

Sustainable management of public beaches by local governments and private organisations – BE

1. Policy Objective & Theme

- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Balancing economic, social, cultural development whilst enhancing environment

2. Key Approaches

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

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

A strategy to involve local governments, private organisations and a broad public to manage and use the beaches on a more sustainable way. The integration of techniques to improve the accessibility, the safety and the ecological value or cleanliness of the beaches.

4. Overview of the case

The Coordination centre on ICZM is cooperating with several coastal communities to improve the quality of Belgian beaches. A multi-sectoral approach is realised through:

- Exchange of information and expertise in workshops for the technical services.
- Communications and raising awareness actions to the broader public
- Support and information for the local policymakers
- Manuals on improving sustainability in surf clubs and beach facilities
- Working with volunteers to guide the disabled.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

The beaches in Belgium have a high value for the Belgian coastal municipalities because they attract a considerable stream of tourists which is also economically important. Therefore, the beaches are under high pressure. Clean beaches, easily accessible and safe, are a key concern for all coastal municipalities. Today, the cleaning is mostly done with a mechanical beach cleaner. Unfortunately, a mechanical beach cleaner not only removes most of the human-produced waste, but takes also organic material away. The organic material in the drift-line has numerous natural functions in the coastal ecosystem, in terms of coastal defence, as a feeding ground, as a biotope for pioneer plants, etc. Safety on the beach results in positive images for the coastal communities. Safety, however, is differently defined from one community to the other. Every coastal community has a lot of expertise and knowledge but there is a lack of co-ordination. Differences are found in e.g. the organisation of rescue teams and training facilities. Easily accessible beaches are important for all users, but measures are mostly taken ad hoc and knowledge is scattered. Economic, ecological and social concerns need to be incorporated within the management of a modern tourist beach.

b) Objectives

The main objective was to improve the different aspects of beach and coastal management in a sustainable and innovative way. As such we want to bring the tourist product of the area to a higher quality level in the future. For this purpose three themes were selected: ecological management of the beaches, safety and security, and accessibility.

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

a) Project Management

Sustainable beach management is initiated by the Co-ordination centre on Integrated Coastal Zone Management. The Co-ordination Centre is working closely with the local environmental services of the different coastal municipalities.

b) ICZM tools

All the different actions to reach more sustainable beaches may be categorised in a policy tool (decision support system). Over the years different aspects of sustainable beach management have been adopted in broader management plans. Three municipalities already maintain certain parts of the beach on a more ecological friendly way. It concerns sand strips situated opposite nature reserves or areas without buildings. It makes these parts of the beach more fascinating for beach combers, as a food source for birds or as place of residence for pioneer vegetation (that in turn will give the possibility for dune formation). The beach will also maintain its natural structure in a better way without the regular disturbance of machines.

7. Cost and resources

The Information campaign of the Coordination Centre on ICZM

Organisation of a beach clean action:	€ 15 000
Inquiries to measure the involvement:	€ 40 000
Reprint of flyers and Information brochures	€ 13 000
Info sessions on sustainable beach management	€ 15 000
Communication and raising awareness	€ 15 000
Flyer on gulls	€ 7.000
Website development on beach litter and gulls	€ 15 000
Manpower: 0.4 Full Time Equivalents	

To encourage sustainable beach management, the coordination centre on ICZM works together with a working group with representatives of the environmental services of the coastal municipalities.

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

The objectives were achieved. Within several surf clubs, new techniques for sustainable energy use on the beaches are being used. In seven coastal communities there are adjusted facilities and assistance for disabled people during summer. New knowledge gaps and challenges came about and need further elaboration.

9. Success and Fail factors

Success factors: funding available for promotion of sustainable management. It is important that local policy makers are informed on the benefits of beaches that are managed on a more sustainable way. Failure factors: Political will is needed to support a more ecological cleaning of the beach. Also the workmen needs to be in favour for such a method.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

What started as a local project is now also being implemented in the Province of Zeeland (NL) and Nord-pas de Calais (France). This work is now also the subject of an international Interreg IVA project 120 Kilometer Kustkwaliteit (budget €3.2 million). Within this project, the partners are working together with policymakers at province level to improve the quality of the beaches. At the end of the work, three reports and guidelines for sustainable beach management based on the three main themes (ecological beaches, safety and accessibility) will be produced. Within each, a comprehensive analysis will show knowledge gaps and the needs to reach these goals.

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13. Sources

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