

Connecting people for better water management



AWARE Newsletter N°2

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What is AWARE?

AWARE's focus is on human-caused deterioration of coastal water ecosystems. The project engages scientists, policy makers and the public in jointly creating and analysing scenarios for improved water management in coastal areas.

AWARE's participatory approach is crucial: it develops further the concept of integrated adaptive ecosystem management, by creating active roles for public participation. This strengthens the consultations between local residents, research and policy communities and facilitates common strategies.

The project implements this approach in three case studies:

the coastal waters of the Gulf of Riga
(Estonia and Latvia),

the Seine, Somme, and Schelder river basins
and the Southern North Sea coastal zone
(France and Belgium),

and the Po river Delta and Goro lagoon
(Italy).



First AWARE citizens workshop | © Adelphi Research



On April 22-24, 2010 thirty citizens met on the campus of the Université Pierre et Marie Curie (UPMC) in Paris for AWARE's first European-level citizen workshop. They came to share their experiences, interest, and love for the sea, and to learn about how they can contribute to protect coastal areas throughout Europe together with the European Union.

The thirty participants came from five riparian countries of the following coastal areas, which are the focus of the AWARE project:

The Gulf of Riga

10 citizens from Latvia and Estonia

The Southern North Sea

10 citizens from Belgium and France

The Sacca di Goro

10 citizens from Italy

The UPMC graciously hosted the participants and the project partners for five days. Both citizens and scientists were highly motivated and inspired to start the dialogue. Citizens joined AWARE for many reasons:

"I decided to join this project because I want a strong improvement of the situation, for my children and for us. I am impressed by the visible deterioration of the quality of the waters."

"I want to act; I want to learn more about the situation, because this will give me tools to act, to convince, to play an active role."

"My work relies on the quality of waters, I want to make sure I can keep my job."

Citizens participating in the AWARE project have varied backgrounds: fishermen, local activists, doctors, parents, students, and swimming enthusiasts. But all care deeply about their sea, about the changes that are occurring in quality, and about ways to protect that resource. Over two and a half days the participants discussed the state of the three coastal areas with local scientists, shared their hands-on knowledge of the health of the water and the local activities for improved protection, and devised a strategy for implementing the participatory AWARE approach in their region.

As part of their commitment the group of citizens already started to develop a joint statement regarding their experience, opinions, and recommendations for coastal water management for the European Union and local policymakers. Some were sceptical: "How can we, as citizens, be involved in the improvement of the situation?"

However, while the final output is yet to be fully elaborated, the group already stressed the need for regular meetings between scientists, policy-makers, and the public for improved communication and joint elaboration of practical solutions to water management problems. The participants also raised the idea to bring scientists and policy-makers to work together with citizens on cleaning and improving the local environment, giving the possibility to not only share the work but have an in-depth conversation and improved mutual understanding for further common activities.

A project management meeting followed the workshop on April 26, where partners discussed the follow-up and planning of the local activities. Finally, the first meeting of the **advisory group** of policy-makers and scientists from local ministries and water management agencies of the three regions took place on April 27. The advisory group accompanies the project during its whole duration and functions as an intermediary between the projects' local and EU level processes. Furthermore, based on their own practical experience and working context, the advisory group members support the project team in reflecting functioning approaches and remaining challenges in public participation in water and coastal zone management. All members of the group confirmed their enthusiasm for the project and underlined the usefulness and timeliness of its participatory approach in their work and in the context of the EU water framework directive. As one participant stated,

"The experience of the water framework directive is just the beginning, but we have to know how to apply participatory approaches in an efficient way."

AWARE promises to help by addressing that goal.

The **AWARE website** www.aware-eu.net is regularly updated! Please check for news on relevant activities – such as the results from the Policy and Stakeholder Advisory Group, conferences, and events at EU level and in the three regions. An up-to-date set of project documentation is also available, such as project posters, previous newsletters, scientific presentations, and public reports.



Gulf of Riga

→ Ministers of the environment and high-level representatives of the ten members of the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) took part in the Moscow Ministerial Meeting during 18-20 May, 2010. They were joined by observers from the governments of Belarus and Ukraine, and up to 50 intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. Participants met to ensure that the implementation of the **HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan**—which significantly reduces pollution and restores the sea’s good ecological status by 2021—is proceeding as planned; and to enable participants to exchange best practices and lessons learned from the experiences of the national implementation plans. The goal of the May, 2010 meeting is thus to assess the success of and lessons learned from National Implementation Programmes in achieving the objectives of the Baltic Sea Action Plan.

More information is available at

www.helcom.fi

→ Latvia has once again participated in the **Blue flag Programme**, and 13 blue flags will wave above 11 beaches and in 2 marinas this year, including Gulf of Riga beaches such as Majori and Jaunkemeri beach of Jurmala city, Abragciems campsite beach in Engure county and beach Vakarbuli of Riga city. The Blue Flag is a voluntary eco-label, and the programme works toward sustainable development at beaches and marinas, dealing with water quality, environmental education and management, and safety services.

More information can be found at

www.blueflag.org

North Sea

→ The **OSPAR Commission** will bring Ministers from the contracting parties together to reflect and applaud successes as well as discuss upcoming challenges to the North-East Atlantic environment. Aside from representatives of the 16 OSPAR countries (which include Belgium and France), other Ministers and governmental observers were invited, as well as observers from intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. Additionally, a Quality Status Report 2010 will be launched, that examines human influence on the sea. The OSPAR Commission works to protect the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic, and a 1998 annex on biodiversity and ecosystems now covers non-polluting human activities that nonetheless adversely affect the sea. More information can be found at

www.ospar.org

→ A meeting of the “Comité de Bassin” will take place at the **Agence de l’eau Seine-Normandie** on 1 July, 2010. More information can be found at

www.eau-seine-normandie.fr

→ The **International Scheldt Commission** includes six parties (including France and Belgium) working to attain sustainable and integrated water management in the Scheldt river basin district. The Commission aims to coordinate European Water Framework Directive obligations across borders, and has regular meetings scheduled for 2010. Additionally, a Management Plan Roof Report was published in 2009 by that Commission.

More information can be found at

www.isc-cie.org



First AWARE citizens workshop | © Adelphi Research

The European level meetings of AWARE citizens and advisory group have set the foundations for the rest of the project – **the local workshops and conferences** will take place between September-December 2010!

Starting in June, **local stakeholders and policy-makers will be invited** to the three respective workshops. Participants will differ in each case study and range from farmer and fisher associations, to harbour authorities, to ministry officials.

These **local workshops** will take place in the three case studies on October 8-9 (North Sea), October 15-16 (Sacca di Goro), and October 29-30 (Gulf of Riga). These meetings will provide an excellent opportunity for citizens, scientists, policy-makers, and other stakeholders to discuss the ecological status of the coastal waters and jointly develop scenarios for improved water management.

Local conferences are also planned for fall 2010, which will present and further discuss workshop topics and be open to the public.

Your opinion counts! Early in June you will have the opportunity to participate in an online questionnaire, asking for your opinion on the state of the coastal waters and the level of public participation in the three study regions. These surveys assess the opinion and perception of a wide range of stakeholders on the health of the Gulf of Riga, the Sacca die Goro, and the Southern North Sea, and use the results to discuss future alternative management scenarios. Please see the AWARE website www.aware-eu.net for more details and for participating in the survey.

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www.aware-eu.net

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-  · Kick-off meeting
-  · Website launch
-  · Field visit of case study Sacca Di Goro
-  · Gulf of Riga Inception reports launch
-  · Sacca di Goro Inception reports launch
-  · North Sea Inception reports launch
-  · Newsletter launch
-  · Citizen panel recruitment
-  · First EU citizen workshop
-  · First advisory group meeting
-  · Gulf of Riga local workshop
-  · Sacca di Goro local workshop
-  · North Sea local workshop
-  · Case study survey reports launch
-  · Gulf of Riga local conference
-  · Sacca di Goro local conference
-  · North Sea local conference
-  · Case study reports launch
-  · Second EU citizen workshop
-  · EU level survey reports launch
-  · EU level conference
-  · Second advisory group meeting
-  · Evaluation workshop
-  · Third advisory group meeting



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