

MEETING DOCUMENT

Wadden Sea Board (WSB 41)

15 May 2023
Esbjerg, Denmark



Agenda Item:	5.3 Trilateral Monitoring and Assessment.
Subject:	QSR process improvement
Document No.:	WSB 41/5.3
Date:	21 April 2023
Submitted by:	CWSS

The Wadden Sea Quality Status Report (QSR) is a highly valued product and based on the Trilateral Monitoring and Assessment Programme (TMAP). Both activities are seen as pillars of the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation (TWSC) and the World Heritage status. The production of the Wadden Sea Quality Status Reports is a complex process with many players from science and research and policy and the TWSC involved. Although the product is generally considered a success, further streamlining of the process is deemed necessary to ensure a state-of-the-art product, but also to create added value for the trilateral community. The Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (CWSS) is performing an analysis of the production process that will result in a proposal to adjust future QSR activities. The analysis will mainly be based on interviews with involved players. The proposal will encompass format and content, periodicity, target groups, review process and finances. It is foreseen to submit the full proposal to WSB 42 in November 2023. The latest QSR Process evaluation (WSB 22/5.6.1) will be considered during the process. The production of Thematic Report updates will not be affected as these processes run in parallel. This note is to inform the WSB briefly on the status of the QSR activities and the way forward to a proposal.

Proposal: The meeting is invited to note the activities and provide support where necessary.

QSR process improvement – status and the way forward

Format

Since the last comprehensive QSR process with the publications of 29 Thematic Reports in 2017, the report updates are issued as an online product with the additional option of printing each report as a document in pdf format. Although the format was well received, it is necessary to explore options for further technical advances, e.g. changing from a static web site to a more interactive one.

Content / target groups

The QSR Thematic Reports are well received from a broad range of stakeholders. This stakeholder group needs further definition to adjust the final products accordingly. This will need to be done in close consultation with the commissioning parties to guarantee a product that will have the necessary back up from management. Further discussion will be necessary on the relevance of single reports and the necessity to create new reports on new topics or those recently becoming more important.

Based on the information compiled by the individual QSR Thematic Reports, an overall analysis considering the ecosystem approach would be of added value for the TWSC. Such “synthesis” is planned to be issued for the 16th International Scientific Wadden Sea Symposium (ISWSS) / the 15th Governmental Conference. The exact format and potential authors will need to be defined in a joint process.

Periodicity

Since the QSR 2017, the publication scheme was amended to a continuous update scheme. This is of advantage to be able to a) present results with more actual data, to b) issue publications throughout a presidency, but also to c) distribute the effort and workload evenly over a certain period. The motivation for update selection was differing and would need to be further streamlined (e.g. by consistently taking into account the monitoring cycles of TMAP and EU directives) but also to be scheduled well in advance for effective planning.

Authors / Editorial Board

The QSR has traditionally been benefitting from in kind contribution from dedicated authors. CWSS and the Editorial Board tried to find authors mainly from the science and research sector, but also from consultancies where needed and appropriate. It is foreseen to further involve the Trilateral Programming Committee Wadden Sea Research (TPC-WSR) to increase the pool of experts and potential authors. The reports should be preferably created by author teams with representatives from all regions.

The QSR process was benefitting from the engagement of individual Editorial Board members. However, the composition, size, and scope of the QSR Editorial Board need to be revised, as the level of support has varied widely, and the overall process has not been viewed as efficient by CWSS in recent years.

Review process

CWSS is generally aiming for independent products and for a professional peer review process, with at least two independent reviews per Thematic Report. As common practice in science and research, these reviews are on voluntary base and caused sometimes additional delays that need to be better dealt with in the future. Further review desires from trilateral bodies will need considered and specified to avoid misunderstandings and wrong expectations during the process and on final products. In this context, the handling of politically sensitive information must be further defined. This counts mainly for Thematic Reports on human activities and pollution.

Finances

Although the general authors dedication remained high over the years, changing circumstances and desires resulted in decreasing in kind contributions. CWSS is aiming for a fair and even payment scheme, but the reality revealed a rather uneven distribution of finances for many reasons. It is foreseen to develop a payment system that would acknowledge all authors and distribute financial contributions with a comparable level over the regions. In kind contributions will certainly be further welcomed, but in the past also created problems of substantial delays due to rather soft deadlines. Additionally, the positioning of a sufficient budget will need further discussion.

Suggested schedule

- Spring 2023: CWSS is performing an internal review of the overall process.
- Summer / Autumn 2023: Interviews with selected involved people to create an overall picture.
- Autumn 2023: Draft QSR proposal for submission to WSB 42