Coastal zones: integrated management ICZM, implementation of a strategy

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The Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council concerning Integrated Coastal Zone Management of 30 May 2002 (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 Council. This Communication constitutes the Commission's report further to the EU 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 Commission. This represents 65% of coastal EU Member States and over 70% 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 observed. The picture does not change significantly when taking into account the 2 coastal Member States (Romania and Bulgaria) that joined the EU on 1 January 2007.

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.

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;
- 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 Initiative, which includes coastal management among its themes. Moreover, the European Fisheries Fund includes an axis dedicated to the integrated and sustainable development of fisheries dependant areas. The EU-supported coordination action ENCORA launched in 2006 will aim to structure the fragmented approach to coastal zone research and education in Europe.