
Integrated management in Irish estuarine and coastal systems - exploring potential pathways

Christina Kelly*¹

¹Queen's University Belfast [Belfast] (QUB) – University Road Belfast, BT7 1NN, Northern Ireland, UK, Irlande

Résumé

The management of Irish estuarine and coastal ecosystems is largely carried out in an ad hoc, fragmented manner. The majority of existing Irish environmental law is often derived from international conventions and European directives and is mainly sector specific. Currently there is no overarching national coastal or marine policy in Ireland. This is further complicated by the fact that there is no single body with overall responsibility for Irish estuaries and coasts. In Ireland, there are at least thirty-four different government departments and organisations with responsibility for estuarine, coastal and marine management issues across different territorial scales. This may result in ineffective decision-making and duplication of functions.

IMMERSE involves developing an Integrated Environmental Management and Monitoring system (EMMS) for Irish estuarine and coastal ecosystems. Based on a review of integrated environmental management processes and practices, a proposed framework of EMMS was devised. The framework was refined through participatory evaluation processes within two Irish case studies, the Shannon Estuary and Dublin Bay. Clearly, the implementation of an integrated approach within a national policy vacuum will prove challenging. Without appropriate legislation, designated governance and institutional responsibilities, it will be difficult to facilitate an integrated approach to management and monitoring within a shared resource. To account for institutional and government inertia, IMMERSE developed a number of 'transition to integration' pathway options. These options consider delivering integration within short, medium and long-term legislative and governance change. This is considered a more appropriate and realistic approach to achieving integrated management within an evolving Irish context.

Mots-Clés: estuary, coastal, marine, integrated management, ecosystem, governance, spatial planning

*Intervenant