



Wadden Sea Forum

9th Meeting

Tønder, 30 November-1 December 2006

Agenda Item: 7
Subject: Sustainability Indicators
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Submitted by: Secretariat

Attached are the main elements of Terms of Reference for the development of Wadden Sea Region specific sustainability indicators

PROPOSAL: The meeting is invited to discuss the document and to decide upon the further procedure

DEVELOPMENT OF WADDEN SEA REGION-SPECIFIC INDICATORS: TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Introduction

The central goal of the WSF is to contribute to sustainable development in the Wadden Sea Region. As a first step, WSF has elaborated sustainability objectives and general and sector-specific strategies (Breaking the Ice) for achieving these objectives.

In order to be able to measure the actual status of sustainable development, as well as progress in achieving the objectives, indicators are necessary.

A set of indicators for the Wadden Sea Region will first of all consist of region-specific indicators (for example harbour statistics or Wadden Sea products). However, also indicators with a more general character are needed (for example unemployment).

At the first meeting of WG ICZM, the development of specific indicators for the WSF objectives was discussed and it was decided to propose WSF-9 to commission an external bureau with this task, provided sufficient resources can be found.

Below, main elements of Terms of Reference for the development of Wadden Sea specific sustainability indicators are given.

2. Terms of Reference: Main elements

2.1 OVERALL AIM OF THE STUDY

To select a set of indicators, on the basis of which status and developments of sustainable development in the Wadden Sea Region can be described.

2.2 SELECTION OF INDICATORS

2.2.1 REQUIREMENTS TO INDICATORS

In general terms, the indicators to be selected must have the following features

- Applicability – Indicators must be applicable in local, regional and national policies.
- Data availability – Indicators should be supported by data that is readily available, adequately documented, and regularly updated.
- Measurability – Indicators should be quantifiable.
- Relevance – Indicators should address the issues at hand.
- Reliability – Indicators should be a trustworthy proxy for a related characteristic (i.e. the social, economic and ecologic dimensions of sustainability) based on scientific credibility or previous observations.

- Sensitivity- Indicators should be responsive to changes in the environment and human activities.
- Specificity – Indicators should have a clear representation of the characteristic they are intended to reflect.
- Timeliness – Indicators should provide timely information, allowing time to act.
- Trackability - Indicator should be based on data that is collected at regular time intervals using consistent methodology over a long period of time.
- Understandability – Indicators should be easily understood by the audience, including those who are not experts.

More in particular, Wadden Sea specific indicators must

- Be indicative of the sustainability objectives, formulated in Breaking the Ice;
- Be suitable for evaluating status and developments of the sector-specific sustainability strategies, as laid down in Breaking the Ice;
- Be relevant for the whole Wadden Sea Region.

The total number of indicators must not exceed 100.

2.2.2 SOURCES OF INFORMATION

In selecting the indicators, use must as much as possible be made of acknowledged sources of information, available within WSF and the trilateral cooperation, in particular:

- Relevant Wadden Sea Forum studies (Prognos reports; Planco reports; COWI sustainable development report);
- Wadden Sea Quality Status Report.

2.2.3 RELATION WITH OTHER INDICATORS

In order to enhance overall transparency and to avoid double work, the indicators must, to the extent possible, be derived from existing sustainability indicators, developed at the national and/or regional levels.

2.2.4 SELECTION PROCEDURE

The procedure for selecting the indicators must be made clear, implying that for each indicator a motivation is given, addressing the requirements from sections 2.2.1, 2.2.2 and 2.2.3, as well as alternative options. This may also include proposals for reformulation of the objectives, if this is considered necessary and/or useful for making the objective and the related indicators more region-specific or in case it is problematic to find suitable indicators for the objective under consideration.

2.3 ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

The study must include a proposal how to apply the set of indicators, i.e. how indicators can be combined and integrated, so as to produce a meaningful assessment of sustainable development in the Wadden Sea Region. This proposal must take into consideration relevant parts of WSF Report No.4 "Sustainable Development Strategy for the Wadden Sea Region".

3. Proposal

The meeting is invited to discuss and adopt the main elements of the Terms of Reference and to instruct the secretariat to finalise the Terms of Reference on the basis of the outcome of the discussion, in consultation with the WG ICZM. The meeting is furthermore invited to instruct the secretariat to investigate possibilities for financing the study and to take the necessary steps to initiate the study as soon as resources have been found.