives, who participated actively in working sessions to define best ways of using existing indicators to measure and assess a number of relevant coastal issues. Mr Ronan Uhel (EEA) and Mr Andrew Calleja (MEPA) were chairing the event.

EEA/ETC-TE is preparing an Assessment report on the State of the Coasts in Europe to support the EC evaluation of progress in implementing the EU Recommendations on ICZM in 2006; a background document by the end of 2004 will also contribute to EEA's State and outlook report on Europe's environment 2005. To this end, it appears that the knowledge on coastal environment is scattered, isolated in place and time, therefore largely disconnected from regular and integrated monitoring and assessment activities.

At the same time, there is a need for a common European understanding of what is the diversity of coastal systems in order to give on the policy level visibility to this interface area in a geo-spatial and integrated perspective, linking land and sea, as well as bio-physical and socioeconomic and cultural processes.

At EU level, the European Commission's Working Group on Indicator and Data (WG-ID) has been working since October 2002 under the mandate of the EU ICZM Expert Group to build a set of indicators to support the countries in their national strategy and to analyse the coastal trends in the context of assessing sustainability issues. Some Member States are developing some indicator tests at national and regional level using the WGID indicators.

Moreover, at the end of April 2004, the EU ICZM Expert Group supported the WG-ID in submitting a tender to an INTERREG IIIC bid whose objective is to develop the ICZM indicators on sustainable development at the European level with different regions and countries.

Regional seas are also working intensively on the development of indicators. BARCOM has endorsed the EU Recommendations for ICZM and together with PAP/RAC and the Blue Plan has developed a number of coastal indicators for the Mediterranean Sea. VASAB and the INTERREG project BALTCOAST are focussing on spatial planning to address both land and sea issues. Other initiatives such as COASTWATCH and the Commissionfunded project EUROSION are also proposing a number of indicators.

The workshop in La Valette had therefore as a main objective to highlight key developments and outcomes across the various initiatives and projects and brought us a step closer to building a common European understanding of how to best tackle the main challenges facing coastal areas in their development.

The main discussion points addressed by the workshop participants were:

- Ø The context in which to build indicators
- Ø The content of the indicators
- Ø Validation of the indicators
- Ø Indicator Coverage
- Ø Relations between indicators and assessment
- Ø Put in relation user and supplier sides

The workshop was very useful for the development of a harmonized and consistent approach for coastal information at different scales and respective management levels (regional sea, national, sub-regional, local) in a harmonious and consistent way.

It was demonstrated that there is a common need to define a good analytical framework to make indicators comparable and consolidate indicator methods. This will involve issues like comparable information sources, from which spatial information can be combined with statistics, enhancing multi-scale techniques, land and ecosystem accounts and other elements, which will allow a better assessment of the coastal environment.

The list of 27 coastal indicators acknowledged by EU ICZM Expert group will be developed further and shall be used as a basis for defining and building our common framework.

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