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The Guiding Principles for a European ICZM Strategy

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Introduction

Many coastal areas of Europe have a long history of human settlement and have formed a focus for economic development, for transport and trade, and for natural resources exploitation. The coastal regions of the EU today are a focus for the concentration of population and for the expansion and diversification of the European economy. Coastal areas are subject to an increasing diversity of demands: as heavy industrial and fisheries sectors are in decline, coastal areas are being looked to for new opportunities to diversify local and national economies, from aquaculture and windfarms to tourism and leisure.

However, human activities on the coast have not been without impact and it was recently estimated that as much as 70% of the European coastline is highly threatened as a result of direct and indirect human impacts (Bryant et al. 1996). Principle areas of concern are loss of natural habitats; loss in biodiversity and cultural diversity; decline in water quality; predicted sea level rise; competition for space; and, seasonal variations in pressure (EC 1995).

Demographic changes in coastal areas as a result of changing economic opportunities are also presenting new social challenges, from urban expansion to decline of communities in more isolated areas.

(See Population map in annex)

The strategic importance of coastal and nearshore marine resources in meeting current and future development needs requires a strategic approach to planning and management of coastal areas in order to maximise their long-term contribution to socio-economic diversification and sustainable regional development. The Demonstration Programme in Integrated Coastal Zone Management has been a response to these concerns.

Need for Action

I would like to emphasise the conclusion set out in the reflection paper, namely that the experience of Demonstration Programme is confirming the hypothesis that most of the problems and conflicts observed in the coastal zones of Europe can be traced to procedural, planning, policy and institutional weaknesses, many of which can be traced in turn to a lack of awareness about the strategic economic and social importance of sustainable management of coastal zones.

Historically

- Legislation and policy has been sectorally-based and uncoordinated
- Inappropriate and isolated sectoral planning decisions have often worked against the long-term interests of sustainable development
- Rigid bureaucratic systems have limited local creativity and adaptability
• Local initiatives in sustainable management have lacked adequate resources and support from higher administrative levels
• Management of the coast has lacked vision and is based on a very limited understanding of coastal processes
• Scientific research and data collection have been isolated from end-users

Integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) is a planning and management process which aims to balance multiple human activities and demands on coastal space and resources with the protection of dynamic and vulnerable coastal systems and the maintenance of the functions and services which they provide (Humphrey and Burbridge 1999). By providing a framework for the management of multi-sectoral activities and for the maintenance of options for future uses of resources, ICZM provides a means to enhance regional economic development and to improve the quality of life in coastal areas (WCC 1993).

There is no one blueprint or correct approach for ICZM. The 35 demonstration projects have demonstrated a rich diversity in approaches to coastal management - from Cork to Athens, the Gulf of Finland to the Algarve - but the results of the programme to date indicate that there are a number of general principles that should be followed in order to strengthen coastal management efforts.

(See map of location of projects, in annex)

General Principles

Coastal zones are subject to geographically far-ranging environmental and socio-economic influences many of which transcend the boundaries of local, regional and even national administrations. We are only just beginning to understand the scope of some of these linkages - the importance of north sea sediment dynamics for the Wadden Sea; the repercussions of changing employment patterns for sustaining communities in peripheral areas. A systems approach will help to identify which are the key driving forces of concern in a given coastal area, and who are the appropriate partners to work with. In all cases, this needs to encompass both the land and sea aspects. The first of the general principles is thus to:

➢ Take a Wide-Ranging Perspective

One of the striking features of Europe’s 89,000 km of coast is its diversity - not just in environment but in social, cultural, institutional and economic characteristics. Good local information, ultimately for an integrated assessment, is critical for local coastal management needs. This leads us to the second principle,

➢ Build on an Understanding of Specific Conditions in the Area of Interest

The correct approach to ICZM in a specific area should be determined on the basis of the needs and conditions particular to that area. As well as emphasising the importance of appropriate information gathering and provision, this also suggests that it is not appropriate for the EU to prescribe a generic ICZM approach or solution.

A wide range of economic activities are located in risk prone coastal plains and estuarine areas and nearshore marine environments. The dynamic nature of coastal systems is largely ignored in current development planning for urban as well as rural areas. We ignore the these very
powerful forces to our cost. Great care must be taken not to increase the incidence of natural and man-induced hazards and their impact upon coastal populations and economic investment.

- **Work with Natural Processes** - not against them.

For example, hard coastal defenses lend a misguided sense of security to developers who will continue to invest in hazardous areas, thus increasing the potential losses from flooding or erosion. Such defenses are increasingly costly to maintain - particularly as we are faced with sea level rise - and are now known to affect other parts of the coast. Planners need to anticipate and where possible avoid being locked into costly attempts to maintain a status quo on the coast.

*In Britain, the Sizewell B nuclear power station which is situated immediately adjacent to a coast which has been eroding at least over the last few centuries. In view of safety conditions associated with decommissioning, future generations will bear the considerable financial burden involved in long-term protection of the site. This could have been avoided by paying due regard to the dynamic nature of this coastline and its well-documented history of erosion.*

Coastal dynamics also provide us with a good illustration for the fourth principle, to:

- **Ensure that Decisions Taken Today Do Not Foreclose Options for the Future**

The dynamic nature of coastal areas extend beyond the increasingly recognised physical forces to socio-economic changes associated with broader political, sectoral and development trends. A good example is de-militarisation - a trend which has presented short-term economic losses, but longer-term opportunities for several coastal communities involved in the demonstration programme. The precautionary principle is applicable to all uses of coastal space and resources. Although we cannot always predict the future, the key is to maintain flexibility in the face of uncertainty.

Participation has been a positive feature of many of the 35 demonstration projects - often breaking new ground as it reaches beyond the more standard consultation procedures. Participation provides a means to harness local knowledge, energy and commitment, and to arrive at a genuine understanding of coastal management issues, and of other stakeholders’ perspectives. Ownership of the process provides a solid foundation for adoption and implementation of ICZM strategies. A strong message from the demonstration programme is to:

- **Use Participatory Planning to Develop Consensus**

Responsibility for coastal management activities is often divided amongst a wide range of government agencies, services and administrations operating on a sectoral or territorial basis. In many countries, for example, management of offshore areas is often a function of central government while land-based planning in general is a function of local government. Coastal management must integrate the concerns of all relevant sectoral agencies - from leisure and tourism to energy; from conservation to industry, shipping and ports. And this must involve all of those involved in sectoral policy and decision making - from local to regional, national and European levels. The principle of subsidiarity will guide the assignment of management responsibilities between different levels of government, but it is critical that policies and actions at different levels are consistent. Another key message for coastal managers is thus to:

- **Ensure Support and Involvement of All Relevant Administrative Bodies**
A range of instruments is available to implement ICZM - from command-and-control to economic incentives and voluntary agreements. Ideally, a wide range of instruments should be used at all stages in the ICZM process, from developing awareness and promoting dialogue though to strategy development and implementation. The seventh guiding principle for coastal management in Europe is to:

➢ **Use a Combination of Instruments** to achieve coastal management objectives.

ICZM is a continuous and iterative process designed to promote sustainable management of coastal zones. ICZM provides a means to accept and reconcile different objectives for coastal areas in order that *multiple* social, economic, cultural and environmental goals can be achieved. This does not simply mean that we should be integrating environment into sectoral planning: ICZM is an integrated governance process that requires that all sectors - indeed all interested and affected parties - work together to ensure that the full ensemble of societal objectives can be achieved for both present and future generations.

**Moving On**

So what should be the role of the EU? Article 6 of the Amsterdam Treaty requires that the environment be integrated into other community policies, but ICZM provides a vehicle for the achievement of other fundamental goals such as regional cohesion.

Certainly there is a justification for action at the European level, which can be summed up from three perspectives:

- First, European sectoral policy has and will continue to have an important influence on the way member states and regions use coastal areas and resources;

- Second, Europe’s coastal zones offer an important asset in terms of realising European policy objectives, from social and economic cohesion to environmental health;

- And third, many coastal issues - both socio-economic and environmental - extend beyond national boundaries.

Finally it is worth adding that since many issues are common to several, if not all, coastal member states, there is great potential for sharing of experience between different parts of the Union. The demonstration programme has been an important first step in this direction, and the challenge today is to determine, where do we go from here?

I look forward to hearing the suggestions and ideas that will emerge from the rest of this day, and hope that they will enrich the Commission’s ongoing process to prepare the final conclusions from the ICZM Demonstration Programme and their proposal for the steps that the EU needs to take to ensure better management of our coastal zones in the future.

**References**
* Many of the materials in the paper are drawn directly from the reflection papers compiled by the Demonstration Programme’s Team of thematic experts: *Towards a European Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy: General Principles and Policy Options.*

