Viru-Peipsi catchment area management plan - EE

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
- Knowledge-based
- Ecosystems based approach
- Socio-economic

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

The full development of a transboundary river basin management plan as prescribed by the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

4. Overview of the case

A transboundary, River Basin Management Plan was drawn up taking into account economic, social, environmental and the transboundary aspects of water management. Specific activities were conducted throughout implementation to reinforce Estonian administrative capacities and awareness raising among stakeholders. The project was an EU Life III project.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

The Viru-Peipsi basin in northeast Estonia is one of the few the European Union shares with a non-Member State, Russia. It has a combined population of 484,000 and covers an area of 15,760km², i.e. roughly one third of Estonia. The region is facing a large array of problems: heavily industrialised in the north, and mostly agricultural in the south. Serious damage to water resources in the northeast have been caused by oil-shale mining and energy production, chemical and other industrial activities. In the south, agriculture and point source pollution from insufficient municipal sewage treatment has contributed to significant pollution, particularly to surface water bodies. Therefore the approach had to be multi-disciplinary and transboundary.

The WFD protects all waters, rivers, lakes, coastal waters, and groundwaters. It sets ambitious objectives to ensure that all waters meet "good status" by 2015. It also sets up a system of management within river basins that recognises that water systems do not stop at political borders. The Directive requires cross-border co-operation between countries and all involved parties. It ensures active participation of all stakeholders, including NGOs and local communities, in water management activities. It also ensures reduction and control of pollution from all sources like agriculture, industrial activity, and urban areas etc. It further balances the interests of the environment with those who depend on it.

b) Objectives

The objectives were to support implementation of the Water Framework Directive in the context of Lake Peipsi Basin and Viru

counties in Estonia.

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

a) Management

The Estonian Ministry of the Environment,is the highest executive body for environmental protection in Estonia responsible for water policy planning and implementation. Project partners were: Tallinn Technical University, Estonian Agricultural University, AS Maves, Maaja Vesi, Wildlife Estonia, and Estonian Water Consultancy Ltd. A complex management system of the project ensured thorough information of Estonian and Russian authorities. In Estonia, a Project Steering Committee supervised the implementation of the project; technical and financial reports were submitted to an Estonian-Russian Basin Steering Committee for final endorsement.

b) ICZM tools

A multi-sectoral inventory and assessment of water resources and their management had to be conducted first. Then, a detailed programme of measures aimed at achieving good status for water resources had to be developed, taking into consideration economic, social, environmental, and transboundary aspects of water management. Specific activities have been conducted throughout implementation to reinforce Estonian administrative capacities. This has led to the development of information tools, training of staff, information diffusion, and awareness building among stakeholders.

The status of fifty rivers was determined i.e. of all water courses having a basin exceeding 100km². Although investigations were conducted on a relatively small number of rivers over the six hundred water courses of the basin, they concerned all in all 25% of the total length of the rivers, i.e. 2,268km. The catchment area considered, taken as a whole, covers a surface of more than 14,280km², i.e. 92% of the area. Following expert assessment, 4% of the water courses length may be classified as poor, 29% as moderate, and 67% as good. Among the lakes assessed, 9% belong to high quality class, 48% to good, 39% to moderate and 4% only can be characterized by poor quality. Existing data suggests that the ecological status of coastal waters is rather good than moderate. From a technical and economic point of view, it was concluded that it would be impossible to achieve a good water quality by 2015 as a consequence of de-watering and contamination by oil-shale waste produc

Particular measures have also been taken to enhance monitoring stations. The Project conducted a thorough characterization of the economic significance of water uses and services in the area, before forecasting their future evolution by developing a baseline scenario. Parallel to the characterization of water use, the project launched public consultation on water issues with stakeholders of different professional profiles and geographical origins. Cost recovery levels of water services have been assessed for three sectors of the economy: households, agriculture, and industry. The last step in the economic analysis, the baseline scenario, was aimed at describing changes that may occur up to 2015 in water uses and in cost recovery level of services

An impact reduction programme was also conducted to define the needs of public water supply, sewer and storm-water systems, of settlements of more than 500 inhabitants. Last but not least, environmental authorities, environmental managers, experts, and other stakeholders have been trained in various aspects of water management, from water sampling to economic aspects of water policy and relevant EU and Estonian legislation in order to strengthen institutional capacity.

7. Cost and resources

No costs are available.

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

A first draft version of the River Basin Management Plan was completed in Spring 2005. Both public comments received during public consultation and experts' comments of officials consulted were used to finalise the Plan. The final document was expected in 2009 with implementation to begin in 2010.

9. Success and Fail factors

Training courses, monitoring equipment, computer hardware and software were provided to the County Environmental Services and to the Estonian Environment Information Centre to create a solid base for future implementation of the WFD. Close cooperation with French and Finnish specialists raised the motivation of locals and helped their understanding of the overall philosophy of the WFD. The inventory and data gathering put into the fore the weakness of the existing monitoring network, as well as the information missing for assessing the state of surface and groundwater bodies. Public discussions concerning the plan of measures in the Counties revealed that there are some hotspots important for local authorities which were not taken into account during the elaboration of the draft river basin management plan. Funding provided by the EU Life III programme was also considered important.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

The positive impact goes beyond the Estonian border as it represents an important test for collaboration with a non-European Union Member State.

11. Prepared by

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12. Verified by

It has not been possible to have this case verified.

13. Sources

- Viru-Peipsi catchment area management plan draft (2005) Estonian Ministry of the Environment
- Viru-Peipsi CAMP Summary Report (2006) Estonian Ministry of the Environment and the European Commision
- www.ctc.ee (Peipsa Centre for Transboundary Cooperation)
- www.envir.ee (Estonian Ministry of the Environment)

Viru Peipsi CAMP_english (7.48 MB)

Viru Peipsi CAMP_summary (4.28 MB)