

Science for Environment Policy

ICZM approaches not always implemented despite adoption

A recent international study has compared different Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) methods and suggests that improved enforcement and compliance would increase implementation of key strategies. It also highlights the potential for environmental impact assessments (EIAs) to develop science and policy integration.

In 2002, the European Parliament and Council adopted a Recommendation on ICZM, outlining the principles of sound coastal management¹. ICZM emphasises the integration of coastal planning and management activities to streamline decision-making and use of limited resources. For example, fisheries and tourism both depend on coastal water quality. Therefore, under a multi-sector ICZM approach, the two sectors should be working together on the issue of coastal pollution.

ICZM is widely accepted and adopted, but coastal degradation persists. Research suggests that routes to the potential benefits of ICZM remain unclear to many practitioners and, in some cases, ICZM approaches are adopted but not successfully implemented. To help plug the knowledge gap, the researchers, working under the EU SECOA project², carried out surveys among other participants working on SECOA, spanning eight different countries: Belgium, India, Israel, Italy, Portugal, Sweden, the UK and Vietnam. They focused on identifying the most common methods for integration and reasons why certain methods were not implemented.

Survey respondents first completed a general survey about ICZM in their own country. They then completed a second survey which focused on the five methods most commonly cited in the first survey. These methods were: setback lines (coastal boundaries beyond which development is prohibited), marine spatial planning (involving analysing human activity in marine areas), regulatory commissions (forums bringing together government representatives and experts), planning hierarchies (in which planning is controlled from the top level down) and EIAs (analysing the positive and negative environmental impacts of a proposed project).

Only EIAs were implemented in all countries and planning hierarchies were used everywhere except in India. Setback lines were used in five countries, while marine spatial planning and regulatory commissions were each used in three.

Based on the results, the researchers developed a conceptual framework to show how certain integration methods enhance specific 'dimensions' of integration better than others. For example, regulatory commissions integrate across different industry sectors and public-government divides, whereas setback lines integrate across landscape boundaries.

The researchers went on to identify barriers to integration. Perhaps most notably, enforcement and compliance were poor, particularly in the case of setback lines and decisions resulting from regulatory commissions. When planning hierarchies were used, there were delays in completing higher-level plans in Israel, Italy and Portugal. There were several reasons why EIAs were not effective, including results not being understood by decision-makers and the public, or recommendations not being implemented.

One dimension of integration that is particularly neglected is the divide between science and policymaking. According to the researchers, EIAs hold the potential to bridge the science-policy divide, but there is a lack of regulations to ensure that scientific evidence is incorporated into policymaking processes.



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1. See:
<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/iczm/home.htm>

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