

The ECNC Land & Sea Group, though still young, is already alive and kicking, and that reflected in the activities in 2013.

Below you will find information about the main ECNC Group activities in 2013.

Governing issues

Over 2013, the so called ECNC Group Integration Task Force worked on an integration plan to put the full integration of EUCC, ECNC and MedCentre into effect, following the request of the ECNC Group Board meeting in November, Oostende, Belgium. The Integration Task Force reported the results of its activities to the ECNC Land & Sea Group Board, and to the governing councils of ECNC, EUCC and MedCentre.

On 22 November 2013 in Brussels, Belgium, the Board of the ECNC Land & Sea Group met. The meeting strongly welcomed the growing cooperation in the framework of the ECNC Group and decided to use all potentials of the ECNC Group EEIG. The Board agreed on mission and vision of the ECNC Land & Sea Group, and also decided as well on several other issues of importance for the cooperation. It was decided to convert the MedCentre into the regional Mediterranean office of the ECNC Land & Sea Group. Before the end of 2014 it will be decided whether or not to opt for a full institutional integration.

Substance focus

The ECNC Land & Sea Group initiated several initiatives and project proposals in 2014, including the below mentioned main activities:

Healthy Seas – a Journey from Waste to Wear

At the beginning of 2013, the ECNC Land & Sea Group, Aquafil and Star Sock together established the 'Healthy Seas, a Journey from Waste to Wear' initiative. The main objective of Healthy Seas is to remove waste, in particular fishing nets and other marine litter, from the seas for the purpose of recycling these into textile products, such as socks, lingerie, bathing wear and carpets.

The aim of the founding partners is not just to clean up the waste, but also to involve the NGO and business communities and consumers in the process in order to create a growing movement for the sake of healthy seas and, thus, our own health and well-being.

According to FAO and UNEP, there are approximately 640,000 tons of abandoned fishing nets in the oceans, accounting for one-tenth of all marine litter. These nets remain in the marine ecosystem for hundreds of years and are responsible for accidental capture of dolphins and other animals, such as turtles and marine birds, which often die once trapped. This is also referred to as 'ghost fishing'.

Recovered fishing nets are still all too often dumped into landfills or burned, but as part of the Healthy Seas initiative they will be transformed and regenerated into ECONYL® yarn, a high-quality raw material used to create new products, such as socks, swimwear, underwear, carpets, etc.

The strength of the Healthy Seas initiative's is that it has a simple and appealing, easy to understand storyline and a partnership of NGOs and businesses working towards the same aim: a better planet and healthier seas, while learning by doing and being open to new partners and creative ideas. The

Healthy Seas initiative does not talk much about greening businesses and cradle-to-cradle approaches: it just puts them into practice. We have only just started, but we all strongly believe in our joint mission. We work on the basis of trust and inspiration and we mobilize the best of the non-profit sector, the business sector and all others involved. We create bridges.

The initiative will be implemented in three main phases:

1. In the first phase, the Healthy Seas approach will be implemented in three pilot regions in Europe: the North Sea (Netherlands and Belgium), the Adriatic Sea (Italy, Slovenia and Croatia) and the Mediterranean Sea (Spain). The completion of this pilot phase will allow the three partners to identify the most efficient practice to adopt in the future expansion of the initiative into other much wider areas.
2. The second phase will identify effective procedures which will discourage the abandonment of fishing nets at sea and will make available, encourage, and facilitate responsible handling of fishing nets at the end of their life, allowing their recovery and regeneration into new products. The expansion of the Initiative to other areas will be part of this second phase.
3. During the third phase constructive proposals will be developed concerning implementable actions. These will be submitted to governments and legislators to ensure that Healthy Seas will deliver long-term results and that public awareness will be maximized.

Currently, the initiative is in its first phase, but despite still being a very young initiative, the following milestones have already been reached:

- A Healthy Seas Steering Committee and Project Group is up and running, and initiating a large number of initiatives.
- The Healthy Seas blog (<http://healthyseas.org/>), Twitter account (https://twitter.com/healthyseas_org), Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/healthyseas>) and YouTube page (<http://www.youtube.com/user/HealthySeas>) are in full swing, and Healthy Seas has received considerable international and national exposure in all kind of media, from newspapers to business magazines.
- A 'Healthy Seas Fund' has been established, with a focus on awareness-raising about the importance of healthy seas and the removal of abandoned fishing nets, and the financing of local coastal and marine projects that support the objectives of the initiative. The fund will only finance not-for-profit actions and activities. It is governed by the ECNC Group and functions according to a transparent set of principles.
- Volunteer divers have been mobilized towards supporting the aims of Healthy Seas, and diving actions have started in the North Sea and the Adriatic Sea. Substantial amounts of ghost fishing nets have been removed already; for instance in the North Sea over 18,000 kg as a start.
- The first reception facility has been established in Scheveningen, with the help of Den Haag municipality – the first two full containers will soon be transported to the recycling factory in Slovenia.
- Healthy Seas socks, mostly made from recycled nets, have been developed, and their market introduction is being discussed with large retail companies in the Netherlands and Germany

right now. A Dutch-based initiative is being developed with the Leni 't Hart Seal Centre, which has over 250,000 kg of waste fishing nets on their premises.

- The initiative is being rolled out to other businesses, including clothing businesses such as Koru Swimwear, fish farms, transport companies, and some global market leader brands in sport and outdoor wear.
- Policy lobbies for healthier seas have been initiated, also at the highest levels of the UN and EU.
- Targeted stakeholder approaches for preventative action have been initiated, including in the fisheries sector and with national governments in the Netherlands and Belgium.
- Contacts have been established for the Turkey, Greece and Cyprus region, and also in the USA, as regards introducing the Healthy Seas initiative there.
- A legal study into the European and international challenges for waste and fishing nets has been carried out by a graduate Russian law student.
- Exposure: a field-oriented meeting has taken place in Slovenia (international media outreach meeting with field visits to fish farms and recycling company).

As this list indicates, elements of phases 2 and 3 are already being dealt with in phase 1, such as preventative action and consultation with partners beyond the three European pilot regions.

Some information about the ECNC Group internal arrangements:

- The ECNC Group has the daily coordination of the Healthy Seas initiative.
- To this effect, a Healthy Seas Project Team has been established, with a project leader from Tilburg and a deputy project leader from Leiden.
- The project is 'matrix-managed' – the line management is provided by the directors of ECNC and EUCC in their capacity as chair and deputy chair of the ECNC Group management team.
- A Healthy Seas Communication team has been established, involving communication staff from Tilburg and Leiden.
- The financial departments of both ECNC and EUCC are directly involved.
- The MedCentre will have a role in the Mediterranean pilot and is also exploring how to mobilize Healthy Seas in other ways.

The ECNC Group has submitted via Kust & Zee (Dutch branch of EUCC) a Healthy Seas proposal to the Dutch Postcode Lottery and via the Group to the Adessium Foundation (private fund).

For more information about Healthy Seas, see: <http://healthyseas.org>

The Healthy Seas logo:



QualityDestination and QualityCoast

QualityDestination (QD) is a new international award programme for sustainable development of destinations at local and regional levels. It is being developed by the ECNC Group, and was inspired by the EUCC-led QualityCoast (www.qualitycoast.info). Currently, the QD programme is financially supported by the European Commission under the ECNC's NGO Grant programme.

QD enables destinations to meet global sustainability standards of tourism destinations. It attempts to raise the awareness of municipalities of the benefits of creating low impacts on the environment, helping local cultures generate local employment, and improving their management and achievements in an international context.

The purpose of QD is to establish a basis for destinations for sustainability which:

- ensures local municipalities are prepared for *sustainable development and social responsibility*, and maintain their high standards of quality tourism in the future;
- maintains *attractiveness for visitors* that are interested in natural and cultural heritage, a clean environment, a local identity, a host community and safety and business involvement in sustainable development;
- provides *policy support and guidance* on sustainable tourism management and other aspects.

A 'destination' refers to an area that is contained within a local municipality or on a regional scale. This area includes nature areas, open landscapes, towns, cities, parks and historical and archaeological sites.

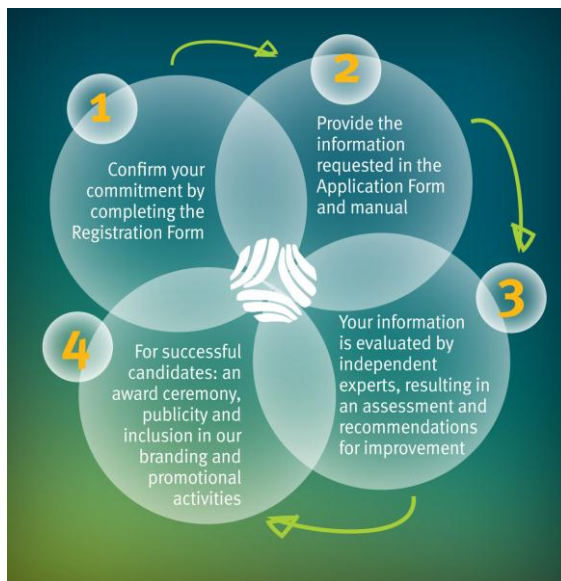
QualityDestination presents its tools to the users/local authorities/regions/destinations to help them reach the goal of sustainable development.

Slogan and logo of the QD programme:

'Mark your place with Quality and Sustainability'



The application process for the programme is as follows:



The QD programme has a functional website (www.qualitydestination.info) which is currently under construction. Other communication materials (flyer, flags, posters, etc.) have been produced and are ready for promotion at various events and meetings with potential clients.



Some information about the ECNC Group internal arrangements for QualityDestination:

- The ECNC Group has the daily coordination of the Healthy Seas initiative.
- To this effect, a QualityDestination Project Team has been established, with a project leader from Leiden and a deputy project leader from Tilburg.
- The project is 'matrix-managed' – the line management is provided by the directors of ECNC and EUCC in their capacity as chair and deputy chair of the ECNC Group management team.

QD is a cross-cutting programme in the work plan of the ECNC Group, which was also included in a project proposal to the Netherlands Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs (November 2013).

As testing areas, the rolling out of QD at regional and local levels is being explored in the Heart of Brabant Dutch region and a Dutch coastal region, and South-East European countries (including the Western Balkans and Turkey).

BojaNaTour project

The ECNC Land & Sea Group has submitted a proposal to the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) to implement an ICZM project in Montenegro. The project 'BojaNaTour - Fostering and bringing together nature, tourism and civil society at Bojana Delta through Integrated Coastal Zone Management' was approved with a budget of ca. 250,000 USD. The ECNC Group leads the proposal, involving the Mediterranean Centre as coordinator, and ECNC and EUCC for various project activities. The MedCentre had the lead in the preparation of the proposal.

Project pilot activities will be implemented in close cooperation with the local partners Green Step and UBA. A Steering Committee comprising external crucial stakeholders and project partnership will monitor and validate project achievements.

The project will have a lifespan of 25 months.

BojaNaTour will use ICZM as a framework to pursue sustainable development in Ulcinj, particularly in Bojana Delta, where the actions will take place; the focus will be on nature and tourism.

The first months of the project will be devoted to reinforcing the links with related initiatives (already started in the project proposal phase), and to start engaging stakeholders in ICZM. This will be the basis for the conception of a series of ICZM workshops that will bring together local authorities, civil society and private sector representatives. Participatory meetings will assist in building and agreeing on a Common ICZM Vision for Ulcinj and Bojana Delta, assuring coherence with other national policies and initiatives and their downscaling to the local level (ICZM Protocol, National Strategy of Sustainable Development, Spatial Plan of Montenegro, CAMP Montenegro, ICZM National Strategy, Coastal Area Spatial Plan (CASP), CEPF projects). This Vision aims to agree on a management model that fosters responsible tourism and nature conservation, among other coastal issues. For this, scenarios and group discussion will be used. Examples from other Mediterranean sites will be provided to learn critical success factors to avoid the mistakes. The Vision will guide future project activities such as the sub-grant programme and the tourism communication strategy.

In order to put ICZM into practice, nature-based and responsible tourism pilot demonstration activities will be carried out, including a two-day training course on these topics, focusing on best and worst cases in similar contexts, and a sub-grant programme. The sub-grant programme will aim at implementing concrete actions by local entrepreneurs and associations on e.g. resource efficiency, quality certification, nature-based products (local food, handicrafts, hiking, shows). Engagement and interest during the project will be achieved through a communication strategy and related tools, including a green seal. It will be enhanced in the form of a Responsible Tourism Communication Strategy in Bojana Delta, to be agreed in the final ICZM workshop.

The project's kick off meeting took place mids December 2014, in Montenegro.