

# Integrated water resources and coastal zone management in European lagoons in the context of climate change



## THEME: Socio-economic and policies issues

### CASE STUDY AREA: Vistula Lagoon (Poland-Russia)

Malgorzata Bielecka<sup>1</sup>, Piotr Margonski<sup>2</sup>, Boris Chubarenko<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Institute of Hydro-Engineering of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Koscierska 7, 80- 328 Gdansk, Poland

<sup>2</sup> National Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Kollataja 1, 81-332 Gdynia, Poland

<sup>3</sup> Atlantic Branch of P. P. Shirshov Institute of Oceanology of Russian Academy of Sciences, Prospect Mira 1, Kaliningrad, 236000, Russia

According to the HELCOM Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Action Programme (HELCOM 1992 & 1998), the Vistula Lagoon has been identified as a priority “Hot Spot” which is in need of a comprehensive environmental management program. The Vistula Lagoon with its drainage basin is shared by two countries: Poland and Russia. Poland is the EU member starting from May 1<sup>st</sup> 2004 but Russia is not, therefore they face different obligations with regard to water management of the lagoon drainage basin. Poland has to implement WFD but Russia does not have such obligation. Described situation may result in potential transboundary “conflicts”. The lagoon itself is subjected to point and non-point sources of nutrient loads so only close cooperation and integrated management would provide successful solutions.

Large land use and industrial changes have taken place and are still ongoing in the drainage basin after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It has already been recognized that management of transboundary waters should be based on the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive. Moreover during the fifth General Assembly of the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO) held in Quebec (Canada) 28/30 May 2002, it was pointed out that “...In addition to the relevant governmental administrations, the representatives of the local authorities concerned, of the different categories of users of water and aquatic ecosystems, and associations of collective interest from the civil society must participate in **the river basin committees or councils.**” The bottom-up initiative just started in September 2010, and “Cooperation Agreement between the stakeholders in Russia and Poland on the implementation of reinforcement of the environmental integrity of the Vistula Lagoon as a part of cross-border South Baltic transitional waters” was drafted, and it now circulates among potential stakeholders, as a response to lack of official relations between environmental authorities of two countries.

In recent years significant structural changes in both countries took place, which resulted in gradual diminishment of cooperation between them concerning water management of transboundary Vistula Lagoon. Poland has been divided into 16 provinces (voivodships) in 1998. Now the Vistula Lagoon waters and its basin belongs to two voivodships: Pomeranian and Warmian-Mazurian. However, one institution Regional Water Management Board in Gdansk (RWMB) is responsible for water management of Vistula Lagoon and its basin. Since October 2001 there has been a new Water Law introduced in Poland reflecting in general Water Framework Directive (WFD).

Since 2002 there has also been new regulations introduced in Russia that caused a change in the institutional responsibility in view of water management. The principal executive federal organ, implementing the State policy and management in the field of research, use, reproduction and protection of natural resources and natural environment and assigned to ensure environmental safety, is the Ministry of Natural Resources of the Russian Federation. The authority for environment protection was assigned to the Ministry after the abolishment of the State Committee of Environment Protection according to the presidential decree of 17.05.2000 and the RF Government Directive № 726 of 25.09.2000. At the present moment the reconstruction of the environmental authorities in Russia are continuing and specific Agency dealing with water in the region will be organised soon.

All those facts significantly influenced cooperation between both countries, resulting in not satisfactory cooperation concerning transboundary Vistula Lagoon water management.

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Having in mind the obligation to develop the water management plan for Vistula Lagoon in the transboundary context it is necessary to establish new principles of cooperation and revive the bilateral contacts between the relevant Russian and Polish institutions.

### **References**

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