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**Introduction**

The Dutch government organised a European conference on coastal management at the occasion of the Dutch EU presidency during the second half year of 2004 in Rotterdam. Within Europe’s coastal zones a large part of its population, huge economic investments and rich biodiversity are located. Managing the coastal zone is important for the environment and for the economic and social well being. Coastal erosion already affects some twenty percent of Europe’s coastlines. With climate change, continuing urban sprawl and exploitation, this figure is set to grow. Coastal erosion is a natural phenomenon, but also a problem requiring remedial action. Remedial action has become increasingly costly and in many areas unsustainable. This has been highlighted by a recent finalised European project EUROSION. The importance of coastal erosion for The Netherlands and the EUROSION outcomes pointing at the transboundary dimension resulted into the conference title: European coasts at risk, how to manage?

This report provides some background information on the EUROSION project and the contents of the main outcomes combined with the main issues and conclusions of the coastal conference proceedings.

**European Context**

EUROSION is a project completed in May 2004 that assessed the social, economic and environmental impacts of erosion on Europe’s coasts and examined the management. The project was an initiative of the European Commission and was carried out by a European consortium lead by the Dutch National Institute for Coastal and Marine Management. Based on the outcome of the project, the consortium proposed a set of policy recommendations. The Coastal Conference has provided an opportunity to discuss the practicability of the recommendations and their validity across many different European coasts. The outcomes and recommendations of the project can be found on [www.eurosion.org](http://www.eurosion.org). The relevant reports can be downloaded from the ‘Reports Online’ section at this site.

**Focus**

The conference focused on three of the EUROSION recommendations:

- **Coastal Resilience**: understanding the coastal system, the role of the coastal cell and the importance of sediments and availability of sediment reservoirs
- **Risk management**: managing the coastal zone through hazard (potential threats) and impacts assessment
- **Accountability**: making sure responsibilities for coastal development and management are appropriately distributed

**Coastal erosion and flooding**
General Conclusions

Resilience
The coastal resilience statements and their potential contribution to sustainable coastal development were broadly agreed. The implementation of the measures and actions associated with the concepts require:

- Proper assessment of the natural system in terms of sediment- and bio dynamics and awareness of the inherent resilience of the coast;
- Local to regional implementation;
- Appropriate evaluation and monitoring.

Risk assessment
It was agreed that assessing risk in coastal areas is important. Several points were made in relation to implementation, namely:

- Risk assessment for coastal hazards around Europe, is desirable. However, it is important to recognise the wide variety of hazards that occur and the different ways in which the coast responds to them;
- Standardisation of information will help assessment, optimize re-utilisation of information and aid access to it;
- Communicating risks to the general public requires caution as it can have unforeseen consequences, such as a decline of property values;
- Cross border co-operation and exchange of experience can help generate better risk assessment and policies for dealing with hazards;
- A European approach can have an important role in identifying cross-border sediment cells and combining existing plans and programs. This is especially true where there is a potential impact from actions taken by one state on its neighbour.
- Practical experiences over the different regional seas are needed to serve as examples of concrete actions, to provide guidelines and to demonstrate cost and benefit.

Accountability
The meeting agreed that there was a general lack of accountability in the decision making process. Amongst others, this has led to:

- Inappropriate development in hazard zones;
- The costs of ‘protection’ of infrastructure being borne by the tax payer rather than those directly benefiting from the development;
- Recognition that the balance needs to be altered such that the true cost of any development is taken into account including any follow-up protection.

Public Private Participation is not a panacea for the future. There may be advantages on a scale of decades that may be well worth trying, but it shouldn’t be adopted without taking into account the restrictions imposed by the coastal system in developing the process.

Taken together it seems clear that combining a better understanding of the nature of the coast together with an assessment of hazards (from flooding and erosion) would lead to balanced decisions about development and use of the coastal zone. All participants welcomed information harmonisation and standardisation. This is a prerequisite for optimal access, understanding and policy participation. How to implement these recommendations in a relevant way, contributing to economical and ecological sustainable coastal zone management is a European key challenge.
Two further relevant points were agreed:

1. **Information management**
   ‘Information lies at the heart of good decision making – at each level the identification of needs, the collection and collation of relevant information helps communication, the understanding of the issues and their possible solutions.’ (EUROSION Project findings, 2004).

2. **European dimension**
   The scale on which the EUROSION recommendations are relevant varies from the local level to the national and even European level. An EU-wide understanding of the concept of resilience at each of these scales should be promoted at the various administrative levels. It is also considered important to stress the relevance of the EUROSION concepts more generally at all these levels. It was felt this should be done by stimulating improved understanding and by looking for synergy with other instruments.

**Next Steps**

- The results of the conference will be presented by the ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management in the Netherlands to its counterpart in the UK (DEFRA) which will host the European presidency the second half of 2005. This will help to maintain continuity of the progress of the subject. Coastal or flood oriented initiatives and ideas on the EUROSION dossier are welcome.

- The development of the EUROSION recommendations associated with accountability, risk assessment and coastal resilience in a cross border and transnational context has potential within an INTERREG Framework and other European research programmes. Currently an INTERREG 3B proposal is being prepared to implement these recommendations for the North Sea coasts (SAFECOAST).

- Considering the relevancy of the EUROSION recommendations at several administrative harmonisation of the concepts such as coastal resilience, valuation of ecosystem analysis and coastal EA procedures. Guidance on Strategic environmental assessment and coastal erosion is being developed by DG Environment of the European Commission.

- The EUROSION database should be further developed and made accessible. Clear communication on the rights to use this database will be required.
Conference background

The relationship between environmental risk and human adaptation remains a key parameter for the safety and well being of the population. Vulnerability and coastal resilience are emerging key concepts in defining the adaptation-safety relationship, from local to global scales. Stressed coastal systems, depleted biological resources, and risks from global climate change all require human adaptation and institutional change if future well use is to be secure and sustainable. The EUROSION project delivered several policy recommendations on how to deal with coastal erosion and flooding in Europe.

flooding and erosion in Europe

Below: Coastal flooding and coastal erosion. Left: coastal flood prone areas in the North Sea Region. Note that the low-lying delta (purple: below sea level) that comprises large parts of Belgium, The Netherlands, Germany and Denmark. Right: EUROSION statistics on the coastal lengths of the EU regions and the proportion affected by coastal erosion.

These recommendations are, amongst others, the concepts of coastal resilience, risk management, accountability and information management. These three recommendations have been discussed during the conference. Central was the level up to which these recommendations are understandable, discussing their feasibility and practical value.

1. Restoring the sediment balance and providing space for coastal processes (Coastal resilience)

Coastal resilience can be defined by the inherent ability of a coast to accommodate changes induced by sea level rise, extreme events and occasional human impacts, whilst maintaining the longer-term functions of the coast. A more strategic and proactive approach to coastal erosion is needed for the sustainable development of vulnerable coastal zones and the conservation of coastal biodiversity. In the light of climate change and associated sea-level rise it may be wise to enhance coastal resilience. This can be done by:

- Restoring the sediment balance (favourable sediment status)
- Allocating space necessary to accommodate for natural erosion and coastal sedimentary processes
- The designation of strategic sediment reservoirs.
2. Internalise coastal erosion cost and risk in planning and investment decisions

A central goal is to reduce economic losses and loss of life from hazard events in the coastal zone. But because such events are so infrequent and sporadic, it is very difficult to judge progress from direct measurement of loss of life and property. It is possible, however, to generate information about changes in the potential for harm, using a risk-assessment approach (hazard x impact).

Strategies for reducing risk to coastal life and property have generally focused on two areas:

Hazard assessment
Coastal erosion hazard assessment has been identified as the first step before investing in protective measures in the coastal zone. Erosion hazard can have different causes such as cliff retreat, beach erosion, flooding of coastal plains and undermining of the sea defences.

Impact assessment
The impact of coastal erosion may be the loss of human lives, of economical assets and valuable ecological areas. Societal cost-benefit analysis and environmental assessment instruments can be used to gain insight of potential impacts.

3. Make responses to coastal erosion accountable

Efforts to reduce coastal risks will have to be undertaken by both private and public entities. It is essential to make clear where the responsibility of the national governments stops and that of the civilians and private entities begins.

Many economical developments have been placed in hazard-prone areas. Remedial action has been taken to prevent erosion and flooding. In the past most local or other public authority bared the cost of ‘protecting’ these areas. In this scenario there was little incentive for the property developer to take account of the cost of protecting the development from erosion. This recommendation seeks to re-balance this. By doing so developments are made more sustainable. The recommendation proposes a more pro-active approach based on planning and accountability of achievements and provides several criteria to accomplish this.

“Accountable coastal erosion management”:

- has explicit objectives for a defined timescale;
- defines clear responsibilities at the various levels of administration;
- is based upon an understanding of the sediment balance and long term trends;
- does not compromise safety, important environmental values and natural resources;
- is based on a cost-benefit assessment;
- is supported by an appropriate budget for both investments and maintenance as well as for a financial mechanism to locally accommodate erosion or its impacts;
- is implemented by technical measures that have proved to be fit for purpose;
- includes a programme to monitor developments and effectiveness of measures;
- determines the duty to publicly report on all above aspects.
Aim of the conference

The main aim the conference was to discuss the EUROSION recommendations, the validity among different European coasts and the practical usage for coastal managers, planning authorities, private investors and consultants.

A clear distinction was made between the key components:

- **Understanding** (are the three recommendations clear in spite of the huge differences over Europe, can we identify common policies, measures, techniques and methodologies?)

- **Attainability** (are the three recommendations ready for implementation, what practical, financial and governmental barriers exist. Is implementation worth the effort Europe-wide?)

- **Sustainability** (do the recommendations contribute to a sustainable ecological and environmental coastal development)

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**Accountability**

The figure below shows accountability based on flood risks: hazards and the cost of the risk involved. If the society as a whole would bear the costs (all properties insured at the same price), the rate would be 0.2%. However, if insurance coverage were limited to the 100 – 500 year risk zones, the premium would be ten times as high. (Source: Swiss Re, Floods, an insurable risk).

Risk-adapted premiums as a function of the size of the risk community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hazard affected every</th>
<th>100–200 years</th>
<th>200–400 y.</th>
<th>300–400 y.</th>
<th>400–600 y.</th>
<th>500–1000 years</th>
<th>not exposed to river flooding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Risk premium per zone</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk premium (weighted average), when all property is insured for the same premium</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>compulsory insurance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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6
Programme

08.30 – 09.00 hrs.
Arrival and registration

09.00 – 09.10 hrs.
Opening speech
By Mr. M.F.P. Dieriks, Director-General, Directorate-General for Water Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management

09.10 – 09.30 hrs.
Working with the recommendations of Euroson
By Mr. P. Doody, National Coastal Consultants

09.30 – 09.50 hrs.
Europe's coasts at risk, from planning to action
By Ms. B. Snoeren, Desk Officer, European Commission, Directorate-General Environment

09.50 – 10.10 hrs.
Coastal Resilience
By Mr. M. Beurrier, director European Affairs, Bureau de Recherches Géologiques et Minières (BRGM)

10.10 – 10.25 hrs.
Towards European coastal assessment
By Ms. F. Breton, Deputy Manager, European Topic Centre/ Terrestrial Environment of the European Environment Agency

10.25 – 10.45 hrs.
Discussion and warming up for interactive session
By Mr. P. Doody

10.45 – 11.05 hrs.
Coffee and tea break

11.05 – 12.00 hrs.
Session 1: Coastal Resilience
By Mr. P. Doody

11.05 – 12.00 hrs.
Themes:
- Vulnerability and practicability of Coastal Resilience
- Prioritisation of actions.

12.00 – 12.30 hrs.
Plenary discussion

12.30 – 14.00 hrs.
Lunch break (exhibition and lounge area)
Chair: Mr. R.E. Jorissen, director, Directorate General of Public Works and Water Management, National Institute of coastal and marine management (RIKZ)

14.00 – 14.30 hrs.
Coastal management, natural process knowledge and where the twin shall meet
By Mr. H.J. de Vleed, Director Science and Technology, W.L. Delft Hydraulics

Parallel sessions 2 and 3

Session 2: Risk Management
Introductory speech: Balancing Development and Coastal Erosion Risks in Malta
By Ms. M. Borg, Team Manager, Natural Resources Planning, Environment Protection Directorate, Malta Environment and Planning Authority
Discussion moderator: Mr. H. Niesing, senior advisor, National Institute for Coastal and Marine Management

Session 3: Accountability
Introductory speech: Accountability and public private participation: panacea for the future?
By Mr. P. Rao, Environmental engineer, Hartrow Group Ltd
Discussion moderator: Mr. B. van der Valk, senior advisor, W.L. Delft Hydraulics

15.30 – 16.00 hrs.
Coffee and tea break

16.00 – 17.10 hrs.
Final discussions, session summaries and conclusions
By Mr. P. Doody
Summarised presentations from the morning session

The conference was opened by Ms. Van der Hee, General Director of RIKZ (on behalf of Mr. Dierikx of DG Water). She presented the situation in The Netherlands, focusing on the activities and running European initiatives during the Dutch Presidency of the EU. Special attention was given to the support of the EUROSION recommendations and how to shape this Europe wide.

During the conference Mr. Richard Jorissen chaired the plenary sessions. Pat Doody opened the discussion on how it has become clear that in many areas as the effectiveness of coastal defences (against erosion and flooding) has diminished while their costs have increased. These costs are often borne by the local and national taxpayer.

The issues of the European dimension of coastal erosion regarding the urbanisation observed in Europe, the pressure on Europe’s environment and investments and the cross-border impacts of coastal activities were presented by the European Commission’s ICZM policy officer Ms Birgit Snoeren.

The EUROSION findings and recommendations were presented by one of the EUROSION key partners BRGM through its Director Southern Europe, Mr Michel Beurrier. Ms Carlota Montori presented the activities of the European Environment Agency and how EUROSION results are combined with other information sources and incorporated in broader environmental planning.

Mr Pat Doody introduced and prepared the participants for the interactive sessions for obtaining input and ideas on what actions would be needed, if these are feasible and how to realise these. The interactive session was opened through voting on the three EUROSION recommendations 1) coastal resilience, 2) risk assessment 3) accountability.

Results of the voting exercise suggest that the concepts above are mostly understood and – if implemented correctly – can change the way we operate. Risk assessment was identified as the most understandable of the three EUROSION recommendations, shortly followed by the coastal resilience concept. Coastal erosion management and accountability was the least understood principle. Attainability showed a similar pattern, although totals were lower for both Risk assessment and resilience, for accountability only 50% of the participants defined this as an attainable principle. Coastal resilience and appropriate knowledge was recognised as an important cornerstone for sustainable coastal zone management.

Further on in the session participants were divided into several smaller groups. Each group discussed two statements related to the concept of coastal resilience.

![Voting Results](image)
Interactive session I: Coastal resilience

Resilience and resistance are functions of the natural system's capacity for autonomous adaptation, which represents the coastal system's natural adaptive response. Resilience and resistance often are affected by human activities, which need not only be negative: Planned adaptation can reduce natural vulnerability by enhancing the system's resilience and resistance, thereby adding to the effectiveness of autonomous adaptation.

The bio geophysical effects of sea-level rise impose a range of potential socioeconomic impacts. This impact potential is the socioeconomic equivalent of susceptibility; it is dependent on human influences. Socioeconomic vulnerability is determined by the impact potential and society's technical, institutional, economic, and cultural ability to prevent or cope with these impacts. As with the natural system's resilience and resistance, the potential for autonomous adaptation and planned adaptation determines this ability to prevent or cope.

Statements discussed:

- For effective and sustainable coastal management the EU member states should adopt a system approach based on management of sediment cells and river catchments.
- In-depth knowledge of coastal resilience and mandatory incorporation of this concept in local spatial planning is needed for sustainable coastal zone development.
- Strategic sediment reservoirs need to be allocated in each coastal sediment cell
- All coastal sediment cells need to be described. Sustainable management of these cells will have to be incorporated in coastal zone development plans.
- To define the coastal sediment cell you need information on the following parameters: bathymetry, hydrography, elevation, wind and wave climate, water levels and currents.
- Operational actions should be based upon a “favourable sediment status” within the management system.

Main outcomes coastal resilience session

Participants broadly agreed the concept of coastal resilience both in terms of understanding the principles and contribution to sustainable coastal development. While developing the concept it was concluded that a system approach was important. In this context the legislative linkages to local planning, sediment cell definition and sediment management needed to be based upon knowledge of the sediment system, including the definition and status of any sediment reservoir.

Implementation of such an approach would not be easy. The obstacles identified ranged from:
- Technical (e.g. the difficulty of assessing trends at the correct geographical and time scales);
- Societal (e.g. acceptance of an approach because of different cultural attitudes);
- Governance (e.g. difficulties of reconciling administrative boundaries with those of the sediment system, “not another plan”);
- Financial (e.g. protecting sediment reservoirs could be costly, how does one deal with rocky coasts?).

Awareness of the importance and the feasibility level of this recommendation requires local to regional implementation based on an adequate evaluation of the sedimentary system and knowledge of the type of coast. It is essential to consider the coast from a systems-approach, instead of managing it within relative arbitrary administrative boundaries. For a more detailed feedback see ANNEX III to this report.
Interactive session II: Risk assessment

Mr Huib de Vriend reflected on the EUROSION recommendations, in relation to natural processes, the need for knowledge and predictive capability concerning coastal systems as prerequisites for adequate ICZM. He highlighted the difficulties of using indicators to reflect the true position with regard assessing risk. This presentation provided an introduction to the parallel sessions on risk assessment and accountability in coastal zone development.

Mr Peter Schoeman presented (on behalf of Michelle Borg) the experiences on Malta regarding coastal risk assessment. The findings from the EUROSION case study indicated that even in the absence of a nationwide database on coastal erosion, it was clear that the main cause for coastal erosion in Malta is linked to human interventions. An inventory of coastal hazard and impacts has a clear added value when considering the sustainability of coastal development.

Statements discussed:

- If mapping of coastal hazards (for planning and development) is relevant for Malta it is relevant for all Europe.
- Hazards and impacts of extreme events need to be forecasted and assessed. These assessments need harmonised mapping in Europe even more because of regional differences.
- The threats are of such an order that we ask the EU to facilitate and guide Coastal Risk Mapping Europe-wide, while coastal nations should undertake the Risk Mapping in a coordinated fashion.
- Highly productive coastal wetlands with the size comparable to that of The Netherlands are threatened by coastal erosion The potential impact of this threat calls for European monitoring.
- Risk mapping results should be made known to the public at large, so that appropriate share of the risk should be transferred from public responsibility to the direct beneficiaries and investors.
- The accumulation of investments in the coast legitimates investment into in-depth knowledge of resilience (for safety and sustainable development)

Open Question:
Who takes action, which institutions are going to make the next steps in this important European process: “From Monitoring to Measures”?

Main outcomes Risk Assessment session

Hazard assessment
All participants recognised the importance of coastal risk assessment, for which regular monitoring is needed. However due to the different types of coasts and locally variable physical parameters (i.e. tides, relative sea-level change) the nature of hazards varies widely around Europe both among the different regional seas and within them. Because of these variations the assessment and monitoring process (type of parameters, frequency, level of detail etc.) also varies. The same is also true for the impacts, though here the differences have more to do with size rather than type. Monitoring risk parameters within Europe should be done on a need-to-know basis with respect to regional/national needs.
Harmonisation of information
Harmonisation of the assessment of similar hazards at an EU-wide range was welcomed. It was also agreed that this would be essential for proper understanding of the natural system, especially in cross-border areas. This would contribute to providing optimal access and (re-)utilisation of information. Another important consideration is the contribution that local information can make to an European information network. This is relevant for validation and presentation of information at different levels, which in turn can help foster co-operation and increase commitment between authorities operating at these different levels. The willingness to contribute to a European approach is clearly present, but only if the information gathered is also relevant at regional, national and sub-national level. In this context the value of the five EUROSION key data sets was questioned. Next steps should focus on specific regional to local implementation efforts (validity and cost-benefits analysis) to concretise the operational results.

Communication on risks
Populations living in dangerous areas should be made aware of the risks so that the population would be able to take necessary preventive measures or know how to act in extreme situations. It is a governmental responsibility to communicate these risks (and provide guidelines/advice/protection) as to how to prepare for extreme events. However, it should be remembered that communicating risks is not without risk itself. Examples from the UK demonstrate that there can be an immediate decline in value of property when areas at risk (from flooding) are identified on maps displayed on the internet. This is not, of course, the purpose of communicating risk. Another undesirable consequence is the opportunistic investment in hazard zones and the subsequence demand for government support when the “unexpected” occurs.

How can we overcome these problems? Maybe general risk assessment, taking all hazards into account is the way forward? Can a differentiation between existing situation and future developments be helpful? It was argued that caution should be exercised with the communication of risks, and consideration should be given to when, how and to whom the risk assessment should be given.

Europe's role
The statements regarding the European dimension of risks to the population, economy and ecology stimulated discussion. The differences between regional seas in terms of risk were mirrored, not surprisingly, by a difference sense of urgency adopted by the organisations responsible for administration. It was considered that Europe’s role should extend beyond just research and transboundary co-operation leading to to the identification of cross border sediment cells and links between existing relevant plans and programs. This was most important where actions in one state might have an impact on its neighbour’s coastline. This is especially true when conflicts occur or environmental impacts are not assessed properly. Many coastal impacts could be taken on board of the EU Action plan on flood risk, scheduled to be addressed next year, though existing knowledge on cause and effect is often limited or absent.

Regarding actions required at member state level, needed for incorporating EUROSION recommendations (either already there, or new). There is still quite a number of questions to be answered and issues be cleared before this can be done. Some implementation experiences through field-based follow-ups within the different regional seas are necessary to delineate and specify the EUROSION suggestions.
**Interactive session III: Accountability**

Mr Paul Rao presented an innovative public private partnership regarding the sustainability both economically and environmentally of a coastal river floodplain protection scheme. He stressed the importance of continuing public support to the implementation of any plan. Overall experience and the progressive implementation of the project maintained and improved the environment for the benefit of local communities both now and into the future.

**Main outcomes accountability session**

Discussions were mainly focused on the topic of Public Private Participation (PPP), where there was common agreement on the fact that this was certainly possible for coastal management issues in general. PPP could be at least a panacea for a future on a scale of decades that may be well worth trying. However, certain restrictions and prerequisites may be mentioned to take carefully notice of before implementing PPP constructions. Namely:

- There is always a public (national) responsibility for saving lives, while for property it may be different (insurance). Infrastructure along the coast, which is chiefly of public interest, is very difficult to insure.
- Long-term commitment to funding a PPP is extremely important. Risks can be stated in the contract. Stakeholder participation as well. Consultation occurs all through the project.
- Certain elements of the coastal system cannot be valued in money, which means there will always be a remaining role for government.
- PPP might come in during certain phases or sectors of coastal management (assisting strategy, doing the work). There should be different models for different situations. Start small, and be intent on opportunities!
- PPP’s may lead to better and more transparent expenditure (value for public funding).
- Clear contract obligations secure responsibilities of the parties (may include fines for breaches). Service Level Agreements (SLA’s) may be part of the procedure as well.
- In general current situation it appears that both the Public and Private sectors are passively looking at each other. In the past, for instance the Delta Works in the Netherlands have been a sole governmental initiative. Now there seems lack of pro-activeness in both sectors, with the serious risk of nothing happening. Installing PPP’s may just well generate solutions overcoming public reluctance while at the same time checking expenses by implementing strict procedures that can be reviewed and adapted while the project continues.

General, though not unanimous conclusions are that accountability can be improved through entering into PPP’s. PPP’s should be started for a limited period, with possibilities for review and corrective action before starting a next phase. It was understood that different types of accountability existed throughout Europe. The general conclusion was also that it might be too early to conclude that PPP’s would be advisable in all cases. Nevertheless, many participants to the meeting would like to give PPP’s the benefit of the doubt.