



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 7.6.2007
COM(2007) 308 final

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION

Report to the European Parliament and the Council: An evaluation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) in Europe

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION

Report to the European Parliament and the Council: An evaluation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) in Europe

1. INTRODUCTION

The Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council concerning Integrated Coastal Zone Management of 30 May 2002¹ (EU ICZM Recommendation) called on the Commission to review the implementation of the Recommendation and to provide an evaluation report to the European Parliament and to the Council².

This Communication constitutes the Commission's report further to the EU ICZM Recommendation. The main sources used for this report are:

- An external evaluation report³, assessing principally the coastal Member States' implementation of the EU ICZM Recommendation;
- A report by the European Environment Agency⁴ with an integrated spatial assessment of Europe's coastal zones;
- A report from the Working Group on Indicators and Data examining the use of indicators in the national reports further to the EU ICZM Recommendation⁵.

In October 2005, the Commission adopted its Thematic Strategy on the Protection and the Conservation of the Marine Environment, including a proposed Marine Strategy Directive⁶. By proposing a legislative framework to achieve a good environmental status of the marine environment, the Thematic Strategy enhances the existing body of EU policies and legislation available for the terrestrial part of the coastal zone, supporting the implementation on Integrated Coastal Zone Management.

¹ 2002/413/EC, OJ L148, 6.6.2002, p.24.

² Idem. 1, Chapter VI.3.

³ An evaluation of integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) in Europe, 1/12/2006, <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/iczm/home.htm>.

⁴ The changing faces of Europe's coastal areas, EEA Report No. 6/2006, ISSN 1725-9177, http://reports.eea.europa.eu/eea_report_2006_6/en/.

⁵ Report on the use of the ICZM indicators from the WG-ID, September 2006, http://ec.europa.eu/environment/iczm/pdf/report_wgid.pdf.

⁶ COM(2005) 504 and 505, 14.10.2005.

The Marine Strategy and the EU Integrated Coastal Zone Management policy are to be also considered in the broader framework of the future EU Maritime Policy launched in June 2006 with the adoption of the Commission's Green Paper: "Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union: A European vision for the oceans and seas"⁷. As the geographical scope of the maritime policy proposed in this Green Paper includes the coastal zones, Integrated Coastal Zone Management has a role to play in the policy framework proposed. Moreover, given the particular exposure of coastal zones to the possible impacts of climate change, the second European Climate Change Programme⁸, in particular its part on impacts and adaptation, and the proposed Green Paper on Adaptation to Climate Change⁹, are also of key importance to Europe's coastal zones.

The on-going inter-institutional discussions on the proposed Marine Strategy Directive, the results from the public consultation launched with the Green Paper on Maritime Policy, which will last until June 2007, and the emerging EU policy on adaptation to climate change will need to be taken into account when devising policy options following the evaluation of the EU ICZM Recommendation. The development of a sustainable, secure and competitive energy policy for the European Union will also have to be considered given its overarching role.

2. THE BACKGROUND TO ICZM POLICY IN EUROPE AND THE MEMBER STATE REPORTS ON ICZM

2.1. The EU ICZM Recommendation

Coastal zones are of strategic importance to the European Union. They are home to a large percentage of European citizens, a major source of food and raw materials, a vital link for transport and trade, the location of some of our most valuable habitats, and the favoured destination for leisure time.¹⁰ However, the attractiveness of coastal zones is under increasing pressure: coastal resources are depleted beyond their carrying capacity, scarcity of space leads to conflicts between uses, there are large seasonal variations in population and employment, and the natural ecosystems that support the coastal zones suffer degradation. The coastal areas are particularly exposed to risks, aggravated by the possible impacts of climate change. Possible rising sea levels increase the likelihood of storm surges, augment the risk of coastal erosion and flooding, enforce landward intrusion of salt water and further endanger natural buffers such as wetlands. Important sectors for the coasts such as tourism, fisheries and agriculture are among the sectors most vulnerable to possible changes in climate¹¹. The vulnerability of human and natural systems on the coasts has increased due to the continuing development and built-up in the immediate vicinity

⁷ COM(2006) 275 final, 7.6.2006.

⁸ COM(2005) 35, 9.2.2005; http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/eccp_impacts.htm.

⁹ 2006/ENV/012, Commission Legislative and Work Programme 2006, COM(2005) 531 final, 25.10.2005.

¹⁰ COM(2000) 547 final, 27.9.2000.

¹¹ COM(2005) 35, 9.2.2005.

of the shoreline, the lack of space to accommodate for sea level rise and the chronic deficit of sediment balance¹².

Against this background, the EU ICZM Recommendation calls for a strategic approach to coastal zone planning and management in order to achieve sustainable development. Policies and legislation on coastal management and their implementing mechanisms have, by and large, been developed separately from each other and on a purely sectoral basis. This can lead to conflicting priorities, a lack of clarity and overall a fragmented approach when it comes to implementing the relevant policies and legislation. A more coherent and integrated approach to coastal planning and management should provide a better context to benefit from synergies, to level out inconsistencies, and ultimately to better and more effectively achieve sustainable development. This is what integrated coastal zone management is about and is the aim of the EU ICZM Recommendation.

The EU ICZM Recommendation lists eight principles defining the essential characteristics of ICZM. Integration across sectors and levels of governance, as well as a participatory and knowledge-based approach, are hallmarks of ICZM. Based on these principles, the EU ICZM Recommendation invites coastal Member States to develop national strategies to implement ICZM. Given the cross-border nature of many coastal processes, coordination and cooperation with neighbouring countries and in a regional sea context are also needed.

2.2. Member State reports on the implementation of the ICZM Recommendation

The EU ICZM Recommendation invited coastal Member States to report to the Commission on the progress made in implementing the Recommendation and, in particular, in relation to the development of a national strategy to promote ICZM. Reports had to be submitted by end February 2006. Of the 20 coastal EU Member States, 14 submitted official reports to the Commission¹³. This represents 65% of coastal EU Member States and over 70%¹⁴ of the European coastline.

The reports cover often very different situations: newly developed national strategies, a new phase in a longer on-going national process of implementing ICZM, the results of stocktaking exercises and initial proposals for a coastal strategy. Research indicates that all coastal EU Member States regulate coastal use and development in some form. Steps were taken during 2000-2005 towards a more integrated planning and management approach, but a mature and well-functioning ICZM involving all relevant levels of governance is still rarely observed¹⁵. The picture does not change

¹² Idem. 4.

¹³ By 31.12.2006 reports had been received from: Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the UK. Draft material and other contributions were received from Poland, Slovenia and Sweden. No national contributions were received from Estonia, Ireland and Italy.

¹⁴ Length of coastline as defined by the EUrosion project (2004).

¹⁵ Idem. 4.

significantly when taking into account the 2 coastal Member States that joined the EU on 1 January 2007¹⁶.

3. RESULTS FROM THE EVALUATION AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER PROMOTION OF ICZM IN EUROPE

For the future direction of Integrated Coastal Zone Management, the Commission draws the following conclusions from the available reports.

3.1. Results from the evaluation of the EU ICZM Recommendation

The implementation of integrated coastal zone management is a slow and long-term process. Most national strategies developed following the EU ICZM Recommendation were adopted in 2006 and their implementation is only starting. In the majority of Member States, the response to the EU ICZM Recommendation is part of a slow, but on-going process towards more integrated coastal planning and management. The EU ICZM Recommendation supports these processes and has had a clear effect in stimulating awareness and increased action towards sustainable coastal planning and management. While the prevailing approach is still sectoral, the national strategies should provide a more strategic and integrated framework. The EU ICZM Recommendation remains valid as a basis to continue to support these integration processes. Given that the majority of coastal Member States have responded to the EU ICZM Recommendation, that most national strategies were launched only in 2006 and that further developments are expected through the Marine Strategy Directive and the Green Paper on a future EU Maritime Policy and their follow-ups, the Commission considers that at this stage a new specific legal instrument to promote ICZM is not foreseen. This assessment will be reviewed in the context of the follow-up of the future EU Maritime Policy and after the conclusion of the inter-institutional discussions over the Marine Strategy Directive, expected in 2008.

However, the Commission notes that the national ICZM reports provide only limited indications of effective implementation mechanisms. Turning the strategies into reality and significantly advancing ICZM in Europe will require continued and effective implementation efforts. Securing sufficient funding to support the strategies is one part of the challenge. A more fundamental problem remains achieving effective long-term support and commitment for integration in a context of predominantly sectorally organised administrations. ICZM also tends to involve more environmental constituencies, whereas sustainable economic development and social considerations need to be taken on board as well in the strategies.

A key achievement of the EU ICZM Recommendation has been to codify a common set of principles that should underlie sound coastal planning and management. While the evaluation confirms the relevance of these ICZM principles, the implementation of the EU ICZM Recommendation also reveals varying interpretations and understanding of ICZM across Europe. To foster a more coherent and effective

¹⁶ While the EU ICZM Recommendation did not ask Romania and Bulgaria to submit reports, draft material and contributions had been received from Romania by 31.12.2006 (no formal contributions had been received from Bulgaria).

implementation of ICZM, the principles need to be made more operational and better communicated. The diversity of coasts, along with the different administrative systems between and within Member States, implies though that there are no readily available, one-size-fits-all solutions. Rather there is a need for a more systematic comparative analysis and increased exchange of experiences in Europe.

Although progress has been achieved towards a common assessment framework for ICZM¹⁷, only a few countries and regions have effectively engaged in the collection and analysis of specific indicators to the coastal zone. A methodology to link the efforts in ICZM to trends in sustainability is still lacking. While the methodology to assess the spatial impacts of EU policies has progressed¹⁸, the gaps in data and the lack of effective information-sharing systems are still a barrier to its more widespread and pro-active use in decision-making processes.

To support the implementation of ICZM, more investment will be needed in the capacity to gather information, analyse it and inform the relevant decision-makers and the public at large. The recently adopted INSPIRE Directive¹⁹ provides the legal framework for a more effective infrastructure for the use and dissemination of spatial information. The Shared Environmental Information System which is being developed by the Commission, the European Environment Agency and the Member States in the context of INSPIRE should assist in making coastal zone information more readily available.

3.2. Priority themes for the further promotion of ICZM: adaptation to climate change and risks and management of the land-sea interface and marine areas

While the diversity of coasts in Europe implies that the issues at stake and their importance may diverge, a challenge common to all coastal zones in Europe is the increasing exposure to the risks and possible impacts of climate change. At the same time, coastal areas can contribute significantly to the development of some forms of renewable energy and thus contributing to a sustainable, secure and competitive energy policy for the European Union. This implies, however, additional claims for space and a further potential source for conflict between uses and values in the coastal and off-shore areas. The changes in climatic conditions are expected to more generally affect the opportunities and threats for key economic activities in the coastal zone.

To tackle these and other challenges properly, and to better prepare for and respond to possible disasters, a coherent, cross-sectoral territorial approach is required. Given that today's plans and programmes set the frame for years to come, there is an urgent need for current planning and investment decisions to incorporate risks related to possible effects of climate change. ICZM contributes to the creation of an appropriate framework to promote comprehensive risk reduction and adaptation strategies in the coastal zones, building on existing instruments and the results of EU

¹⁷ Working Group on Indicators and Data WG-ID <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/iczm/home.htm#zone6>, DEDUCE project (Interreg) <http://www.gencat.net/mediamb/sosten/deduce/deduce.htm>.

¹⁸ The changing faces of Europe's coastal areas, EEA Report No. 6/2006, ISSN 1725-9177; European Spatial Planning Observatory Network <http://www.espon.eu/>.

¹⁹ Directive 2007/2/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, OJ L 108 of 25.04.2007.

research²⁰. The Commission Green Paper on Adaptation to Climate Change²¹ scheduled for 2007 and the Integrated Strategy on Disaster Prevention announced for 2008²² will contribute to further promoting adaptation to possible risks related, inter alia, to climate change in Europe's coastal zones.

When launching its strategy to implement the EU ICZM Recommendation²³, the Commission indicated that coastal areas are particularly in need of an integrated territorial approach, but that, in essence, such good territorial governance is relevant for other areas facing multiple pressures and conflicting interests. This is increasingly the case for the seas and oceans²⁴. Notwithstanding the continued need for ICZM on-shore, further emphasis will need to be placed on the implementation of ICZM across the land-sea boundary and in a regional seas context. The foundations for such better cooperation in a regional sea context have been laid, for instance in the form of the maritime cross-border and trans-national cooperation spaces as part of the Cooperation objective under the Cohesion Policy²⁵. Most importantly, the proposed Marine Strategy Directive introduces marine planning and management units in the form of Marine Regions and Sub-regions²⁶. Finally, for the Mediterranean Sea, a legal framework for ICZM is being developed in the form of a protocol to the Barcelona Convention, to which the EU is a Contracting Party²⁷.

The proposed Marine Strategy Directive will set the environmental standards necessary to safeguard the marine environment and the marine resource basis it represents. It also identifies spatial and temporal controls as part of a spectrum of measures needed to attain the overall objective of good environmental status²⁸. In other words, maritime spatial planning measures will be part of the policy mix required to successfully implement the proposed Directive. This aspect is already being factored in by certain regional seas conventions which will have a key role to play in coordinating implementation of the Directive at regional sea level. The Helsinki Commission on the Protection on the Baltic Sea, the Oslo and Paris Conventions on the protection of the Northeast Atlantic and the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea have recently taken important steps to integrate maritime spatial planning considerations into their existing or planned activities. This will constitute an essential building block for the further work on maritime spatial planning in the context of the proposed Marine Strategy Directive.

²⁰ E.g. proposed Directive on the assessment and management of floods, COM(2006) 15 of 18.1.2006; proposed Framework Directive for the protection of soils, COM(2006) 232 of 22.9.2006; Council Decision establishing a Civil Protection Financial Instrument, 2007/162/EC, Euratom, of 5.3.2007; the Maritime safety packages: http://ec.europa.eu/transport/maritime/safety/index_en.htm; EUrosion study: www.euroSION.org; ARMONIA applied multi-risk mapping for impact assessment: www.armoniaproject.net.

²¹ Idem. 9.

²² Annual Policy Strategy 2008, COM(2007) 65 final, 21.2.2007.

²³ COM(2000) 547 final, 27.09.2000.

²⁴ Green Paper "Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union", COM(2006) 275 final, 7.6.2006.

²⁵ Council regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, OJ L210 of 31.7.2006, p.25.

²⁶ Idem. 6, article 3.

²⁷ Convention for the protection of the Marine environment and the Coastal region of the Mediterranean, Barcelona, 1976 and amended 1995: <http://www.pap-thecoastcentre.org/>.

²⁸ Idem. 6, annex V.

Building on the above measures and on other existing initiatives at Community, regional seas and national levels, the future EU Maritime policy will consider, as indicated in the Green Paper adopted in June 2006, the introduction of a maritime spatial planning system. The sustainable development of the seas and oceans of the European Union may indeed require a broader planning and management approach to address the conflicting and competing uses of ocean resources and space. Key aspects are finding optimum locations for economic activities whilst avoiding conflict between the various uses, the most efficient use of space, and the effective management of marine development and its associated development on-shore.

To achieve this, the comprehensive, goal-orientated and problem-led character of ICZM, within the context of a comprehensive maritime policy for the European Union, offers a distinct added-value compared to some of the traditional, more rigid planning and management systems. Moreover, ICZM would contribute to ensure coherence between policies, plans and programmes, and the effective nesting and implementation of plans and programmes at different scales of intervention. Working at different scales and across administrative and sectoral boundaries remains a formidable challenge, but is central to achieving integration. The overall result should be greater clarity, certainty and predictability of policy and decision-making. This will facilitate the sustainable development of maritime economies and enhance the livelihoods of coastal communities.

3.3. The evolving context of EU policies and legislation affecting the coastal zones

The Commission Communication "On Integrated Coastal Zone Management: A Strategy for Europe"²⁹ recognised that most, if not all, EU policies and instruments have some impact on the coastal zones. The Commission will continue to endeavour that these policies and instruments are coherent, so that the implementation at the lower levels of governance is facilitated. Since 2001 and the launch of the White Paper on European Governance³⁰, the Commission has implemented a range of structural measures to improve openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence in decision making and implementation of EU policies (e.g. publicly available work programmes, policy impact assessments, more systematic stakeholder consultations). The future EU Maritime Policy – of which the Marine Strategy Directive constitutes the environmental pillar – offers a platform to further strengthen the coherence and synergies among the many EU policies and instruments that affect the coastal zones.

In addition to the strategically important initiatives in the marine environment, referred to above, also the built-up of other specific instruments addressing significant coastal problems has continued since 2000. Given the continuing trends of depletion of coastal resources and loss of natural spaces, such instruments are essential components of a holistic approach to achieve the sustainable development of Europe's coastal zones. Among the most relevant instruments are the Water Framework Directive³¹, adopted in 2000, the Habitats and Bird Directives³² as well

²⁹ Idem. 10.

³⁰ COM(2001) 428 final, 25.7.2001; http://ec.europa.eu/governance/governance/index_en.htm.

³¹ Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council, 2000/60/EC, OJ L327 of 22.12.2000.

³² Council Directive 92/43/EEC, OJ L 206 of 22.07.1992 and Council Directive 79/409/EEC, OJ L 103 of 25.04.1979.

as the Action Plan "Halting Biodiversity Loss by 2010 – and Beyond"³³, and the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive³⁴ of 2001 applicable to plans and programmes. Concerning specific coastal risks, coastal flooding is covered by the proposed Directive on the assessment and management of floods³⁵; landslides and soil-sealing, such as through urbanisation, are covered by the proposed Directive establishing a framework for the protection of soils³⁶. On the issues of water scarcity and droughts some exchanges have already taken place in the Council and, as a follow up, they will be addressed in a Commission Communication in 2007³⁷. Given the importance of tourism in coastal zones, the Commission initiatives to enhance the sustainability of European tourism also need to be highlighted³⁸.

3.4. Directions for the further promotion of ICZM in Europe

Based on the conclusions outlined above, the Commission considers that continued efforts to support ICZM are needed at EU level, as follows:

- coastal Member States are encouraged to implement their national ICZM strategies or to develop ones where the EU ICZM Recommendation has not yet been implemented, directed at a balanced environmental, social, economic and cultural development, and in partnership with the relevant stakeholders;
- to achieve a more coherent understanding and implementation of ICZM across Member States, guidance needs to be developed to clarify the principles underlying sound coastal zone planning and management and ways to operationalise them;
- as the proposed Marine Strategy Directive and the related work of regional seas conventions are key for the development of a holistic approach to the sustainable development of the EU oceans and seas, it is essential to develop ICZM strategies in close co-ordination and co-operation with these instruments. By doing so, ICZM will become an important component also of the future Maritime Policy of the European Union;
- while further support for the implementation of ICZM on-shore is necessary, more emphasis needs to be placed on cooperation at regional sea level, including coherence between plans, programmes and management covering the terrestrial and the sea parts of the coastal zones. The proposed Marine Strategy Directive and the related work of regional seas conventions will provide important instruments to take this forward;
- given the high vulnerability of coastal zones to risks and possible impacts related to climate change, strategies to adapt to these risks should be developed and implemented in full coherence with ICZM strategies and instruments dealing with specific natural or technological hazards;

³³ COM(2006) 216 final, 22.5.2006

³⁴ Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, OJ L 197 of 21.07.2001.

³⁵ COM(2006) 15 final, 18.1.2006.

³⁶ COM(2006) 232 final, 22.9.2006.

³⁷ Commission Legislative and Work programme 2007, COM(2006) 629 final, 24.10.2006.

³⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/services/tourism/tourism_sustainability_group.htm.

- more efforts are needed for comparative analyses and the communication and promotion of good practices regarding ICZM, including between coastal regions. The gathering of relevant data and effective information sharing and -use in policy and decision-making also needs to be furthered. The development of common indicators and a framework to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of ICZM will need to be continued.

The integrated approach to policy-making of the future EU Maritime Policy and its environmental pillar the EU Marine Strategy, allows us to take important steps towards implementing the above agenda.

As regards direct support for the further implementation of ICZM and as of 2007, the European Cohesion Policy will be a major contributor, mainly through the Cooperation objective and the Regions for Economic Change Initiative³⁹, which includes coastal management among its themes. Moreover, the European Fisheries Fund⁴⁰ includes an axis dedicated to the integrated and sustainable development of fisheries dependant areas. The EU-supported coordination action ENCORA⁴¹ launched in 2006 will aim to structure the fragmented approach to coastal zone research and education in Europe⁴².

4. CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation of the EU ICZM Recommendation has shown that the EU ICZM Recommendation has had a positive impact in stimulating progress towards a more integrated planning and management of coastal zones in Europe. The future EU Maritime Policy and its environmental pillar, the EU Marine Strategy, will give new impetus to our ICZM policy and further improve its implementation in the years to come.

To address the continuing problems of environmental degradation in the coastal zones, a number of specific instruments have been proposed or adopted since the launch of the EU ICZM Recommendation. The Commission will continue to ensure coherence and synergies among the many EU policies and instruments that affect the coastal zones.

To support the implementation of ICZM, opportunities are offered especially through the Cohesion Policy, the European Fisheries Fund and as part of the Research Framework Programme.

In this context, the current EU ICZM Recommendation remains valid to support the implementation of the national strategies and to further ICZM along Europe's coast.

³⁹ Regions for Economic Change, COM(2006) 675 and SEC(2006) 1432, 8.11.2006.

⁴⁰ European Fisheries Fund, Council Regulation (EC) No 1198/2006, L223, 15.08.2006, p.1.
http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/structural_measures/arrangements_2007_2013_en.htm.

⁴¹ ENCORA <http://www.encora.eu/>.

⁴² The adoption of the financial instrument for the environment "LIFE+" is pending (Commission proposal COM(2004) 621 of 29.9.2004).