

Sustainable Wadden Sea Tourism - DE

1. Policy Objective & Theme

- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Developing Europe's regional seas sustainably
- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Balancing economic, social, cultural development whilst enhancing environment
- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Improving competitiveness

2. Key Approaches

- Integration
- Participation
- Knowledge-based
- Socio-economic

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

Lack in communication and political planning, as well as in knowledge about the natural environment and socio-economic factors in the coastal zone were identified as major obstacles to the development of ICZM. An action plan was proposed by a broad stakeholder forum to tackle these issues.

4. Overview of the case

The focus was on integration and participation to develop a new spatial planning and development programme for sustainable tourism. Stakeholders from different levels were included in a participation process. NetForum was established as a stakeholder network across borders and sectors. Members were representatives of tourism, environment, recreation, municipalities, counties and from the trilateral governmental level.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

Tourism is a strong economic factor in the Wadden Sea, in some areas the most important one. 8-10 million tourists visit the area annually (in 2000), mainly because of its unique nature. In the Schleswig-Holstein region of the Wadden Sea, approximately €286 million Euro profit was made directly in the tourism industry. About 20 % of the employment was estimated to depend on tourism, matching about 9,000 jobs and affecting roughly a third of the population. Only minor roads and a poorly developed public transportation system hampered accessibility in the whole region. Tourism activities are partly financed by "Kurtaxe", a tax that tourists have to pay for overnight-staying in the so called "Kurorten" (resorts). The challenges have been to create jobs all year round, to develop a tourism product that is competitive and not seasonally dependent, to limit negative impacts on the social life and culture of the residents, to involve the residents, and to avoid irreparable damage to natural assets.

Since 1978 Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands have worked together to protect the ecosystem of the Wadden Sea. In 1997, at the 3rd Inter-regional Conference, a joint Wadden Sea Plan was approved for the sustainable development of tourism and recreation in the entire Wadden Sea Region (mainland, islands, sea). The co-operating entity at governmental level is the Trilateral Wadden Sea Co-operation, on a regional level the Inter-regional Wadden Sea Co-operation (IRWC), and on the municipal level the EUregio the Wadden. The oldest co-operation in the Wadden Sea Region was established by environmental NGOs: the Dutch Wadden Society, the German and the Danish World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

b) Objectives

The main aim was to promote environmentally-friendly tourism to create jobs and generate local income. The Wadden Sea tourism initiative aimed at realising the political decisions that were made by the Inter-regional Wadden Sea Co-operation.

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

a) Management

Members of the workgroup NetForum were state and local representatives of tourism, environment, recreation, municipalities, counties, and from the trilateral governmental level. Involved in the NetForum were the Ministry for Rural Areas and Tourism Schleswig-Holstein, the community Kampen/Sylt, WWF Wadden Sea Project, District of Nordfriesland, Tourism Concept, National Park Administration, Wadden Sea.

b) ICZM tools

The partners analysed the development in the Wadden Sea and prepared a model of communication and co-operation between the authorities and stakeholders in the Wadden Sea Region (NetForum), to provide a common vision, propose joint policies, and to define follow-up projects for the development of sustainable tourism. Conservation of natural and cultural assets on one hand and promotion of tourism and recreation on the other hand were considered. The main issues addressed were sustainability, nature and recreational activities, culture and cultural tourism, accommodation, and mobility. The analyses to develop common sustainable tourism policies in the Wadden Sea were started in 1997. The recommendations were embedded in a final report in December 2000. The integration of local and regional stakeholders from several sectors was improved by the establishment of the NetForum working group; environmental and economic stakeholders were integrated. Four thematic workshops and three meetings were held within two years to communicate knowledge on the matter, state opinions of the different stakeholders and to write recommendations for future development. An action plan for the whole Wadden Sea Region was agreed upon in June 2000 to initiate, co-ordinate, and facilitate follow-up activities. Existing inter-regional networks and management plans formed a good basis for the process and made the dissemination of results relatively easy.

Defined goals in the action plan were: Tourism development should be more oriented towards target groups. Support should be given to establish a communication and co-operation strategy for the local level. The establishment of a network designed for the technical support and counselling of the partners in the Wadden Sea Region with regard to the implementation of environmental measures in the tourism sector ("practitioners support practitioners") was recommended. The development of demand-oriented and competitive projects was proposed, and public-private-partnership (PPP) was seen as a way to foster tourism development. Proposals for disaster prevention, ship safety, regional oriented public participation, and a model for a trilateral convention were provided. Due to a lack in monitoring data concerning tourism and recreation a new monitoring programme that can be used region wide across country boundaries was proposed. 24 project ideas were suggested with a focus on five thematic approaches: establishment of socio-economic (tourism) monitoring; development of a thematic marketing strategy; establishment of a gastronomy-award for menus containing locally grown (eco) Wadden products; enhancement of facilities for the less mobile and disabled; establishment and promotion of alternative transport-systems on islands with excessive car traffic. Further EU programmes were considered in order to finance the future projects.

7. Cost and resources

This work formed part of the EU demonstration project on Integrated Coastal Zone management, LIFE-Environment 96/DK/012/PAZ. The total budget was €663,761.

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

Expected results were: improved co-operation of authorities concerned with the development of the Wadden Sea Region, participation of the public in the decision-making process, application of sustainability principles and integration into regional

planning; demonstration of the everyday-usability of concepts, also for other trans-boundary coastal areas; dissemination of knowledge. These results could only partly be realised. NetForum was founded as a test communication and co-operation model. The postponement of the 4th Inter-regional and the 9th Governmental Wadden Sea Conferences from 2000 to 2001 caused a one year prolongation of the work.

9. Success and Fail factors

The co-operation model could be established on the basis of existing horizontal networks, and the process was integrated in the existing democratic structures. The commercial tourism sector lost interest in the process, transnational co-operation in this sector had not been established before. The NetForum members had to back-up themselves. The organisational effort was enormous due to the differentiated thematic background and different abilities of members to understand and express themselves in English. To involve local population in Germany most documents had to be translated. The work load had been underestimated. The knowledge-base was still insufficient as a good basis for communication and planning for managers and stakeholders. The knowledge on the interactions of the sectors nature and culture conservation versus promotion of tourism and recreation was still limited due to non-existing data or a lack in data or data that were not comparable between sub-regions. A lack of knowledge on the situation in the other regions/countries was a serious communication obstacle and prevented innovative and creative discussions. Therefore, the implementation and evaluation of common Wadden Sea policies was not possible in the end. At the Trilateral Governmental Conference in 1997 a monitoring package for the Wadden Sea had been approved but contained only three parameters to describe recreational activities.

High nutrient loads from agriculture leads to eutrophication in the Wadden Sea and reduced biodiversity but intensive agriculture is encouraged by policies. For example, high payments for sheep cattle cause high grazing densities on coastal salt marshes in Germany. Tourist numbers had declined in the German part of the Wadden Sea due to economic difficulties of the mainly German tourists, new target groups had to be defined. Public transportation was at the time being not regarded as alternative to private car traffic. Gas extraction in the Wadden Sea leads to land subsidence and coastal erosion.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

In the state Niedersachsen', political struggles posed difficulties, so some local administrations were constrained from participating. A joint internet platform for the Wadden Sea was established. The Wadden Sea Forum was established in 2002 after the 9th Governmental Conference of the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation as an independent platform for stakeholders.

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13. Sources

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