

CCC Statement

Coastal cooperation and the role of an NGO



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Early coastal concerns in Europe

In Europe, the Council of Europe raised the coastal environment as an issue of concern by as early as 1974. The Council issued a number of studies, documenting the decline of coastal environments, as well as recommendations and ministerial resolutions.

Since the end of the 1980s an increasing number of integrated planning and management initiatives began in NW Europe at local and regional level. Many of the bottom-up and fruitful coastal partnerships originated around estuarine water bodies. Some of these early concerns can be considered as the start of integrated coastal management in Europe. However, the Mediterranean Action Plan and UNEP launched the only 'official' international ICZM programme in the Mediterranean region, during the 1990s.

Emergence of a European coastal network

International contacts between coastal experts, practitioners and planners increased as a result of the European integration process. An awareness developed that multidisciplinary networking would be important to solve planning problems, involving both governmental and non-governmental practitioners. At a European coastal conference in Leiden in 1987, delegates from 12 countries agreed to establish a coastal network, resulting in the establishment of the EUCC in 1989.

The emergence of EUCC has led to a considerable boost for ICZM throughout Europe. In 1991 the EUCC organised the European Coastal Conference, in close cooperation with the Dutch government that was President of the European Union at the time. A month later, the European Council of Ministers unanimously adopted a Resolution inviting "the Commission to propose for consideration a Community strategy for ICZM". The result of this initiative was twofold: the 'official' and the 'informal' ICZM programme.

Official and informal ICZM programme

The informal programme developed as a patchwork of local initiatives, running as a process in a climate of cooperation ("the more partners the better"). Most could not meet the rules and criteria of EC-funding. Because of their dependence upon local funding, they developed very slowly but often steadily.

The official programme developed later in the form of the EC Demonstration Programme for ICZM (1997-'99), in a climate of competition for funds ("only the best project is a winner"). This programme consisted of 35 projects with EU co-funding. However, because of EC-regulations for open competition and tendering, this programme could not be connected to the EUCC's practitioners network nor to the informal ICZM programme.

The Commission realised, after some time, the value of networks of coastal practitioners and invited EUCC to act as a representative of the European ICZM community.

Interface

Over the last couple of years EUCC has been involved in an increasing number of coastal projects including very large ones: the EU's EUROSION study, the Coastal Practice Network and the ENCOR, SPICOSA and OURCOAST providing interfaces between the European Union and the coastal experts, practitioners and stakeholders community. EUCC's first role is to ensure the input from the stakeholders in the fields of planning, management, conservation, and industry. This task

is implemented through its international staff and office network and its ability to communicate in 15 languages. The second role is to provide external communication mechanisms and media to Europe and the large English speaking countries in the world. This relies on the presence of a range of electronic newsletters, magazines, and websites in 7 languages, reaching more than a million people a year.

In this way the Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC) became the largest European organisation of coastal and marine professionals: experts, practitioners and policy makers.

Concluding

After more than a decade at the forefront of European coastal management, many achievements of the informal international networking by the EUCC can be mentioned. It has been particularly successful in delivering studies, promoting integrated approaches in planning, implementing ICZM-focused projects, and developing information and communication tools.

Some examples of the important role of international and national NGOs at the threshold between formal and informal ICZM activities in Europe as well as in Asian countries such as Bangladesh, India and Vietnam, are described in the CCC publication.