

River basin analyses and management – Eastern Baltic

1. Policy Objective & Theme

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

2. Key Approaches

- Participation
- Knowledge-based
- Ecosystems based approach

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

That transnational collaboration can successfully contribute to the harmonised implementation of European guidelines or directives.

4. Overview of the case

A number of partners co-operated to develop management plans for trans-boundary river systems as part of the implementation of the Water Framework Directive.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

There are 14 large international river basins within the Baltic Sea region. The Eastern Baltic Sea region includes the trans-boundary river basins of the Narva (between Estonia and Russia, extending to Latvia), Daugava- Zapadnaya Dvina (between Latvia and Belarus, but also Lithuania and Russia) and Nemunas (between Lithuania and Belarus, but also Poland, Latvia and Russia).

In 2000, the EU adopted the Water Framework Directive (WFD), which had to be implemented step-by-step nationally by 2009. The implementation of the WFD required systematic procedures and the analysis of river basin management. In the WFD's Common Implementation Strategy (CIS), established in 2001, the Member States committed themselves to defining common goals. In order to jointly and systematically develop effective river basin management, intense co-operation was needed at the regional and local levels to conduct pilot projects that would test different approaches. Implementation had to consider the characteristics of water management in neighbourhood countries, (including those outside the EU such as Russia and Belarus), which also influence water protection in the Baltic Sea Region.

Two main options of river basin management have been identified, one in which the main authority of the river basin district is located at the national level and the other with the main authority at the regional level. Strong national actors in the Baltic Sea region are the basis for implementation in Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. Overall responsibility for the elaboration and the approval of river basin management plans for all river basin districts have been assigned to one central water management authority that in turn has appointed sub-ordinate co-ordination bodies at the regional level. Strong regional actors of the WFD implementation in e.g. Estonia, Finland and Germany have strengthened the role of regional water management authorities. In these countries regional authorities have become responsible for co-ordinating and producing the river basin management plans albeit under national supervision. Additionally, the competent authorities are part of the water management administration that previously existed. In Estonia and Finland these authorities have traditionally been state representatives at the regional level.

b) Objectives

The aim was to improve the ecological and water management co-operation in the Eastern Baltic Sea region, in the field of river basin management planning, by creating a network of partners from EU and non-EU countries. The partnership set out to support the implementation of the WFD by, first, comparing, evaluating and testing different water management tools and methods, and then producing guidelines to enhance planning processes by linking the WFD with more general spatial plans for the trans-national region.

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

a) Management

The Finnish Environmental Institute worked with a group of partners, mainly at local government level, in Finland, Sweden, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia (as well as Belarus and Russia).

b) ICZM tools

The initiative sought to gather information about established procedures and methodologies in different fields of water management in the participating regions (description of the state-of-the-art), and then, in a series of case studies, test these new methodologies and co-operation approaches, with a view to harmonising management procedures. It addressed basic elements of river basin management, the interface of spatial planning with riverine planning, public participation approaches to river basin management, and the creation of guidelines and recommendations for co-operation in trans-boundary river basins.

The case studies were analysed to develop river basin management plans. The main aim of the Daugava case study was to investigate the interface between river basin management planning and spatial planning. It identified and analysed the main differences in, and possible hindrances to, international river basin management planning in this river basin. It also looked at the potential implications of having different authorities responsible for river basin management planning and spatial planning in Latvia. Material was collected through interviews with relevant experts at the regional and/or local level and relevant planning documents were collected and analysed. In the Narva case study, the main aim was to compile available data for land use and water management planning for the catchment area both on the Estonian and Russian side according to requirements of the WFD. Work included development of a cross-sectoral partnership at local municipality level in Estonia and Russia. The Nemunas study identified the similarities and differences in current planning systems in the countries sharing the basin and analysed the main hindrances for international river basin management planning in this river basin.

7. Cost and resources

The budget was €1,572,007, of which €739,117.75 was ERDF funding.

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

The partnership demonstrated that transnational co-operation can successfully contribute to the harmonised implementation of European guidelines or directives. Despite differences in regional socio-economic conditions and political-administrative structures the partners recognised that their regions were facing similar challenges. As such, exchanging information about approaches and different testing, implementing and evaluating methods, techniques and procedures, was valuable, particularly in light of newly emerging national legislation.

9. Success and Fail factors

The involvement of the different, but specific partners, was extremely important as many river basin districts are located in a boundary region of one EU and one non-EU region. The co-operation brought to the fore the differences between EU and non-EU partners, like Belarus or Russia, concerning regulatory regimes, but also the basic problem of language barriers and

how these need to be overcome. It showed how financial and political support for language training courses is essential.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

More generally, and with a view to long term co-operation, there was a reinforcement of the expert networks. These not only facilitated the exchange of technical information and know-how, but also subsequently increased managerial capacities concerning water quality regulation, enhanced cultural and technical awareness of divergent perspectives across borders and improved inter-cultural understanding among partners.

11. Prepared by

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12. Verified by

It has not been possible to verify this case.

13. Sources

- River basin analyses and management (2007) A. Pilke, H. Mäkinen and O-P Pietiläinen, Finnish Environmental Institute
- TRABANT - Transnational River Basin Districts on the Eastern Side of the Baltic Sea Network
- (undated) Ex-Post Evaluation Interreg III 2000-2006 Panteia



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TRABANT project-eu summary (75.97 KB) 