



Ex-Post Evaluation - INTERREG III 2000-2006

PROGRAMME: INTERREG III B NWEurope

SCALDIT (Scheldt - and Integrated Testing)

"From collective testing to a transnational analysis of the international river basin district of the Scheldt as a basis for a transnational integrated water management for a cleaner and safer Scheldt."

Project Good Practice Study

Project Study: SCALDIT (Scheldt - and Integrated Testing): "From collective testing to a transnational analysis of the international river basin district of the Scheldt as a basis for a transnational integrated water management for a cleaner and safer Scheldt."

1. General Information

Keywords: Transnational Integrated Water Management

Region: North West Europe (Belgium, France, The Netherlands)

Strand: INTERREG III Strand B

Programme: INTERREG III B North-West Europe

Measure: Measure 3.1. Land use and water systems

Duration: 1/2003 – 6/2006

Funding: The project had a total budget of €6,500,000, of which €3,250,000 (50%) was funded by ERDF and €3,250,000 (50%) co-financed by the partners.

Lead partner: Flemish Environmental Agency. Project partners were the riparian regions of the Scheldt River in Belgium, France and the Netherlands.

2. Project aim

The long term goal was to reduce the risk of accidental floods in the Scheldt river basin, a highly populated and urbanised area. The project aimed to make an essential contribution to the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) in the Scheldt (Escaut) river basin district by testing the guidance documents prepared by the European Commission under the WFD's Common Implementation Strategy. At operational level the partners sought to carry out a transnational analysis of the characteristics of the river basin, review the impact of human activities on the status of surface water and groundwater, and conduct an economic analysis of water use, in order to improve transnational river management.

3. Project description

France, Belgium and the Netherlands share the Scheldt river basin district (51% of this river basin district is located in France; the project partner representing France was the Coordinating Prefect of the Basin Artois Picardie). Cooperation between the involved authorities of the three countries and their representatives in the International Scheldt Commission had together identified the need for a joint project that would lead to the establishment of a joint management plan. Thus, all project activities would ultimately contribute to the setting up of an International River Basin Management Plan (IRBMP) for the Scheldt River Basin.

The project intended to take EU guidance documents, prepared under the WFD Common Implementation Strategy, and test their practicability and applicability when implementing the WFD directive. All international river basin districts within the NWE area, the EU and the candidate countries would potential benefit from the experience gained. The Scheldt's international character, yet low number of riparian states and relatively small geographical scale, made it highly suitable for testing the feasibility of the guidance documents. Nonetheless, it was to be quite a difficult

task, given that the political and administrative cultures of the riparian states differ greatly and operate on different levels (central, regional, provincial, local). Moreover, numerous different monitoring and evaluation systems for determining the status of the water existed in the area as a whole.

Five key themes were defined in the project action plan:

1. **Characterisations of the river basin district**, including an analysis of physical (topographical) features, a review of the impact of human activity on the status of surface and ground water, and an economic analysis of water use, with all results feeding in to recommendations for implementation
2. **Data information management** to make the different partners' data, including maps and cartographical data, accessible and comparable to all
3. **Water management and spatial planning** to update partners' inventories on the planning process and best practice with regards to spatial planning, and harmonise working methods for flood forecasting and prevention
4. **Communication and awareness-raising** to promote project's results by developing a logo and common visual identity, organise events targeted at specific groups, produce newsletters and brochures and create a website to inform stakeholders about project progress and disseminate results
5. **Future perspectives** to address how to extend the Scheldt river management plan to a wider area, and take the project forward in the new programming period.

4. Political and strategic context

The demand for good quality water is increasing steadily throughout the European Union. In order to secure adequate water supply and ensure the quality of river basins, the European Parliament and the Council approved Directive 2000/60/EC on 23 October 2000. This directive, known as the European Water Framework Directive (WFD), provides a framework for EU action in the area of water management. The intention is to achieve good status for the surface water and groundwater in all European waters by the end of 2015. According to the WFD, by the end of 2009, each Member State should have established a programme of measures for achieving the directive's objectives (art. 11). They should identify the most cost-effective combination of measures (Annex III), through analyses that weigh up the expected costs and effects, in terms of improvements to water status.

Since the WFD is a *framework* directive, the concrete details of many of its provisions still needed to be established. One of its basic principles is transnational cooperation, promoted as a prime condition for achieving good water status in international river basins. The Commission (Directorate-General Environment), Member States, Norway and the candidate Member States have agreed to work out a Common Implementation Strategy (CIS). The emphasis is on achieving a common understanding of the technical and scientific implications of the WFD. A number of informal guidance documents for implementing the directive have been drawn up at European level, intended for experts directly or indirectly involved in implementation. However, before putting these guidance documents into practice, the Commission and Member States are required to determine how useful and applicable they are by carrying out pilot projects in river basins across the EU. In this context the various riparian states of the Scheldt River Basin District proposed to carry out one pilot project.

5. Project Implementation

The first step was to develop a transnational characterisation of the river basin district and ensure a common understanding of the relevant issues among the project partners – only then could the partners proceed with their various analyses. In addition to the formal project partners, members of national and regional delegations within the International Scheldt Commission (ISC) were also involved, to ensure a link to the political authorities. Each partner's national or regional head of delegation was invited to plenary meetings. As government representatives they were responsible for approving the project results. Communication was ensured via a website, newsletters, brochures, and by attending the project's major events.

The five themes of the project action plan were implemented through 19 activities. The action plans proceeded as follows: Firstly, the partners characterised the river basin district using and testing the guidance documents developed in the CIS process, particularly with regard to encouraging public participation in water management. They reviewed the impact of human activity on the status of surface waters and groundwater and performed an economic analysis of water use. Secondly, they sought to make the numerical and cartographic data of the different parties accessible and comparable. Thirdly, they updated partner inventories related to planning processes and best practices in spatial planning and harmonised working methods related to flood forecasting and prevention.

Thereafter a lot of project activity concerned communication and raising awareness to ensure that the project and its results were recognisable. The partners developed a logo and a common visual identity while regularly publishing newsletters, brochures and regular press releases. They created a web site and developed a fair stand to inform stakeholders about progress and disseminate results. The final event informed target groups about project results with boat excursions on the river Scheldt from its source to its estuary. Regional and local water managers and spatial planners were informed via a transnational handbook, CD-ROM and series of guidelines for flood forecasting and prevention.

With the international river basin management plan (IRBMP), partners communicated conclusions and recommendations to the Commission and EU Member States based on their own experiences of engaging in the integrated testing of the guidance documents. They developed not only a follow-up application to Scaldit but also a work programme for developing the management plan for the whole Scheldt River Basin District.

Obstacles during project implementation included the language barrier between the French and Dutch speaking partners. Also, the data necessary to be collected in the project was often not comparable and/or had been generated in different ways. There were also differences in the interpretation of project goals and the ambitions of the partners.

6. Project Results

The principal achievements of the project are two reports which together serve as 'terms of reference' for future transnational coordination on the WFD – one a transnational analysis of the current situation of the water system, and the other a report on key water management issues across the Scheldt. The project also produced a cartographic website with numerous maps of the Scheldt river basin, a catalogue of water management measures, and further thematic reports on the link

between water management and spatial planning, surface water, groundwater and the cost-effectiveness of water management measures.

The project tested the approved CIS guiding documents, which can now be used as an official 'terms of reference' for all future actions related to integrated water management in the river basin district. As a result of the project, water types and issues, as well as their inter-linkages can now be addressed such as: groundwater, fresh surface water, coastal and transitional water, reference conditions, heavily modified water bodies, economics, description of the river basin district in terms of the WFD, pressures and its impacts on the water ecosystem, monitoring and the development of a co-ordinated approach to mapping.

SCALDIT has been recognised as a highly successful pilot for all international river basin districts within the NWE area, across the EU and in candidate countries. Its findings are entirely transferable to other international river basins, but also to national and regional basins. Consequently, the partners are also committed to applying the methodologies developed under SCALDIT to smaller, national and regional river basins.

7. Key success factors and lessons learnt

The experience of the project indicates the vital importance of political will. The partners came up against several obstacles in the project lifecycle, though most were overcome during implementation, thanks largely to the fact that the project was strongly embedded within the International Scheldt Commission (ISC). By anchoring the project within the ISC, actions were subject to a transnational political decision-making process, led by the political bodies from the five riparian regions.

Key success factors included the fact that the initiative was based on an existing partnership which had already identified a number of common threats and joint interests. Strong political will and commitment to take the project forward was also vital. Fortunately there existed a long-standing tradition of territorial cooperation in the regions concerned. The possibility of offering all partners a chance to implement EU legislation in an innovative and coordinated way made the project attractive to the partners involved.