The use of diverse instruments to ensure multi-use sustainability in a port city, Ventspils - LV

1. Policy Objective & Theme

- ADAPTATION TO RISK: Managing impacts of climate change and safeguarding resilience of coasts/coastal systems
- ADAPTATION TO RISK: Preventing and managing natural hazards and technological (human-made) hazards
- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Preserving coastal environment (its functioning and integrity) to share space
- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Improving competitiveness

2. Key Approaches

- Integration
- Participation
- Ecosystems based approach
- Socio-economic
- Technical

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

How different activities can be integrated in a management approach that uses a variety of instruments to avoid conflicts before they occur amongst different stakeholder groups.

4. Overview of the case

The case study describes methods and planning instruments that have been used by Ventspils city, at the municipal level, to develop the town whilst preserving valuable natural resources. This entails optimally satisfying the interests of all parties involved (different stakeholders and institutions, including developers and environmentalists as well as the general public), as well as ensuring economic growth and the meeting of social needs e.g recreation. Ventspils has been able to prevent conflicts and solve potential problems before conflict arises.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

Ventspils is the sixth largest city in Latvia situated in the north-west on the Baltic Sea at the outlet of the River Venta. The total area of the city is 55km2, with 44,000 inhabitants (2006). It is an important transport hub with an ice free deep-water port which has one of the largest cargo turn-overs in the Baltic region. At the same time Ventspils is a green city – almost half of the total area (45%) of the city is covered by natural flora that consists mainly of pine forests (one quarter of the natural area). The River Venta, with a length within the city borders of 3.75 m and a width between 150-300m, divides the town. The total length of coastline in Ventspils city is 11.85km and is characterised by the beach and a dune zone along the shore reaching a maximum height of 15-20m. The beach used for recreation is a 300m wide and 1.2km long section of the seashore, situated to the south of the territory of the Free Port of Ventspils. Almost a quarter of the city’s administrative territory is occupied by the Free Port.

b) Objectives

Planning for the development of economic activities in a free port area while at the same time preserving valuable natural resources, minimising environmental pollution and facilitating beach recreation.

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

a) Management

At a national level, the Marine Environmental Board implements the state policy in marine environmental protection, sea coast development and use of sea natural resources under the Ministry of the Environment which co-ordinates implementation of the National Environmental Policy Plan. Ventspils City Council is responsible for planning and policy implementation of the city and those areas impacted by the city and its inhabitants.

b) ICZM tools

Ventspils City Council has used a wide variety of instruments to effect integrated management of the coastline. The over-arching policy is the Environmental Policy Plan and its action programme. This Plan is used by the city as a flexible environmental management tool, which allows it to promptly make informed decisions on effective solutions for various environmental problems and to ensure continuous monitoring of the implementation of the environmental action programme. The plan facilitates negotiations with large companies encouraging them to be more active in the development or improvement of their environmental management systems, further reduction of the risk of accidents and reduction of pollution. The plan also provides for the dissemination of more comprehensive information to the public on the environmental status of the city and encourages greater public involvement in decision-making on environmental issues. It is under-scored by the National Environmental Policy Plan which defines environmental protection principles and the main goals and measures for their achievement. Special attention is paid to the integration of the Environmental Policy in all industries of the Latvian national economy, as well as at the level of national, regional and local planning. Ventspils city has developed, from its Environmental Policy Plan, a Development Strategy for 2005-2015

In 2004, Latvia introduced the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in compliance with the requirements of the EC SEA Directive. A strategic assessment was applied to the city Planning Document (2006-2018) which reflects the long-term development trends of the municipality, determining the current and the planned use of the area, as well as prospective research areas (construction of the northern port), for which opportunities of use will be researched in the future. In addition, the planning document defines the protective belts and also envisages development of infrastructure e.g. a centralised water supply and sewerage network. It included the planning document to change the width of the Baltic Sea protective belts in the south-western part of Ventspils. It determined that to maintain the structure of the established and fore-dunes, changes would be needed for visitors e.g. no-go areas, walkways, designated recreation areas.

Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) are another tool which have been carried out for a number of reconstructions in the largest oil and product terminals in the port territory, as well as for the construction of a number of new production facilities and a sewage water treatment plant. In cases where, according to the law, an EIA is not required, the Ventspils Regional Environmental Board has been carrying out initial EIAs, and only thereafter technical requirements for design and construction works are being issued.

Ventspils has also relied on good co-operation with the Free Port of Ventspils Authority. This authority provides various kinds of environmentally important services including the removal and the utilisation of different types of waste that are polluted with oil and oil products, the removal and purification of polluted waters from the washing of cargo tanks, and the removal of polluted ballast waters. In the case of oil or oil product spillage, it is possible to contain the spillage with absorbent booms within 15 minutes after which the polluted water area can be closed off with effective light booms and the oil skimmed. The River Venta is the only maritime access to the port of Ventspils and must be regularly dredged as a minimum depth for sea going vessels has to be guaranteed. The Port Authority disposes 305.000 m3 annually in a special dumping area situated 4 nautical miles from the northern breakwater and 1.7 nautical miles from the shore line.

Ventspils has also found that participation in the Blue Flag movement is another good method for promotion of beach management and environmental education. The city government decided to get involved in the Blue Flag movement in 1997 and each year since 1999, the Blue Flag has been awarded for the beach, showing not only the development of bathing places and cleanliness of bathing waters but also a systematic and purposeful approach to solving environmental issues at local government level.

7. Cost and resources

No figures are available.

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

The management methods chosen were geared towards preventing conflict before it needed to be resolved. They encouraged elaboration of an integrated strategy for the coastal area and the sustainable development of the whole town thereby facilitating the best possible decision-making. They have transformed the city and environs from an ecologically disadvantaged area to a well-kept and environmentally conscious city.

9. Success and Fail factors

Ventspils City Council have implemented a wide range of different tools as well as involving all interest groups viz. municipal and local institutions, developers, enterprises, NGOs, independent consulting companies and scientists. It also co-operates with neighbouring, coastal, local governments because the environmental policy and management system cover not only the city territory but also all those areas around the city, which are of interest to and impacted by Ventspils and its inhabitants.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

None as yet.

11. Prepared by

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12. Verified by

It has not been possible to verify this case.

13. Sources

- Coastal Zone Management in Ventspils (2006). I. Zilniece, T. Valdmane, I. Kraule, S. Galindoma & L. Kule, Ventspils City Council, Latvia.
- National Environmental Policy Plan 2004 – 2008 Summary, (2004) Ministry of Environment, Riga, Republic of Latvia
- www.ventspils.lv

Coastal Zone Management in Ventspils (1.25 MB)

Mitraju aizsardziba Kemeru NP (3.26 MB)

National Environmental Policy Plan (861.19 KB)