Strategic Environmental Assessment of the National Strategy for ICZM - PT

1. Policy Objective & Theme

- ADAPTATION TO RISK: Managing impacts of climate change and safeguarding resilience of coasts/coastal systems
- ADAPTATION TO RISK: Integrating coherent strategies covering the risk-dimension (prevention to response) into planning and investment
- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Sound use of resources and promotion of less resource intensive processes/products
- 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

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) when following a strategic approach can be built into the policy process in a constructive way to help, and facilitate, the integration of environmental and sustainability concerns in the formulation of objectives, setting the agenda, conceptual design and implementation.

4. Overview of the case

SEA was used to closely assist the preparation of the Portuguese Strategy for Integrated Coastal Zone Management (PS-ICZM), achieving quite an integrated outcome. The SEA proved to act as a facilitator to enable the full integration of environmental and sustainability issues into the strategy development process, including identification of objectives, agenda setting, concept of the strategy and design of the implementation measures. SEA enabled the consideration of key strategic options to fine tune the strategy, and highlighted risks and opportunities associated with the strategy, proving, in the end, to have strongly influenced the ICZM strategy.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

The Portuguese coastline offers great landscape quality, bio-geographical and geo-morphological variation in its 1,187 km of length from north to south, and along the Algarve coast from west to east. Coastal characteristics range from low sandy coasts, with or without natural barriers, to high and rocky cliffs, interspaced by river mouths, estuarine and coastal lagoons, mostly exposed to the Atlantic influence. Human occupation affects the coast line in two main forms: along river basins, increasing the sedimentation rate at the mouth of rivers, and by direct occupation in large sections of the coast. In fact, 75% of the Portuguese population live in the coastal areas, which are also responsible for 85% of internal gross product through urban and industrial activities, intensive tourism, rural activities and fisheries. Portugal has one of the largest economic exclusive zones in all Europe, with over 1,700,000 km2, which represents 18 times its land area. This area represents an

enormous potential of the Portuguese maritime resources. Over 30% of the coast line is legally protected as a natural area within the National Protected Areas network, while 50% of the area is statutorily integrated in Natura 2000. The coast is quite vulnerable to natural risks such as coastal erosion, tsunamis, sedimentation deficit in the continental platform, coastal areas flooding, loss of biodiversity, increase in salinisation of estuarine and ground-waters.

In Portugal, public participation was conducted in 2006 on a preliminary document proposing the Basis for the National ICZM Strategy which was later published in 2007 by the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Regional Development. In this document, the fundamental principles and objectives for ICZM in Portugal are laid out which have then been adopted by the National Strategy for ICZM, reaffirming the national purposes and reinforcing an integrated vision for ICZM, including the policy drivers established by the Maritime Strategy European Framework and the challenge of ensuring a clear articulation between the planning and management of the maritime space and the conservation of the sea. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was used to assist the preparation of the Portuguese Strategy for Integrated Coastal Zone Management (PS-ICZM). SEA is not legally mandatory for application at policy level in Portugal. However the National Water Institute (INAG), the Portuguese authority mandated by the Portuguese Government to develop this PS-ICZM, understanding the merits and the added-value of SEA for strategic decision-making, decided to use SEA on this occasion. The SEA was developed together with the strategy.

b) Objectives

The objective of the SEA was to contribute to the integration of environmental and sustainability issues in the development of the PS-ICZM, and to identify, and compare, policy options in terms of risks and opportunities for the environment and sustainability. The leading intention was to create conditions for the sustainable management of human activities in coastal areas to safeguard the integrity of ecological systems, the recognition of ecosystem services, the sustainable use and management of coastal resources, the avoidance and minimisation of natural and technological risks and the adoption of governance approaches for sustainable and integrated coastal management.

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

a) Management

The National Water Institute (INAG) is the Portuguese authority mandated by the Portuguese Government to develop the PS-ICZM.

b) SEA of the ICZM tools

A strategic-based methodology for SEA was adopted. This methodology basically establishes an iterative process with the strategy formation and formulation process, ensures a strong focus for the SEA right at the beginning, helps to identify and to discuss and compare strategic options, conducts an assessment of risks and opportunities of the strategy for the environment and sustainability and, based on outcomes, issues guidelines to assist implementation and ensure continued follow-up. The SEA started off by identifying the object of assessment, which was expressed as the main concept, drivers and strategic purposes of the PS-ICZM, and the scope of the assessment through the identification of a small number of strategic themes which were recognised as being crucial for integrated and sustainable coastal management in a strategic context. Named as Critical Decision Factors (CDF), such crucial themes were used to structure the SEA and ensure a strong focus in the assessment. The CDF are established in relation to the context of the coastal management policy and establish a direct link to possible sustainable follow-up; in other words, if things go wrong with respect to those themes, the sustainability of the coastal management policy will be at risk. But the CDF will express opportunities where things go well. This means therefore that these themes are crucial not only for a policy formation phase, but also for policy implementation phase and monitoring processes

The CDF were identified through the cross-relationship of three main components: key strategic issues, or drivers, of the PS-ICZM; environmental and sustainability issues; and a strategic reference framework (SRF) that collects and interprets all major macro-policies for coastal management in Portugal and at the European and international level, including the Maritime Strategy, the Water Framework Directive, the White Paper on Climate Change, the Natura 2000, the Maritime European Policy, the European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development as well as national policies. The background of the PS-ICZM was considered with respect to the initial studies and public discussions undertaken in the previous three years. Four CDFs were adopted: Ecological systems and coastal landscapes, Coastal resources and uses, Natural and technological risks, and

Management and governance, representing four strategic factors for the success of the PS-ICZM. Options for the PS-ICZM were then assessed in two rounds of assessment, using these CDF and respective criteria. Three sets of strategic options were considered – thematic, institutional and model of governance - and for each set, three alternative options were assessed. The options were compared, in a first round of assessment, in terms of their risks and opportunities, the results of which provided policy indications which were subsequently used in the identification of priorities and strategic objectives, measures and actions to be followed. The strategic objectives of the PS-ICZM were then subsequently assessed in a second round of assessment as to their opportunities and risks considering the measures and actions envisaged to implement the objectives. The results of the second assessment round were then used to refine the PS-ICZM. Guidelines for planning, management and monitoring were then proposed by the SEA and adopted by the PS-ICZM.

7. Cost and resources

The resources needed for the SEA were provided by the INAG. It took roughly three months to develop the PS-ICZM and respective SEA, and two additional months with public and institutional discussions following the preparation of the two instruments.

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

The SEA of the PS-ICZM is an example of good governance at policy level, revealing how SEA can be used as an enabler and facilitator of integrated and sustainable policy decisions, and how SEA and policy-making processes can be jointly carried out with mutual benefits regarding shared information and team collaboration, jointly motivated by the similar purpose of enhancing a strategic, sustainability integrated policy instrument.

9. Success and Fail factors

A simultaneous and strong iterative process, and team collaboration enabled by the leadership of INAG make good ingredients for the success of this case. Scarce public engagement, limited time and resources contributed to limit greater success in this case.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

The PS-ICZM is a reference instrument for the development of the Maritime Spatial Plan at a very macro-level, and also for regional and municipal spatial plans in the coastal areas, however with a relatively smaller impact in relation to changes in coastal land occupation.

11. Prepared by

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12. Verified by

It has not been possible to verify this case.

13. Sources

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