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**ACRONYM : Science and Policy Integration for Coastal System Assessment**

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**Coordination with European Projects  
(Second Interim report)**

**WORK PACKAGE : WP 11 Communication and stakeholder involvement**

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# **INTERIM REPORT**

## **Coordination with European projects (D11.5)**

### **Work Task 2.2 Interproject Exchange**

#### **1. SUMMARY**

The Work Task “Interproject Exchange” aims at organizing effective liaisons with international projects of major interest for the objectives of SPICOSA, in order to achieve greatest possible synergies. In the first Work Task period this objective has been pursued through a partner search mediated by the ENCORA Coordination Offices established in 13 EU countries and 5 non-EU countries. The evaluation of this partner search procedure has learned that such an indirect and non focused search does not yield the expected results. Besides, several difficulties for liaising with other projects and with institutions responsible for the implementation of water policy have been identified. Recommendations for overcoming these difficulties will be implemented in the next Work Task period. A new approach for interproject exchange is proposed and some promising results of this approach are highlighted.

More emphasis will be put on the transfer of project results to the practitioners community. Therefore a SPICOSA Wiki will be created and maintained, which is fully embedded in the existing Coastal Wiki.

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

This second Interim Report reports on the progress of the Work Task 11.2 “Interproject Exchange”. It starts with reminding the objectives of the Work Task and with an evaluation of the actions carried out in the first Work Task period. The evaluation provides clear grounds for a revision of the approach originally proposed for this work Task. The report highlights some results of this new approach. Several other recommendations are formulated, based on the evaluation. Implementation of these recommendations will part of the work to be carried out in the next Work Task period. These actions are summarized in the last section Conclusions and Outlook.

### **3. OBJECTIVES OF WT 11.2**

SPICOSA aims to look for synergy with other projects that work on similar research questions and have developed tools and knowledge from which SPICOSA can take advantage. While SPICOSA is composed of high-level experts with their own professional networks, European coastal research is too fragmented and large in scope for any researcher to be aware of all other activities in his or her field. This Work Task organizes effective liaisons with international projects of major interest for the objectives of SPICOSA in order to achieve greatest possible synergies. This objective is pursued by making use of the ENCORA Coordination Action, which has established a partner search service. This service is operated by the ENCORA central office, in cooperation with the coordination offices of national coastal networks in 13 European countries (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Ireland, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, UK) and in 5 non-EU countries (Algeria, Morocco, Russia, Tunisia, Ukraine). The Contact Search Mechanism is a service responding to requests from persons for identifying and contacting experts and practitioners from different countries to share knowledge and to work together on problems with a common denominator in coastal zones. The following subtasks have been defined:

1. Establish an inventory of the most relevant research projects to be contacted;
2. Inform relevant project leaders, e.g. through ENCORA mechanisms, about SPICOSA results and possibilities for cooperation;
3. Establish and maintain close cooperation with selected projects whenever mutually beneficial.

#### **4. RESULT OF PREVIOUS PARTNER SEARCH**

During summer 2007 task leaders and site study leaders of SPICOSA were encouraged by the SPICOSA coordinator to submit contact search requests, in order to bring them in contact with other colleagues in Europe with relevant experience or conducting similar studies in other projects around the European coastal zones. At that time, most of the work tasks and site studies had dressed their work plan, allowing a fairly precise description of the requested type of contact. Altogether 5 search requests were submitted: two site study requests, two work package requests and one work task request. The requests were disseminated in the ENCORA network via the National Coordination Offices in 18 countries. The SPICOSA partner search initiative was also announced in the ENCORA e-news, distributed among the 2500 ENCORA members. At the closure of the contact search, 11 replies were received to the 5 contact search requests; one request received 4 replies, while for other requests the number of replies was lower. The replies were sent to the relevant SPICOSA work package, work task or site study leaders, who contacted the respondents in view of exploring possibilities for cooperation. Although some contacts yielded useful information, they did not lead to the establishment of substantial interproject collaboration. This confirms the reservations already been expressed in the first Interim Report.

## 5. EVALUATION OF THE PARTNER SEARCH

What lessons can be drawn from the partner search? From interviews with SPICOSA partners and with ENCORA members the following picture emerges.

### **Cost-benefit of cooperation**

All interviewees agreed that cooperation with projects in the same region or cooperation with projects related to the same type of issue or expertise, may yield interesting new insight and an overall higher quality and broader applicability of results. However, one cannot neglect the cost factor: mainly time spent on communicating, looking for synergy, adjusting research plans, exchanging research tools, sharing data, ... Only in few cases a net time benefit is realized by avoiding double work. This burden is particularly heavy for small research groups that often depend on tightly budgeted research assignments. Many research groups are not in a position to broaden their research program for adjusting to the approach, the tools and the objectives of related projects. The availability of financial support, allowing the extension of research contracts for young researchers, is often a crucial condition for establishing cooperation. For instance, contacts have been established between the Capacity Building Work Task of SPICOSA, led by the universities of Algarve (Portugal) and Cork (Ireland), and the Capacity Building Theme Network of ENCORA, led by the university of Cantabria (Spain). The objectives of both projects are similar on headlines, but different in detail. So far, the synergy advantage between these projects did not appear sufficient to outweigh the costs of engaging in a full cooperation.

### **Political dimension of cooperation**

Many SPICOSA site studies deal with water quality issues in transitional or coastal waters, which play a role in the implementation of the Water Framework Directive. Implementation of the WFD has a political dimension, due to its legal implications. Several site studies therefore interfere with a political arena where diverging national, regional, local, economic and environmental interests have to be reconciled, sometimes requiring delicate compromises. The SPICOSA site studies have their own financial means and are not bound to the policy process. However, the policy institutions responsible for implementing the WFD often prefer to keep control over the scientific input and therefore tend to consider the site studies with mixed feelings. In many cases, provisions for the scientific input in the WFD implementation have already been agreed and set in place at national/regional and European levels. It is precisely the direct policy relevance of many site studies which may constitute an obstacle for establishing a close cooperation with policymakers. A good political feeling and a careful communication strategy are required to remove this obstacle. This is a time consuming activity, generally not fully anticipated in the project plan. It is suggested that it might be helpful to discuss with the Commission (DG Environment) the position of SPICOSA with respect to the implementation of the Water Framework Directive.

An example of the above dilemma is the Scheldt site study. This site study focuses on the nitrogen loading of the Scheldt estuary, following a DPSIR approach, i.e. modelling anthropogenic inputs and their impacts in relationship to socio-economic drivers and to possible reduction or mitigation measures. Several governments have a responsibility for dealing with this issue in the WFD framework (France, Federal Belgium, Wallonia, Flanders and the Netherlands). They therefore have installed an intergovernmental consultation structure and a scientific advisory group. The SPICOSA Scheldt study has established a good relationship with the Dutch and Flandrian authorities, but it is not (yet) adopted by all the governmental

institutions responsible for implementing the WFD for the Scheldt basin. This is an obstacle for delivering the project results to the policy process and for obtaining from some governmental institutions the most recent data and information. Other site studies with transboundary water quality issues experience similar difficulties (Guadiana River Estuary, Oder Estuary).

### **Conclusion**

The partner search via the ENCORA contact search mechanism has not yielded the expected interproject cooperation with similar studies elsewhere. We have identified several obstacles for interproject cooperation, which are not removed by mediation of partner search through the national coordination offices. The ENCORA contact search has contributed to make potential partners aware of the studies carried out by SPICOSA work tasks and site studies. However, engaging in a cooperation process requires more than that— direct personal contacts are of paramount importance. We therefore propose a different strategy for the work task on Interproject Exchange. This strategy is based on identifying external projects with the highest correlation to SPICOSA and on fostering direct personal contacts between the leaders of these projects and the relevant SPICOSA work task and site study leaders. A few examples are presented in the following section.

## **6. CONTACTS WITH RELATED PROJECTS**

### **Interproject exchange with DEDUCE**

DEDUCE (Développement DURable des Côtes Européennes) has been identified as a project with a high correlation with SPICOSA. DEDUCE is a transnational project concerning Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), co-financed by the European Commission and the participating regions, in the framework of Interreg IIC South. Its main objective is to evaluate the utility of indicators for optimal decision making on the coast, following the principles and criteria established by the EU Recommendation on ICZM. Nine partners representing all decision-making levels (European, national, regional and local) are carrying out the project, which has run from October 2004 to June 2007. A follow-up of this project is in preparation. The indicator assessment of DEDUCE is highly relevant for the SPICOSA systems approach and the SPICOSA site studies. Interproject exchange between SPICOSA and the DEDUCE partners is therefore mutually beneficial. The DEDUCE project coordinator, Mr. Xavier Marty, has acted on invitation of the Commission as one of the expert reviewers for the SPICOSA interim assessment. He therefore is well aware of interproject exchange opportunities between DEDUCE and SPICOSA. He has written an article on the potential benefits of cooperation in the SPICOSA e-news Issue 1- 2008.

### **Interproject exchange with LOICZ**

LOICZ, Land-Ocean Interaction in the Coastal Zone, is a core project of the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP) and the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change. It aims to provide the science base for informing, educating and contributing to the sustainable development of the world's coastal zones. LOICZ operates a worldwide network of ICZM-related research projects and provides as such access to a great resource of knowledge, experience, data and tools, which are relevant for SPICOSA. In 2008 SPICOSA has become member of this network with the status of LOICZ affiliated project. An article on SPICOSA has appeared in the 2008 summer issue of the LOICZ bulletin INPRINT, which is distributed among coastal professionals worldwide. LOICZ chairman, Mr. Hartwig Kremer have actively participated during the SPICOSA ICZM 2008 Forum, which took place in Brest (France) in October 2008. Recently, one of the SPICOSA partners, Alice Newton of the University of Algarve, has been appointed chair of the LOICZ Scientific Steering Committee, since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009.

### **Membership of European Coastal, Marine and Maritime Platform**

The establishment of a European Coastal, Marine and Maritime Platform is an initiative responding to the wish of the European Commission to communicate with stakeholders on the further development of the European Maritime Policy. It is also intended to better interconnect different stakeholder communities, through exchange of experience, practices, knowledge and information across networks. These intentions, which are expressed in the Venice Platform Declaration, received strong support from the European Commission. The declaration was signed in Venice on 28 November 2008 by some 30 coastal, marine and maritime network organizations. The SPICOSA scientific coordinator, Denis Bailly, was one of the first signatories of the declaration. The Platform provides SPICOSA with relations to a broad range of stakeholder organizations, which on the one hand can take benefit of the studies and tools developed by SPICOSA and on the other hand can support the SPICOSA work tasks and site studies with information and data. Through the Platform membership, SPICOSA will be better nested in the coastal practitioners community and its impact on coastal management practice will be enhanced.

## **7. MEETING WITH THE ICZM EXPERT GROUP**

At the Littoral Conference in Venice, in November 2008, the SPICOSA project was presented to the ICZM expert group, composed of representatives of national environmental administrations in the EU member states and representatives of the European Commission. This presentation was an excellent opportunity to raise interest in the SPICOSA project at the national policy level in the member states and to highlight the benefits of a common framework for analysis of coastal issues in Europe. The presentation triggered a lively discussion about the range of applicability and the limitations of the systems framework for application in practical situations. A concern was expressed about the emphasis on technical tools, which might distract the attention from the political complexity of real life issues.

## **8. SPICOSA WIKI INTEGRATED IN THE COASTAL WIKI**

The Coastal Wiki developed within the ENCORA Coordination Action is a professional Internet encyclopaedia based on the Wikipedia concept. The Coastal Wiki is primarily meant for disseminating knowledge to a broader audience than the community of specialists working at the frontiers of science. The strength of this concept is its capability to highlight relationships, to reveal context, to enhance feedback and peer review and to guide users in a simple and natural way through related topics. Therefore the Coastal Wiki includes articles at different levels of specialization, which are mutually interlinked. Non-experts (policy makers, general public) get a comprehensive overview of new insight gained in EU research projects, with links to articles providing information on the general context and other related topics. Experts (scientific stakeholders, practitioners) will find specific up-to-date knowledge and experience, including information on tools and practices. By connecting scattered knowledge sources the Coastal Wiki provides up-to-date, coherent, reliable and comprehensive information. The access to the Coastal Wiki is free to any coastal and marine stakeholder, but only experts registered in the Wiki Contact Database are entitled to enter new information, in order to guarantee high quality information.

The Coastal Wiki is an excellent medium to transfer the knowledge and results of the SPICOSA project to colleague scientists and practitioners in Europe and beyond. Several SPICOSA partners have already found their way to the Coastal Wiki for publishing their results. The use of the Coastal Wiki in the SPICOSA project will be enhanced by the development of a special SPICOSA project entry to the Coastal Wiki. The SPICOSA Wiki will contain clearly identified SPICOSA Wiki pages authored by SPICOSA partners, while being fully integrated in the Coastal Wiki. The SPICOSA Wiki will soon be available on the SPICOSA website. The development and implementation of procedures for managing the SPICOSA Wiki and for its quality control will take place within this work package.

## 9. CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK

Based on the assessment of the first partner search through the ENCORA contact search mechanism it has been decided not to launch a second round of partner search in the same way. A more focused approach will be followed instead, by identifying projects which clearly have a high potential for cooperation. Personal contacts will be established between the leaders of these projects and the leaders of relevant SPICOSA work tasks and site studies. The SPICOSA membership of the European Coastal, Marine and Maritime Platform will facilitate these contacts.

The difficulties encountered in several SPICOSA site studies to liaise with local, regional or national authorities need to be discussed in a following meeting of the site study leaders. The question is how to cope with the political sensitivity of the issues at stake, in a manner that reconciles scientific objectivity and effective participation in the policy process. This question might also be discussed with representatives of DG Environment, as well as the role of SPICOSA with regard to the science input to the implementation of the Water Framework Directive

Another question to be discussed is, how to take better advantage of other research projects. How can it be made more attractive for other research groups to liaise their research projects to similar studies carried out within SPICOSA?

The SPICOSA work tasks and site studies can publish their results soon through the SPICOSA Wiki, which will enhance the output of the project towards the practitioners community. An incentive letter will be sent to all SPICOSA partners. The development and implementation of procedures for managing the SPICOSA Wiki and for its quality control will take place within this work package.