

A free, on-line, multimedia, internet-based training package on ICZM – Central & Eastern Europe

1. Policy Objective & Theme

- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Preserving coastal environment (its functioning and integrity) to share space

2. Key Approaches

- Knowledge-based

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

A free, easy-to-use, effective, on-line ICZM learning tool for use by policy-makers and planners.

4. Overview of the case

A bottom-up approach involving user groups led to the development of a free, on-line distance learning tool for ICZM. One of its unique points is that it is available, in full, in many different languages. It has eight modules which allow an easy-to-follow, comprehensive and enjoyable course which can be followed at the learner's own pace and with his/her own focus.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

During a meeting in Split, Croatia, in 2000, 18 governmental representatives of the Baltic, Black, Mediterranean and Caspian Seas came together to discuss their common problems with respect to the implementation of ICZM. One of the main outcomes was the recognition for the need of a distance vocational training tool. It should communicate ICZM information, experience and ideas on a longer term basis, be free and on-line and available in national languages. As a result, a Netherlands-based NGO, the Coast & Marine Union (EUCC) set out to try and raise funds from various sources. Grants from the EU and Dutch government have seen the realisation of this learning instrument, called CoastLearn.

There are already a number of universities and institutes throughout Europe which offer ICZM courses but not only are they expensive to enrol, they require travel budgets, a time commitment of several days or longer and they are generally in English. They are also very much tailored to western European and US situations and problems and in most cases are part of an academic education programme. Other courses are available on-line but, again, have to be paid for before they can be used. Of course, the advantage of these paid courses is that there is generally a tutor available for feed-back.

b) Objectives

To develop a free, on-line learning tool that would provide policy-makers with a course on ICZM which would be easy-to-follow, comprehensive, tailored to the regional policy context and, hopefully, enjoyable to complete.

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

a) Management

A number of grants have been awarded over the years overseen by Coast & Marine Union (EUCC), The Netherlands. The lead organisation has worked together with different groupings of partners to realise different modules in a number of different languages. A Helpdesk run by experienced staff of the EUCC in the Netherlands and backed up by ICZM trainers and experts of EU partner organisations could be contacted for help. The most original aspect of the CoastLearn approach has been the co-operation between western European ICZM training experts and their colleagues in central and eastern European countries as well as Turkey and North-Africa to jointly develop new CoastLearn products. The needs of the Eastern and Southern partners are in the forefront of the project.

b) ICZM tools

CoastLearn is a distance vocational training package on ICZM that makes extensive use of the electronic media. This self-learning tool targets primarily coastal managers and planners working at local, sub-national, and national levels. The secondary target groups are university students and NGOs. Whilst CoastLearn was originally tailored to the training and technical needs of pre-accession countries in transition, it has proven to be of value for non-target countries as well. The course aims at training professionals (both practitioners and trainers) in accessing internet based information for continuous update of knowledge on ICZM.

The main feature of CoastLearn is that students can study at their own pace and anywhere they want. It is moreover a simple tool that does not require sophisticated computers or software for its use. In order to counteract Internet connection problems, CoastLearn is also available on CD-ROM. It has a modular structure. The modules can be studied independently, are illustrated with figures, exercises and good & bad practice examples and can be supported by tutorial services.

To date, the following modules have been completed: Principles of ICZM, Policy Analysis, Planning, Environmental Risk Assessment, Sustainable Tourism, GIS, Public Participation, and Biodiversity. The modules are divided into chapters, which give details on the concepts of each module topic, how to implement the concepts ("practice"), the expected learning outcomes, and hyperlinks related to the specific topic. There are also practice examples to test the learner as well as a Simulation Game. Although not all possible modules have yet been developed, it is already a powerful training tool and a starting point for the ICZM learning process. For those users who want to know more, each module contains a link list and references for further in depth studies. The major point of difference with other on-line courses is its full availability in languages other than English viz, Arabic, Croatian, Estonian, French, Greek, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Romanian, Russian, and Turkish. It promotes the exchange of knowledge and experience by providing practical examples and case studies illustrating the most important issues.

CoastLearn is not a final product. It can grow much further and needs to be updated regularly. Existing CoastLearn modules will be translated into new languages. Results of internet based discussions about the CoastLearn modules and the suitability of their application are fed back to the module developers in order to improve the training materials. The experience so far has been very motivating and funding is constantly being sought for additional modules and other language versions.

7. Cost and resources

The service is free of charge. It was set up using a multitude of different grants and national sources of money.

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

The project achieved its major goals, as an independent evaluation conducted in all countries of the project partnership has shown. The modules were very well received and the overwhelming majority of users were content or very content with the language and structure of CoastLearn. Nearly 95 percent think that the tool is relevant to their country showing that the nearly impossible task of bridging cultures, socio-political contexts and natural conditions in countries as far apart as Estonia and Turkey or Great Britain and Romania has been achieved. The tool is regarded as appropriate to the main target groups – coastal managers and NGOs – but just as well to university staff and students. The simulation game was seen as an important endeavour to embark on and a first step for meeting the need for such innovative forms of teaching in ICZM. The overall verdict on CoastLearn is that it is a practical, innovative and exciting learning tool which should be even further improved.

9. Success and Fail factors

The fact that this was a bottom up approach from the beginning ensured its success. The need was identified by the user groups. Further engaging them in the development of the tool was very important. In this instance, the availability of European and other funding was critical. The willingness of the lead organisation to keep the instrument up-to-date when funding was lacking was also significant. CoastLearn is being visited by 3800 users/month and still growing.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

CoastLearn has been used by experienced, international consultancies in Romania as well as Georgia, Ukraine, Jordan and Eritrea. It is being promoted among the Regional Sea Programmes to be included in their training initiatives as well. In 2005, it was introduced into the Erasmus Mundus European Joint Master in Water and Coastal Management at Cádiz University in Spain.

11. Prepared by

Alan Pickaver, Coast & Marine Union (EUCC), The Netherlands

12. Verified by

Irene Lucius, WWF Danube Carpathian Programme, Austria

13. Sources

- www.coastlearn.org
- http://www.encora.eu/coastalwiki/Catalogue_of_ICZM_courses_and_programmes