

MEETING DOCUMENT

Wadden Sea Board (WSB 31)

18 June 2020
Location to be confirmed



Agenda Item: 5.4 Trilateral Monitoring and Assessment Programme

Subject: Proposal QSR

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Submitted by: CWSS & TG-MA

TG-MA was commissioned to take the responsibility on the integrated implementation of the TMAP strategy and should therefore play a vital part in future QSR processes. In its ToR, the group is expected to

"- Analyse potential target groups for the QSR Thematic and Synthesis Reports and provide analogous recommendations for the overall process;

- Support and supervise the next generation Quality Status Report process, including a QSR synthesis report (publishing period to be defined);"

This document contains proposals for future QSR processes based on the experience from former QSRs and in particular considering the QSR 2017 review document by Mr Coulander (WSB 22/5.6.1).

The key alteration of QSR related products is a constant review and update of the QSR Thematic Reports (published online) based on data availability and emerging issues/items of interest. Summarizing Synthesis Report will be published within the frame of the Trilateral Governmental Conferences (TGCs) every four to five years as key products.

Proposal: **The WSB is invited to endorse the general approach on future QSR processes and to instruct CWSS and TG-MA on a further elaboration.**

Future QSR process and products

From the QSR 2017 Process evaluation (by Pieter de Lezenne Coulander):

“The QSR is still a very well-respected product, maintaining that level requires also scientific focus.”¹

1. Project Description

“Prepare a comprehensive QSR project description to address most of the reported processing challenges; The founding fathers knew and had ‘authority’ without a project description how to manage and find solutions in their network but circumstances changed substantially making those old solutions outdated.”

The overall process needs a very detailed and specific description listing the products, responsibilities, and finances. The TG-MA together with CWSS is elaborating on such description during a series of meetings in 2019/20 incorporating experiences from former processes and the QSR 2017 review document.

Responsibility

CWSS and TG-MA.

2. Responsibilities

“Within the production process too much time is wasted, due to defective coordination and follow-up; Too much is within CWSS with a shortage on staff. This cannot be addressed by money alone but needs a more focussed spirit by all contributors on the schedule and a clear assignment of tasks. “

Background:

CWSS was not capable of providing sufficient coordination for an in-time product due to staff shortage at times. A single officer was responsible for the overall task most of the time not making resource of a corresponding trilateral group. Therefore, the process was significantly delayed with consequences for the release (not in time for ISWSS in Tønder) but also for the motivation of involved scientists.

The following conditions have to be determined early during the process:

- staff availability in CWSS for sufficient coordination capabilities
- role and input of TG-MA and TG-M
- role of new Editorial Board
- role of EG-Data

Proposal:

The responsible officer at CWSS, supported by CWSS staff members in their field of expertise, will overlook and coordinate the overall process in close cooperation with TG-MA. The involvement of a dedicated task group is a major improvement for the QSR development. The engagement will encompass content, timeline, but also proposals for the budget as part of the core and supplementary budget planning. The process will be aligned with the topics and requirements of TG-M.

The Editorial Board, together with CWSS and TG-MA, will coordinate the content development and production of Thematic Reports in particular. It will also produce the QSR Synthesis Report together with TG-MA and CWSS and in consultation of other trilateral groups where appropriate.

The EG-Data will coordinate the data delivery to TMAP as basis for the QSRs in close cooperation with TG-MA.

¹ Further citations from the review document in *italics*

3. Audience & Promotion

“With respect to (further) usage of the QSR the following information was gathered:

- Increase the interaction with the outer circle such as provinces.
- Create a portal for citizen science.
- Intensify the usefulness of the QSR by ‘translators’ of the ecosystem to the general public.
- A well-kept structure within the QSR facilitates the ‘translation’.
- Make, after publications of the new QSR, a promotion trip along the coast.
- Do not expect that a QSR is read by the public in general.
- Ministries refer to the QSR for the development of their policies.
- Promote the QSR at the various NGO’s.
- The QSR needs an owner/promotor.”

Background

The QSR 2017 was launched and announced almost exclusively within the existing trilateral community without a connected event. The outreach has been considered as insufficient since then. The series of delays and pending products resulted in a noticeable loss of attention.

Proposal

The CWSS (secretary TG-MA and communication officer) should act as owner and promoter of the QSR. A series of presentations at organizations in the trilateral partner countries should be performed in due time after publication/website launch. Potential targets would be authorities, research institutions (and connected events like workshops, symposia etc.), local authorities, education facilities (Wadden Sea Centres) and NGOs. Since there is currently no rewarding system like peer reviewed publications for the involved scientists within the QSR process so far, it is important to create ownership, also for the scientists, to strengthen the commitment for the QSR.

A citizen science portal could be considered but should not be essential for the QSR.

Responsibilities

Planning and coordination by CWSS in cooperation with TG-MA..

4. Format and Products

“The intention to convert to a web based QSR is well accepted, however a rolling scheme needs further elaboration.”

QSR Thematic Reports

Background

The aim of an improved QSR process is a more evenly distributed workload, financing and the continuous availability of minor and major products. Unforeseen delays of “full” QSRs had caused longer periods without any corresponding products at all in the past.

Proposal

The well received web-based format of the QSR Thematic Reports should be kept. Whether it will be again a static web page per report, with the advantage of an easy pdf creation, or if enhanced interactivity could be gained will be dependent on available resources. A combination with a data portal delivering (TMAP) data but also GIS based information (e.g. species distribution in the area) would be desired. Thematic Reports should be continuously updated depending on the TMAP data reporting cycle (or availability of data from other external sources), new findings and issues of concern. The corresponding programme review would be

performed, or at least organized, by TG-MA. All trilateral groups will be invited to contribute on suggestions but also on compiling Thematic Reports. The reports will feed into the International Scientific Wadden Sea Symposia (ISWSS) one year before the Ministerial Conference. The outcome of corresponding discussions during the ISWSS could be integrated in the QSR Synthesis Report to be published in the framework of the Trilateral Governmental Conferences the year after.

Options for a peer-reviewed special issues on Wadden Sea topics based on selected QSR chapters as an incentive for a Thematic Report authorship should be explored.

Responsibilities

Planning and implementation by CWSS and TG-MA with a clear assignment to the Editorial Board to overlook the content.

QSR Synthesis Report

Background

The WSB instructed the QSR 2017 Editorial Board early in the process to develop a Synthesis Report under their authorship. It had been developed mainly as a summary in an appealing brochure format to be published for the Ministerial Conference in Leeuwarden in May 2018. Due to political sensitivities, the process was stopped during WSB 24 in April 2018. The QSR 2017 Synthesis Report is still not issued due to these irritations on the content and responsibilities.

Proposal

The QSR Synthesis Report will be issued in the light of the Ministerial Conferences and should be available as hard copy with the aim to provide basic information on the overall product. Further discussion will be necessary if the Synthesis will have the character of a summary or of an integrated analysis of the Thematic Reports including an assessment e.g. by displaying a traffic light system. The working title and final name of the product needs to be chosen carefully to avoid wrong expectations.

Responsibilities

QSR Editorial Board and CWSS in consultation with TG-MA.

5. Finances

“The financial support for the QSR requires upgrading to nowadays circumstances; Current financial resources need expansion, not necessarily only from the involved governments.”

Background

The contributions for the last QSR were unevenly allocated ranging from straight forward sums per year, internal commissioning and “in-kind” contributions. This led to a loss of transparency and as a consequence the overall contributions by the regions were difficult to be stated and the overall budget remained rather unclear.

Proposal

For future QSR processes, the financial pledges should cover a minimum that is needed to gain the targeted products including

- authors payment,
- technical implementation,
- printing and promotion.

A clear financial commitment by the parties is needed at the beginning of the process.

Former QSR approaches also relied very much on personal commitment. Consistent payment schemes had never been developed. This led to an uneven rewarding system which finally caused irritation.

Alignment of authors payments in the following way:

- Thematic reports with a an EG/WG coverage (Marine Mammals, Salt Marshes and Dunes, Birds, Climate, fish, alien species) should be created without further financial benefits for authors and will be expected to be a product of the group. If there will be financial requirements e.g. for lead authors, those should be covered by the regions in kind contribution and not be part of the main budget.
- To guarantee a certain quality level, voluntary contributions should be kept to a minimum to allow the application of the necessary review processes.
- A payment scheme based on (three?) categories (e.g. ranging from 5.000,00 – 15.000,00 Euros) should be established. Those categories should reflect the overall effort for the author to create the report, including the necessary data availability and transformation efforts and the overall volume of the report. Selected reports might be subject of further donation, such auxiliary funding should be part of the overall budget.

Technical implementation:

The technical necessities should be explored and determined in detail from the beginning. Former approaches contained unrealistic set-ups and led to confusion on the budget and products. If a product (e.g. public data base) is agreed on, regions should be committed to financially guarantee the implementation. This should also comprise available staff resources at CWSS and connected groups e.g. TG-MA, EG- Data and Editorial Board.

Printing and Promotion:

The QSR Synthesis Report should be delivered in an appealing hard-copy format with the involvement of a design company. Additional leaflets to advertise the QSR might be considered. The overall promotion of the QSR should be enhanced. Web based presentations (e.g. webinars) should be considered and costs for professional implication should be considered.

Responsibilities

Planning by CWSS and TG-MA under consultation of TG-M. CWSS should administrate the finances for the regions except for in kind contributions.

6. TMAP/Data

“The use of the TMAP database requires an additional decision/evaluation.“

Background

TMAP became a rather weak and almost invisible product mainly due to major problems in data delivery, although the programme was described as the underlying data source for former QSR attempts. De facto, only a minor proportion of the Thematic Reports originated from TMAP data. Authors gained data from individual sources of their network instead.

-> TMAP and the trilateral data handling are currently under review by TG-MA and EG-Data.

7. Review process

“The editing/reviewing communication between the authors, Editorial Board and CWSS has to be clarified and then maintained.“

Background

The review process of the QSR 2017 turned out to be partly insufficient. It was organized on an ad-hoc basis and voluntary participation. Afterwards, some authorities claimed their involvement earlier in the process and noted errors in the final product but hardly with any precise feedback.

Proposal

A precise description of the review process including corresponding responsibilities will be necessary. TG-MA discussed already options for an efficient review process during its 19-2 meeting and issued first findings:

- external peer and stakeholder review online (anonymous?)

- lead authors as editors
- final acceptance by QSR Editorial Board (plus lead authors, CWSS and TG-MA members)