



Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority



Regional initiative on Black Sea Coastal wetlands - BlackSeaWet

AIM OF THE REGIONAL INITIATIVE

Background: Coastal wetlands in the Black Sea include a wide variety of habitats and plant and animal species. 2,486,372 ha of Black Sea coastal wetlands are considered to be of national and international importance and 35 sites totaling 1,953,576 ha, are designated as Ramsar sites. These ecosystems provide important services and benefits to people that have economic value. They also have a vital role in ensuring the health of the Black Sea itself, buffering it from some of the upstream impacts of agriculture, industry, forestry and urbanization and providing habitats that are important to the life cycle of many of the species living there. Despite the clear importance to biodiversity and benefits to people, Black Sea coastal wetlands have been seriously degraded in recent years. This has been related to unsustainable industry, agriculture, aquaculture, silviculture, navigation and tourism related practices. The result is that many Black Sea coastal wetlands are no longer able to perform their natural functions and is denying local people access to the resources that they use in their day to day lives.

How is the Ramsar approach implemented ?

The overall aim of new regional initiative – BlackSeaWet is to catalyze the conservation and sustainable development of Black Sea coastal wetlands. Wetland wise use and conservation has been initiated in the region for many years through various unrelated regional and national activities. A Regional Initiative will stimulate and coordinate cooperation around coastal wetlands issues in the region, acting as a means to address regional issues, share knowledge and expertise to address shared issues amongst different countries and stakeholders in the region and stimulate the development of capacity to address them. The issues require a multi-stakeholder approach that engages with government, civil society and

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increasingly the private sector. The Regional Initiative will undertake to bring these parties together. The BlackSeaWet Initiative will strongly promote the goals of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-14. Of the five main goals, the Initiative will strongly contribute to the realization of 1-4 (the fifth not being relevant in the region as all countries are already Contracting Parties):

Goal 1. Wise use: Promotion of the wise use of coastal wetlands is a key focus of BlackSeaWet. Territorial spatial planning, water resource management, river basin and coastal zone management, agricultural management, and sustainable management of economic activities and other decisions affecting wetlands all need to take more account of wise use. Furthermore fully recognizing the values and functions of wetlands, including the wide range of social benefits and cultural significance embodied in them, particularly for people directly dependent upon wetlands are also an important part of BlackSeaWet. Regional cooperation will enable sharing and the development of new approaches / experiences.

Goal 2. Wetlands of International Importance: Although many of the major Black Sea coastal wetland are listed, maintenance of the ecological character of Ramsar sites is one of the most important and difficult tasks for today. Facilitation of information exchange and stimulation of monitoring of ecological characteristic of coastal wetlands are important parts of BSW.

Goal 3. International cooperation: Sound International cooperation is a crucial part of BSW. It is planned to bring a new level of cooperation between all the main stakeholders in the region related to coastal wetlands management, conservation and research. In addition cooperation on specific issues that confront the region's wetlands and species such as pollution from the Black Sea, the conservation of migratory water bird species and avian influenza will be important foci of the Initiative.

Goal 4. Institutional capacity and effectiveness: BlackSeaWet will build the regional capacity to implement the Convention focusing on enhanced CEPA activities to catalyze implementation of wise use. A strong emphasis will be placed on engaging civil society and strengthening their engagement in planning and decision making processes. Furthermore fundraising will be a key area with a strong emphasis on engaging the EU through its Nearest Neighbor Programme and the developing Black Sea Synergy Initiative to develop a major regional wetlands focused initiative.

Geographical coverage and participants

The geographical focus of BlackSeaWet regional initiative is represented by the Black Sea coastal countries. The need for the Initiative is well supported by Contracting Parties in the region. For today, 5 of them - Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine have supported the initiative. It is expected that in future Russian Federation also will join to BlackSeaWet regional initiative.

BlackSeaWet Vision: In 20 years time the coastal wetlands of the Black Sea and Azov Sea will be sustainably used, with healthy ecosystems that provide the basis for conservation of wetland dependent biodiversity and support services for people throughout the entire area.

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BlackSeaWet strategic objective: The overall aim of new regional initiative – BlackSeaWet is to catalyze the conservation and sustainable development of Black Sea coastal wetlands.

Key strategic targets will be to:

- Stop the loss and degradation of wetlands and their biodiversity by 2020;
- Ensure wise use principles are integrated into coastal zone development;
- Engage local people in planning and decision-making;
- Complete the ecological network around the Black and Azov Sea coasts;
- Combine wetland conservation in integrated water resource management and integrated coastal zone management approaches;
- Mainstream wetland conservation in sectors whose activities are contributing to degradation.

The work plan for the 2010 will have, as starting point, the first meeting of the Management Body of the Initiative that will approve the main directions and actions. Presently the Ministries and non-governmental organizations designated their representatives in the Management Body. Part of the 2009 objectives and activities will continue in 2010 as the Initiative was delayed due to organization setbacks.

1. Establishing of the Interim Coordination Unit

The Interim Coordination Unit represents the technical coordination body of the Initiative. It will insure communication with the Management Body and all partners and will coordinate the actions with the Ramsar Secretariat. The Coordinator of the ICU will represent the focal point between the MB and Ramsar Secretariat and his team will be responsible for coordination, administration, communication, monitoring and implementation of BSW plans and preparing annual meetings and reports.

2. Formalizing the National Working Groups

Each country and partner will designate a national working group which will be responsible for coordination and implementation of the Initiative in the respective country. Their actions will be in line with regionally defined goals and targets. The National Working Groups will include voluntary representatives of Ministries, NGO's, scientific and relevant organizations.

3. Conducting CEPA related activities

The activities related to communication, education and public awareness will disseminate information on the Initiative and bring into attention the importance of the wetlands and coastal ecosystems. The website of the Initiative will be created, containing all necessary information. The website will be updated regularly.

Written materials (leaflets) will be edited and printed (in several languages) in order to inform the public about the Initiative and the actions for the coastal wetlands conservation.

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Permanent communication between the members of the Initiative and stakeholders will ensure that all actors are informed about the activities.

4. Organizing a second Management Body meeting

This action is necessary considering 2 aspects:

- not every partner was able to participate to the first meeting and actively exercise its role;
- a second meeting will help partners reinforce their commitment and also offer the possibility for those who haven't nominated a representative from the beginning.

A face to face meeting will also allow a better evaluation of the situation, better communication and easier decision-making process.

5. Preparation of several project proposals

Evaluating the projects already implemented in the region whose focal points overlap with the Initiative's objectives. Finding different sources of financing will ensure the self-sustenance of the Initiative. All partners will be involved. Cooperation between different countries in identifying the problems and addressing them by projects initiatives will allow the best ideas to be put in practice.

Financial plan for 2010

| Activities | Forecasted expenditures (Euro) |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Establishing and operating the Interim Coordination Unit - personnel costs - travel costs - rent and operational costs | 15.000 |
| Creation, hosting, maintenance and updating of the BlackSeaWet Initiative website | 3.500 |
| Communication activities | 1.500 |
| Editing and printing 1 leaflet, in at least 2 languages | 3.000 |
| Preparation of 2 project proposals for actions on sustainable use and conservation of coastal wetlands - evaluation of the projects already implemented in the region - external consultants - communication | 3.000 |