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Interreg IIB Water Forum

Lüneburg, 10 - 11 May 2004

How can the coasts of Europe be protected against anthropogenic impacts and natural disasters? How can the quality of ground and surface water be improved? How can riverbeds and catchment areas be sensibly regulated?

These were the most important questions being discussed at the Interreg IIB Water Forum.

The forum was held in Lüneburg on 10-11 May 2004 and brought together experts from 15 European countries, representing 41 transnational projects, dealing somehow with water. The event provided the opportunity to discuss the water issues across the four different Interreg IIB programs of the North Sea Region (NSR), the Baltic Sea Region (BSR), the North West Europe (NWE) and the Central, Adriatic, Danubian, South-Eastern European Space (Cadses).

After a plenary session in the morning of the first day, in which presentations on water management, water frame work directive strategies, river management and integrated coastal zone management were given, the forum split into three working groups to focus on some topics in more detail.

A first group dealt with the management and protection of coastal areas with regard to human activities and climate change and its pressure on the natural environment.

A second group focused on river catchment areas, its water supply, changing riverbeds as a

result of human activities, and ecological effects caused by high water levels and flooding.

The topic of a third session was about water quality with emphasis on surface and groundwater quality improvement on a transnational level.

The results of the parallel sessions were presented in a plenary session on the second conference day. Finally, an encouraging perspective on future transnational cooperation and funding opportunities was given by a member of the DG Regio of the European Commission.

The Forum meeting was a good opportunity to discuss benefits and further requirements of Interreg amongst and not only within the different programs. As an important result, it was stated that a likely Interreg IV program should not become too ambitious with regard to contents, indicators and supposed cost-benefit fulfillment.

The program should also allow a convergence between authorities, institutions and organizations in Europe, particularly with the new member states. Small projects without long-term investments should also have a chance to get co-financed.

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