

INTRODUCTION

AIM AND BACKGROUND

The Wadden Sea, encompassing the coastal zone from Den Helder in The Netherlands to Blåvands Huk in Denmark, is an exceptional ecosystem of global importance, and together with its cultural landscapes is a shared responsibility of the three countries.

The vision of the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation is a Wadden Sea which is a unique, natural and dynamic ecosystem with characteristic biodiversity, vast open landscapes and rich cultural heritage, enjoyed by all, and delivering benefits in a sustainable way to present and future generations.

1. The participating Governments have identified a Wadden Sea Cooperation Area and within this a Nature Conservation Area as the geographical basis of their Cooperation (see Map 1):

The Wadden Sea Cooperation Area in short 'Wadden Sea Area':

- the area seaward of the main dike, or where the main dike is absent, the spring-high-tide waterline, and in the rivers, the brackish water limit;
- an offshore zone 3 nautical miles from the baseline as fixed nationally or where the Nature Conservation Area exceeds the 3 nautical mile the offshore boundaries of the Nature Conservation Area;
- corresponding inland areas to the designated Ramsar and/or EC Bird Directive areas being the adjacent inland marsh areas of the Danish Wadden Sea Region designated as international nature protection areas and the Bird Directive Areas of Schleswig-Holstein adjacent to the Nature Conservation Area;
- the islands.

The 'Nature Conservation Area':

- In The Netherlands, the areas under the Key Planning Decision Wadden Sea;
- In Germany, the Wadden Sea national parks and the protected areas under the Nature Conservation Acts seaward of the main dike and the brackish water limit;
- In Denmark, the Wildlife and Nature Reserve Wadden Sea.

The Cultural Entities

For the specific purposes of cooperation on landscape and cultural heritage the Wadden Sea Area, and an area beyond, has been identified to include the main cultural entities. Activities on landscape and cultural heritage should be carried out by, or in close cooperation with all relevant administrative levels and with support of the people living and working in the region.

2. The Wadden Sea Plan (WSP-2010) provides, in accordance with the Joint Declaration on the Protection of the Wadden Sea, a framework for the integrated management of the Wadden Sea Area as an ecological entity, as well as its landscape and cultural heritage, within the cultural entities. It sets out a series of Targets, as well as policies, measures, projects and actions to achieve these Targets, to be implemented by the Wadden Sea countries.
3. The Plan is a political agreement (meaning it is a legally non-binding document of common political interest) and will be implemented by the three countries in cooperation, and individually, by the competent authorities on the basis of existing legislation and through the participation of interest groups.

4. Through WSP-2010 the objectives of the Trilateral Cooperation, as contained in the **Joint Declaration**, will be implemented, *i.e.* achieving
 - a. a natural ecosystem, its functions and characteristic biodiversity;
 - b. resilience to climate change and other impacts;
 - c. maintenance of the landscape and cultural heritage;
 - d. sustainable use as defined by the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Habitats Directive;
 - e. public support for the protection of the Wadden Sea.
5. In relation to the Wadden Sea World Heritage Property, the WSP-2010 also serves as the overall management plan to ensure the coordinated management of the Property.
6. WSP-2010 was developed with the participation of local and regional authorities and interest groups. It is a further development of WSP-1997, adopted at the 8th Trilateral Governmental Wadden Sea Conference (TGC-8; Stade 1997), following a decision by the TGC-6 (Esbjerg, 1991) to elaborate a management plan covering the Wadden Sea from Den Helder to Blåvands Huk in order to further substantiate the joint coherent protection. At the 1991 Esbjerg Conference and the subsequent TGC-7, (Leeuwarden, 1994), the cornerstones of the Wadden Sea Plan were adopted: the delimitation of the Trilateral Area of Cooperation and Conservation, the Guiding Principle, the Management Principles, and the Targets.
7. At TGC-10 (Schiermonnikoog, 2005) it was acknowledged that in order to continue and further intensify the cooperation for the protection of the Wadden Sea as an ecological entity, a coordinated and consistent implementation of the European legislation in a transparent way must be ensured. It was therefore agreed to further develop the WSP in accordance with the stipulations entailed in the Habitats, Birds and Water Framework Directives and other European Union directives and regulations, in particular Article 6 (1) of the Habitats Directive.
Therefore the WSP incorporates the relevant EU directives, especially the Birds and Habitats directives, into the management of the Wadden Sea Area.
8. This also encompasses the landscape and culture heritage of the Wadden Sea and will include the relevant regional and local level, with the task to get a detailed insight in best practice and to develop common trilateral strategies for the future management of these assets.
It will furthermore include reviewing the Wadden Sea Forum recommendations for sustainable human use.

INTEGRATED ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

9. The objectives of WSP-2010 will be achieved by applying *inter alia* the instrument of Integrated Coastal Zone Management and by harmonizing conservation objectives and good ecological status to the extent possible and at different levels of implementation, ranging from their definitions to harmonised methodologies for their assessment.
10. In compliance with national legal provisions, the focal point of trilateral nature conservation policy and management is directed towards achieving the Guiding Principle for "the Nature Conservation Area", as laid down in the "Joint Declaration", *i.e.* "to achieve as far as possible, a natural and sustainable ecosystem in which natural processes proceed in an undisturbed way".
Such an ecosystem contains the full range of natural and dynamic habitats (see Map 2), each of which needing a certain quality (natural dynamics, presence of typical species, absence of disturbance, absence of pollution), which can be reached by proper conservation and management. The quality of the habitats shall be maintained or improved by working towards achieving Targets which have been agreed upon for the tidal area, the offshore area, estuaries, salt marshes, beaches and dunes, the

rural area, water and sediment quality, fish, birds and marine mammals, as well as landscape and cultural aspects.

In addition to the Guiding Principle, seven Management Principles have been adopted which are fundamental to decisions concerning protection and management within the Wadden Sea Area:

- the Principle of Careful Decision Making, *i.e.* to take decisions on the basis of the best available information;
 - the Principle of Avoidance, *i.e.* activities which are potentially damaging to the Wadden Sea should be avoided;
 - the Precautionary Principle, *i.e.* to take action to avoid activities which are assumed to have significant damaging impact on the environment, even where there is no sufficient scientific evidence to prove a causal link between activities and their impact;
 - the Principle of Translocation, *i.e.* to translocate activities which are harmful to the Wadden Sea environment to areas where they will cause less environmental impact;
 - the Principle of Compensation, *i.e.* that the harmful effect of activities which cannot be avoided, must be balanced by compensatory measures; in those parts of the Wadden Sea where the Principle has not yet been implemented, compensatory measures will be aimed for;
 - the Principle of Restoration, *i.e.* that, where possible, parts of the Wadden Sea should be restored if it can be demonstrated by reference studies that the actual situation is not optimal, and that the original state is likely to be re-established;
 - the Principles of Best Available Techniques and Best Environmental Practice, as defined by the Paris Commission.
11. The Targets of the Wadden Sea Plan are consistent with the national conservation objectives for habitat types and species in accordance with the EC Habitats and Bird Directives and national conservation laws, as well as water bodies and definitions of good chemical and ecological status in accordance with the EC Water Framework Directive. However, the three Wadden Sea states acknowledge some differences in their implementations of definitions of the Habitats Directive.
 12. As stated in the Joint Declaration, the participating Governments will, in the measures they take, be guided by the Guiding Principle, the Precautionary Principle and Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.
 13. The Targets are a specification of the UNESCO criteria which apply to the Wadden Sea World Heritage property in The Netherlands and in Germany and serve to implement these criteria.
 14. The landscape and cultural heritage compliments the natural and environmental heritage. Despite local and regional diversity, the Wadden Sea has a common history in developing and shaping the landscape, in human survival adaptation strategies and techniques that have created a unique cultural heritage.
 15. The Integrated Ecosystem Management approach is further specified in the Chapter "Integrated management". This chapter also addresses a number of issues, with an overarching character. It concerns climate change, alien species and shipping.

PRECONDITIONS

16. The inhabitants of the coastal marshes and the islands in the larger Wadden Sea region depend upon an adequate coastal protection in a changing climate. The implementation of the Plan will not affect the priority of coastal flood defence and protection and the safety of the local inhabitants against the sea.

17. In accordance with the Joint Declaration, unreasonable impairment of the interests of the local population and its traditional uses in the Wadden Sea Area has to be avoided. Any user interests have to be weighed on a fair and equitable basis in the light of the purpose of protection in general, and the particular case concerned.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND POTENTIALS

18. Within the constraints of suitable protection and natural development of the Wadden Sea, economic activities and development remain possible. Tourism and recreation, agriculture, industry, shipping, and fisheries have considerable economic significance for the Wadden Sea and sustainable human uses will continue. They must be continuously balanced in a harmonious relationship between the needs of society and ecological integrity. This will be done in cooperation with stakeholder fora and organizations, e.g. the Wadden Sea Forum.
19. Parts of the Wadden Sea Area of The Netherlands and Germany have been designated by the UNESCO as biosphere reserves participating in the worldwide network of the Man and Biosphere Program (MAB). MAB Reserves are protected areas of representative terrestrial and coastal environments, which have been internationally recognized under the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) MAB Program for their value in conservation and in providing the scientific knowledge, skills and human values to support sustainable economical development. The WSP encompasses the management of the biosphere reserves.
20. After establishment of nearly the whole German Wadden Sea as National Parks in the years 1985, 1986 and 1990, Denmark has declared most of its Wadden Sea Area, including the islands and some embanked marshlands on the mainland, as National Park in 2010. The aim of the Danish National Park is to maintain a high nature protection level and to improve the culture and landscape aspects, in combination with improved economic sustainable development in order to contribute to a more viable region.

COMMUNICATION, INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

21. For the successful implementation of the Wadden Sea Plan and the long-term protection of the Wadden Sea as an entity, the awareness and support of the people living in this region is important. Communication, stakeholder involvement, information and education are a prerequisite for raising awareness and support. The trilateral approach to communication, information and education is specified in Chapter III.3.

IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

22. Progress on implementing the trilateral policies and management in the Wadden Sea Plan will be evaluated every 6 years. As appropriate, the Plan will be amended on the basis of the conclusions and recommendations of the review process, which is specified in the Chapter III.2.
23. Projects and actions for implementing the trilateral policies are contained in a separate document to be developed and adopted by the Wadden Sea Board.