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Non-stutory approaches to integrated coastal management based on UK experience

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Abstract

This paper examines “Partnerships”, coastal Fora and other local, non-statutory approaches to the development of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM). Although the principles and practice of ICZM have been evolving for some 40 years in the United States and other areas of the World, ICZM in Europe has been slow to develop. There have been some notable examples of advances towards international cooperation in developing sustainable use of terrestrial and near-shore marine resources in the Baltic and the Wadden Sea. However, most ICZM initiatives are based on smaller scale, non-statutory, voluntary partnerships and there are major concerns over their sustainability. It is only in the past 12 years that there has been a concerted effort on the part of the European Union (EU) to promote ICZM through funding demonstration projects and formulating a non-binding “Recommendation” that encourages the adoption of ICZM and the formulation of national strategies in all Member States. The EU Recommendation on ICZM provides a general framework for national actions to facilitate the development of a robust ICZM process, however it remains an advisory mechanism and is non-binding on Member States. It does offer some elements of an “Enabling” environment for ICZM development. However, unlike the US Coastal Management Act, it does not provide the same incentives that would encourage Member States to adopt ICZM, or the funding and technical support to enable a coastal Member State to develop and implement a coastal strategy, policy and supporting legislation that is consistent with principles and practices set out by the EU. In a sense we have “lost an opportunity” to emulate the US “Federal consistency requirement” whereby a Member State of the EU could require any EU policy, or other mechanism to be consistent and adhere to their approved coastal strategy and plans. We therefore rely heavily upon local voluntary ICZM initiatives to meet expectations at a European level that our coasts will be managed in a wise and sustainable manner. This is a highly questionable approach as “Partnerships” face major difficulties in sustaining their efforts in meeting local, national and European coastal management objectives. These obstacles include: the absence of national policies to promote ICZM, lack of funding to support local ICZM initiatives, absence of technical support and information, any plans and management measures developed at a local level do not have a legal base and cannot be enforced, in the absence of a national framework for ICZM there is no “home” for local initiatives at a national level, and there is no mechanism for coordinating local ICZM initiatives at a district or provincial level. Although there are some notable examples of effective local, non statutory ICZM, most local voluntary initiatives struggle to maintain their viability.