

A long-term strategy for development by the Vistula Lagoon Communities until 2015 – PL

1. Policy Objective & Theme

- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Improving competitiveness

2. Key Approaches

- Integration
- Knowledge-based
- Ecosystems based approach
- Socio-economic

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

A vision to revitalise an economically backward trans-EU-boundary region towards the basics of sustainable development in a new EU Baltic Sea country with the role of a leading ICZM administration entity (Maritime Office) highlighted.

4. Overview of the case

A strategy of economic recovery of the Vistula Lagoon region was prepared by the Union of Lagoon's Communities (ULC); the prerequisite for sustainability is the construction of a cross-cut through the Vistula Lagoon Bar which is entirely on EU territory. The cross-cut implies financial participation of the Government, because the combined potential of the ULC is weak. The cross-cut will remove the actual separation of the Lagoon from the Baltic Sea due to unstable political climate and yield grounds for ecologically sound, sustainable economic growth, reversing negative social trends - aging and a decreasing local population due to lack of jobs and high unemployment.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

The Vistula Lagoon region became isolated after World War II when it was split between the then communist Poland and USSR. The only access to the Baltic Sea near Kaliningrad in USSR was blocked for political reasons (Russian major naval base). After 1989, it remained unavailable due to a political dispute with Russia opposing Poland's admission to NATO. The entrance to the Schengen treaty by Poland in 2008 had an additional negative impact (because of the visa regime with Russia). The long-term isolation has resulted in a permanent economic stagnation of the local communities and produced population aging and decline. The Lagoon communities formed a Union that in 2000 jointly elaborated a strategy towards reversing this trend. It identified independent access to the Baltic Sea as a precondition of the area's sustainable recovery and growth, consistent with strategic, national and regional plans. Due to low local economic capacity, participation of the Government became indispensable.

b) Objectives

Four major objectives of the strategy are ranked top down, so that No. 1 is a prerequisite for the start-up of No. 2, and so on: (1) there is a road and waterway transportation system developed in the area, linked to the regional, national and international networks; (2) environment and flood protection infrastructure is developed for areas surrounding the Vistula Lagoon and

Vistula River depression area, (3) infrastructure for national and international tourism is developed with an emphasis on eco- and agro-tourism – the creation of an economic basis for the economy of the area, (4) The major city (Elbląg) of the Lagoon, plus 3 smaller towns, are revitalised as the area's nodal points encompassing the major activities necessary for a proper functioning of the Lagoon communities (education, SMEs, culture, trans-EU traffic to Kaliningrad region, etc.).

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

a) Project Management

The Union of Vistula Lagoon Communities is a voluntary organisation established to prepare and implement jointly approved development plans of individual communities facing the same problems. The Maritime Office in Gdynia is a governmental agency with full administrative jurisdiction in the Polish exclusive economic zone, technical belt (10 – 1,000 m wide strip landward from shoreline, excluding harbours and wharfs) and important jurisdiction in the protection belt (100 – 2,500 m wide strip contiguous to the technical belt, including harbours and wharfs) in the Pomorskie and Warminsko-Mazurskie Provinces (capital Gdansk and Olsztyn respectively), where the Lagoon is situated.

b) ICZM tools

The region-wide approach toward the revitalisation of the Polish part of the Vistula Lagoon (328 out of 838 km²) took shape in the Union of Vistula Lagoon Communities. It combines and integrates their weak individual potentials to absorb national and EU funds. The adopted Strategy is a vision with a 2015 time horizon, whose objectives are consistent with the plans of socio-economic development of the Pomorskie and Warminsko-Mazurskie Provinces prepared by these authorities. It requires substantial initial input from the Government, i.e. the expenditures associated with the Vistula Lagoon Bar cross-cut construction. After a formal decision of the Government to launch construction (10th Nov. 2006) the Maritime Office in Gdynia took over a major co-ordination role in the preparatory phase. Exercising administrative jurisdiction in the Polish coastal zones they commissioned a number of coherent partial analyses for the preparation of the integrated feasibility study. They included: (1) selection of the ultimate cross-cut location, (2) environmental impact assessment, (3) assessment of the adjacent shoreline evolution on both sides of the Bar, (4) selection of a construction design concept (lock preventing saltwater intrusions into the Lagoon in idle hours, suspension overpass for local traffic), (5) assessment of the effects of (residual) saltwater intrusions on the Lagoon's flora and fauna, (6) assessment of flood threats, (7) inventory of the existing environment, its uses and services, (8) assessment of the dredging work volume on approach channels and the influence of dredging on protected areas, (9) analysis of geo-technical conditions (marine and lagoon bottom deposits), (10), analysis of ice phenomena and their impact on the maintenance of the approach channel, (11) determination of the legal status of the cross-cut location, (12) consistency analysis with EU policies and legislation, (13) consistency analysis with strategic and operational plans on national/regional levels, (14) demand analysis, (15) financial and economic study, (16) socio-economic analysis.

These extensive studies allowed for the completion of the feasibility study with the following key provisions: (1) the ultimate location was determined ('Skowronki' location), (2) maximum vessel size was determined: length 100 m, width 20 m, draught 4 m, (3) working regime were determined – the cut will be navigable the whole year - with winter ice-breaking, (4) important construction details were identified, e.g. lock length, width and depth, lengths and widths of approach and navigational channels, (5) cost calculations and time-schedule of the project were made. Currently, the project is waiting for the ultimate go-ahead decision of the Government, the cross-cut is to become operational by about 2015.

7. Cost and resources

Total estimated cross-cut construction costs: PLN 471 million (ca. €112m), the scheme found cost effective in 20+ years perspective: PLN 148 million (ca. €35m) in surplus over total costs.

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

The Strategy prepared by the Union of Vistula Lagoon Communities realistically assumed that the overcoming of long-term economic backwardness would require an intervention on a national level – the financing of the cross-cut construction from the national budget. The modern coastal legislation in Poland that gives the Maritime Offices strong ICZM competences in the

technical and protection belt and exclusive economic zone, ensures that the co-ordination of such a comprehensive scheme is conducted smoothly and efficiently, while retaining the consistency with more general development plans of Pomorskie and Warminsko-Mazurskie Provinces. The project is in the implementation phase with the time horizon of 2015.

9. Success and Fail factors

Governmental funds were indispensable for the 1st step of the Strategy – the cross-cut construction although this type of funding remains uncertain in the wake of the global economic depression.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

The cross-cut aroused intense discussions among researchers, environmentalists, local and provincial authorities and general public, highlighting the previously under-estimated need for an ICZM approach. Some dissent emerged in communities, where a possible cross-cut location was considered, but finally skipped; this triggered unhealthy 'competition' as to where the cut should be located.

11. Prepared by













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13. Sources

- www.umgdy.gov.pl (Maritime Office in Gdynia)
- www.zalew.org.pl (The Union of Vistula Lagoon Communities)

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