



The German Küsten Newsletter of EUCC-D – spatial distribution, stock of readers and assessment of its quality

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Abstract

There are existing numerous and extensive activities all over the world which deal with the topics of coastal and marine management. Many of these activities are made accessible to the interested general public by press releases or newsletters.

In Germany the EUCC - Coastal Union Germany tries to increase the availability and knowledge of coastal and marine data and information by providing on-line based information tools (data bases, the coastal newsletter and further website services) to the public and coastal community. In the following we will dwell on the German medium "Küsten Newsletter" which is giving since approximately 4 years information concerning coastal issues.

An inquiry among the newsletter subscribers in 2006 should find out, how satisfied the readers are with the terms of content organisation of this information medium and whether they have suggestions for improvement within some points. In this context selected results of this inquiry are presented. Beyond that it is discussed which advantages the newsletter will have compared to other existing coastal media and if the newsletter can learn by other information tools and which future development possibilities exist in addition.

Results of the inquiry and further analysis show that with its more or less constantly 1000 subscribers, the Newsletter has a considerable readership and a encouraging large distribution area but this mostly in the coastal parts of Germany. Mainly customers from the science and administration subscribed the newsletter, especially within the administrative sector participants on Länder an national level, while clearly less regional and hardly local participants read it. Furthermore the subscribers are really satisfied with the content, topics and layout of this medium.

1 Background

The 6 times per annum coming out "Küsten Newsletter" of the EUCC – The Coastal Union Germany (EUCC-D) releases since approx. 4 years coastal and marine information concerning research or project results, news of other media or coastal management. It tries to pick up and summarize all possible new information for several categories called "reports and background", "international developments", "newsflash", "publications", "other newsletters", "mixed issues" and "new dates". The heading:

- „reports and backgrounds“ gives the opportunity to stakeholders to talk and inform the coastal community about their subjects, developments of projects or research activities,
- „international developments“ precis new legal developments in the european and worldwide marine environment, e.g. new laws or directives. It is given also information about new research programmes and projects in the international framework,
- „newsflash “ collects news by media coverage or news by the ministries or research institutes with coastal and marine subjects from international to regional level,
- „publication“ und „other Newsletters“ presents the updated publications (more books, less magazine articles) with marine/coastal issues and the update version of other newsletters which also concentrate on coastal subjects

➤ „new dates“ means conferences, workshops which will take place in the future.

The newsletter may not be seen detached from other activities and information tools of the association EUCC-D. Since 2006 a web-based event databases offers everyone to diarise new conferences, workshops or meetings. The new enlisted ones will also be transferred to the newsletter. And otherwise all events listed in the newsletter will also be registered in the online event database. Furthermore there is the possibility to register projects in a project data base on the EUCC-D homepage.

In order to find out, whether the newsletter is sufficient for the requirements of the readership, there was conducted a web-based survey in the period April to May 2006. This survey was announced in the newsletter itself, at the EUCC-D website and the subscribers were informed by direct mail about this inquiry. The survey covered 14 questions, which predominantly aimed at, how the newsletter will be received by the readers, and what points could be improved. In addition some complementary data of the readers could be won, for example in which professional sectors they are working (and so indirectly which kind of information they need by the newsletter). Up to 16.5.2006 it was counted 105 filled out questionnaires, what approximate 11 % of the entire newsletter subscribers at that period (numbers of subscribers in May 2006: 950). These numbers clarify that the inquiry wasn't representative.

Further more the absolut number of the subscribers gives a first overview of the spatial distribution of the newsletter (the email-endings of professional email addresses shows the sector and the institution where the subscribers are working). Therefore in the following some results of the inquiry are presented to get an overview about the quality of the medium Küsten Newsletter, a first hint of its spatial (national, regional, international) and "vocational" distribution (kinds of professional guilds use it as an information tool). Beyond that it is discussed which advantages the newsletter will have compared to other existing coastal media and if there are something which the newsletter can learn by other information tools.

2 Readers (vocational distribution) and spatial distribution of the Küsten Newsletter

The newsletter has the goal to give coastal information of different nature to the interested public community.

Since one year the subscriber's number of the newsletter varies consistently between 950 and 1050. For the editors it is a matter of particular interest to know which kind of stakeholders and target groups use the medium and which distribution area does it has. A first overview can be given on the basis of the subscribers email addresses. At the 21 June in 2007 the subscribers data base has Registered 995 persons. 70 % of these email addresses can be assigned to the category "vocationally" (clearly email addresses of research establishments, business enterprises, authorities or non-governmental organisations), 23 % were "private" email addresses (gmx, web, freenet, arcor, t-online) and 7 % could not be identified.

With the subscribers who indicated their vocational address, it was further from interest to know to which professional guild they belong. Figure 1 delivers an insight in this matter. Barely 41 % of the 679 vocational subscribers could be attributed to research establishments (universities, professional schools and research institutes), 36 % were email addresses of the administration (Ministries, and other authorities), at least 14.5 % were business enterprises and scarcely 7 % so-called NGOs (e.g. BUND, NABU, Greenpeace, WWF, etc.)

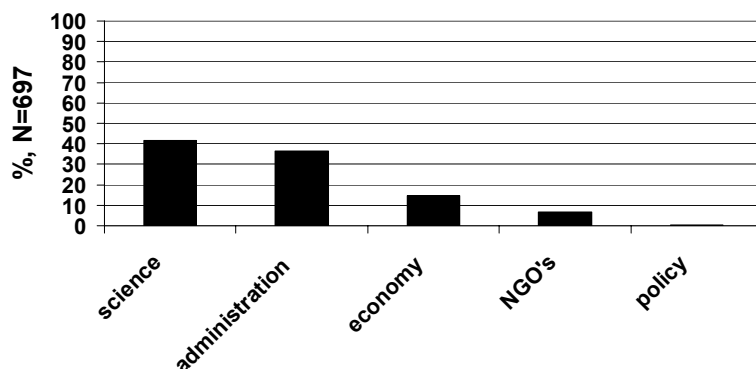


Figure 1: Percentage of the different branches of the EUCC-Newsletter Subscribers with professional email-addresses in the databases

In the on-line inquiry this distribution was also reflected partially. The readers were asked about their work surrounding field and in which range of topics they are working more exactly (multiple answers were possible). Figure 2 gives an overview of the answers. Most of them answered to be active in the science (approx. 23 %) and nevertheless to 14 % in the administrative sector.

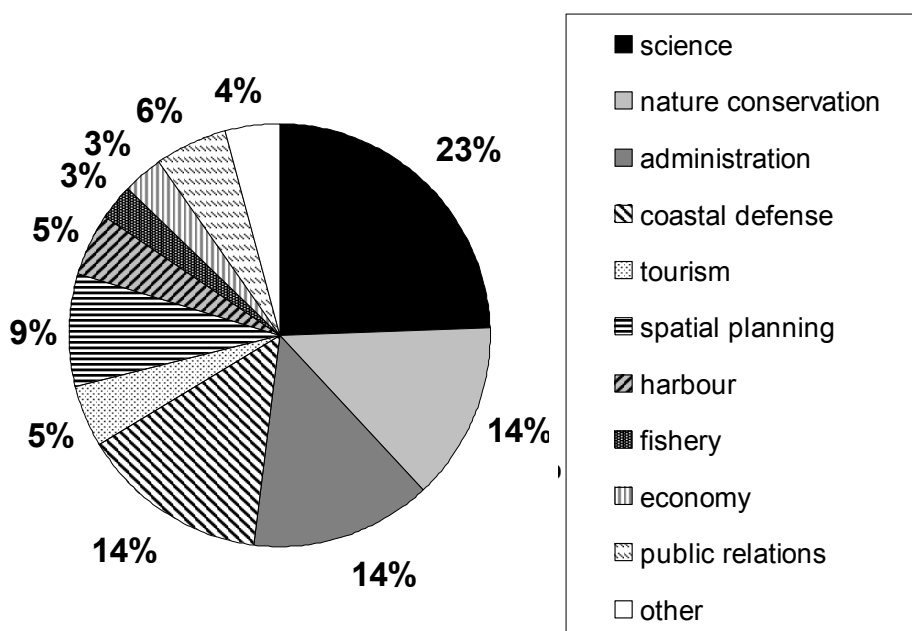


Figure 2: In which branch and subjects do you concentrate your professional activities (multiple answers possible)? Percentage of the answers of the 105 EUCC-D Newsletter email-subscribers. (N=218)

Most asked persons specifies their activities on nature protection (14 %), on coastal protection (14 %) and spatial planning (9 %) while the branches tourism, fishery, economics, port development and public relations were not so often called. And these branches were mentioned in combination. Most frequently the combination science/nature protection, science/coastal protection and science/spatial planning were given. In addition, the combination nature protection/coastal protection and nature protection/spatial planning were often called. Three-way denominations give the combinations:

- science/nature conservation/coastal protection
- science/nature conservation/spatial planning
- nature conservation/coastal protection/spatial planning

➤ nature conservation/coastal protection/tourism

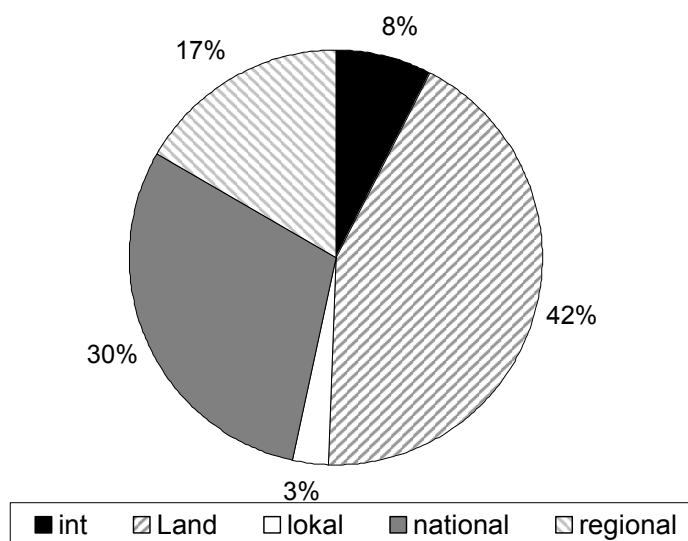


Figure 3: Percentage of the different spatial levels of the administrative branch of professional EUCC-D Newsletter Email-subscribers (N=995).

The email addresses that at present cover nearly 1000 newsletter subscribers give also information on the spatial distribution area of the Küsten Newsletter. Altogether it concerned to 95 % by email addresses in the German WWW. Within the German email addresses the professional email-endings shows that all subscribers belong to the coastal Länder Schleswig-Holstein, Niedersachsen und Mecklenburg Vorpommern. Scarcely 5 % of the nearly 1000 newsletter subscribers was international origin (usually from European coastal neighbour countries the Netherlands, England, Sweden, Finland).

But is the newsletter read within Germany crosswise through all administrative levels? A more detailed view of the professional email addresses (N=697, 70 % of the total number of the addresses) and here the addresses, which are assigned to the sector administration (N=251), give an answer (figure 3). Most oft the administrative subscribers are working at the Länder (42 %), and national level (30 %) and less at the regional level. The local administrative level is totally underrepresented. Reasons could be that the local communities or administrative actors do not know the newsletter or they know it, but are not interested in its contents because of its focus on scientific subjects (project results and so on).

Most of the subscribers became aware of the newsletter by the homepage of the German Coastal Union website (34 %), whereas 31 % had got an advice/tip by colleagues. The result of the online survey gives further the information that most of the subscribers are reading at least each second issue, whereas 80 % of the readers do not take more than 30 minutes for reading (45 % invest 15-30 minutes, 35 % fly over it and invest only 5-15 minutes). Nevertheless 17 % takes more time (30-45 minutes).

3 How do subscribers assess the Küsten Newsletter?

Altogether the newsletter goes down really well. Both contents, topic choice and information and their topicality as well as weblinks are praised. Table 1 shows the results of the assessments of the newsletter contents.

Best are doing the categories “reports and background”, “short reports” altogether (and here especially the topics sea protection, North Sea and coastal protection), international developments and web-links (80 % as useful/interesting indicated).

Particularly „badly“ come off the sub-categories of the newsflashes:

- fishery (36 % useless/less interesting, 33 % „I don’t read”),
- shipping/-safety (30 % useless/less interesting, 24 % „I don’t read”),
- port development (30 % useless/less interesting, 27 % „I don’t read”)

Table 1: Percentage of answers of the online survey (N=106): How do you assess the different categories/headings in the Küsten Newsletter?

Category	useful / interesting	less/not useful/interesting	I don’t read it
Reports and background information	95,6	3,3	1,1
International issues	83,5	12,1	4,4
News....	84,4	13,3	2,2
...and their focus on fishery	30,9	35,8	33,3
...marine protection	83,1	14,5	2,4
...Nature conservation	76,5	20	3,5
...Coastal defence	80,7	13,6	5,7
...Water framework directive	67,1	22,4	10,6
...Harbours	42,9	29,8	27,4
...Marine transport and ship safety	45,8	30,1	24,1
...Offshore wind energy	67,9	26,2	6
...Europe	78,3	15,7	6
...North Sea	81,9	13,3	4,8
...Baltic Sea	79,3	9,8	11
News about programmes and projects	79,8	17,9	2,4
Publications	71,3	24,1	4,6
other Newsletter	43,2	40,7	16
Conferences and workshops	72,6	21,4	6
www links	81,2	12,9	5,9
Küsten Newsletter altogether	92,2	5,6	2,2

Because they were mostly called as „useless/less interesting“ and „I don’t read“. The possibility "I do not read" means the fact that the topic does not interest actually because the people/readers do not work within this subject, while the response possibility “less interesting” can mean that the provided information is not sufficient. It is also mentioned that with the categories, which fared more badly there were altogether less answers. Approx. 20 % of the asked readers delivered no answer.

An explanation, why the columns fishery, navigation/security and port development did not go down so well, could have to do with the fact that the asked ones do not work within this topics and therefore are not dependent on information. The results of the survey verifies this assertion, because only 3 % of the readers are working in the subject fishery and 6 % in port development. To catch more stakeholders from branches it could be important to deliver more information in these subjects.

Also the categories "other newsletters" is not classified as useful and not “interesting” (40 % and “I do not read” with 16 %). Maybe this is because people get enough information in the German “Küsten Newsletter” an do not need to comb other newsletters for more “news”. This category represent only a special service for the user. He keeps informed about the newest issue of the other coastal and marine “information media”.

Further, the newsletter is characterised as

- easily understandably

- filled with new information
- information is clearly arranged
- reliably
- versatile and
- professionally

On the other side the clearness of the Medium is criticized. Only 56 % think the newsletter is clearly arranged, but 17 % doesn't think so. Specially the persons, who read it rather more rarely in the year, as well as the persons, which spend the less time for reading (< 30 minutes) argue like this.

4 Discussion and outlook

The German "Küsten Newsletter" has, with its nearly 1000 subscribers, a considerable readership and a encouraging large distribution area in the coastal parts of Germany. In Germany there is by now no comparable medium that offers marine and coastal issues with this spectrum of information preparation and topic composition.

Due to the German written contents it is not amazing that the reader circle predominantly comes to 96 % from Germany. Mainly customers from the science and administration subscribed the newsletter. Especially within the administrative sector participants on Länder an national level are using the medium, while clearly less regional and hardly local participants read it. Maybe it is not well-known or uninteresting in the lower administrative levels. By the German language the distribution area of the newsletter will remain in Germany. So the question arises which possibilities exist in the German territory to find further prospective customers for the medium. There are different approaches which are based on different strategies. So various strategies would have to be pursued, depending upon either one would like to win rather the lower administrative level or the broad public. Another possibility to win further users could be a further expansion of the topics or deepening of individual main topics. A pity is that because of the German language of the Newsletter the collected information of German coastal activities (especially in topic "reports an backgrounds") have no chance to be noticed by the international coastal community. But the cooperation of the Küsten Newsletter with the international distributed Newsletter of the Coastal Union, the "Coastal News", reduces this lack. Sometimes the Coastal News take up the German news of the Küsten Newsletter. But if the German Küsten Newsletters wants to catch more international subscribers it has to give more news also in English – maybe restricted to special topics-.

The 2006 accomplished inquiry explains - even if it can be classified not as representative, since only scarcely 11 % of all subscribers took part in it – that the newsletter goes down really well so far to the readers. Both contents, their topicality and the dressing of the information are outstanding praised. It is to be proceeded thus with caution, if new strategic adjustments are mentioned, if the existing readership should not to be deterred.

The medium newsletter does not have to be seen detached by further information tools of the EUCC-D. The linkage of the newsletters with a web-based-supported event data base creates on the one hand much place in newsletter and causes active participation by the readers, by being able to enter their meeting themselves. The same applies to the project data base, which was furnished on the EUCC-D homepage. And nevertheless the German "Küsten Newsletter" is coming out periodical which can't be said for the all the other existing newsletters with coastal background.

Because of the above discussed advantages of the German newsletter, especially the satisfaction with content and layout of the subscribers and the linkage of the medium with web-based supported event and project databases, it can be said that the German Küsten Newsletter of the EUCC-D hasn't to be learn from other existing Newsletters or media.

References

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