

# Wadden Sea Board

**WSB 20**  
**16 June 2017**  
**Harlingen, Netherlands**



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**Agenda Item:** 5.2  
**Subject:** Swimway  
**Document No.** WSB 20/5.2/2  
**Date:** 14 June 2017  
**Submitted by:** Swimway group

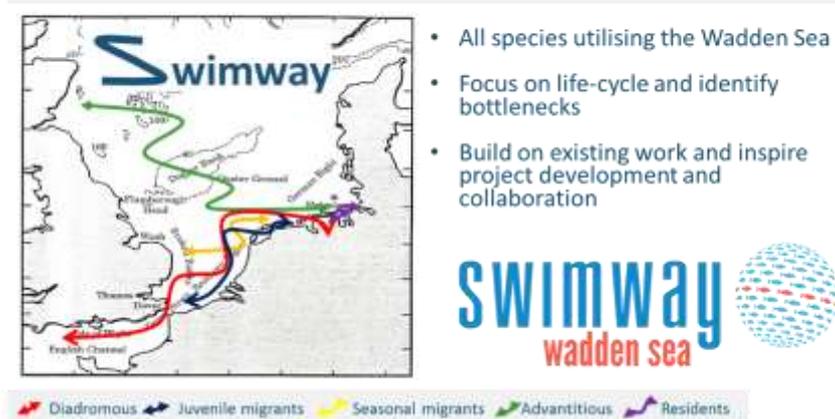
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**Proposal:** The meeting is requested to consider the document.

## The Swimway Wadden Sea

The Wadden Sea stretches across the borders of Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands, from Den Helder in the south-west to Esbjerg in the north-east. Of the more than one hundred fish species occurring in this area, only a few of them are there for their whole life cycle. The majority spend only a part of their lives in the Wadden Sea, either as juveniles to feed and grow (such as flatfish species), as adults to spawn or search for food (such as herring), or *en route* between marine and freshwater habitats (such as sea trout and eel). These different life cycles mean that the species utilise the Wadden Sea in different ways.

### Swimway approach to implementation of targets



Fish populations community in the Wadden Sea have changed in the last decades. In order to maintain and improve the living conditions for

fish trilateral objectives - the so-called Fish Targets - were developed. During the governmental conference in 2014 Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands agreed to work on these targets. In 2014 the three Wadden Sea countries agreed to develop a trilateral Swimway Wadden Sea programme. The ultimate vision for a corresponding action programme is to have no human-induced bottlenecks in the Wadden Sea for fish populations or their ecosystem functions. Specifically, it is aimed to maintain or improve: robust and viable fish populations ; the nursery function of the Wadden Sea and estuaries; the quality and quantity of typical Wadden Sea habitats; free passageways for diadromous fish species ; and the protection of endangered or threatened fish species.

The Swimway encompasses all fish species which use the entire Wadden Sea area in a certain stage of their life-cycle. Studies on habitat use, migratory patterns and reproductive strategies of key species will form the basis for the approach. The role that the Wadden Sea plays in the population dynamics of these species will be highlighted by studying the entire life cycle and identifying the bottlenecks in population dynamics. This includes diadromous species and the connection between the Wadden Sea and inland migratory routes, as well as routes to the North Sea and further.

Trilateral action programme focus

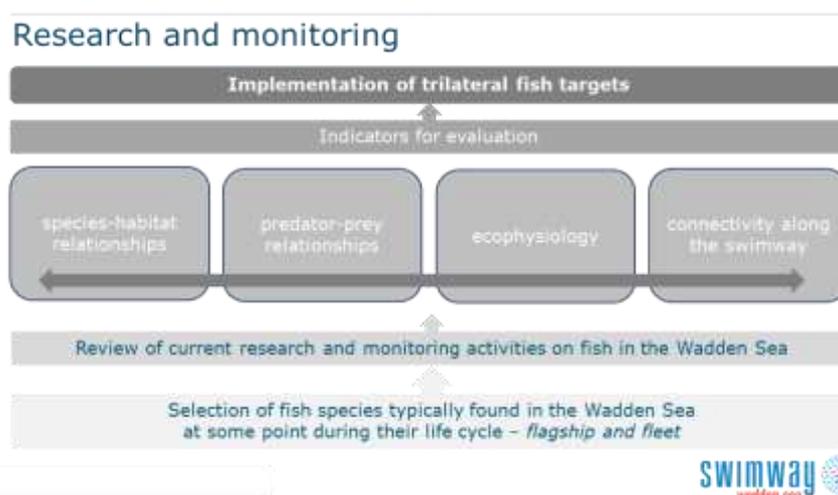


An analysis of the current policy and management measures in the three countries, as well as the overarching trilateral targets for fish, will provide the legislative and management framework. By combining the insights into the population dynamics of the species with

this policy and management framework, we aim to create a trilateral coherent action programme for fish species in the Wadden Sea, which will address the trilateral policy objectives for fish.

Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands have agreed to implement the targets. The strategy to do this will be developed in the Swimway Wadden Sea Action Programme 2018-2024. The programme aims to fill knowledge gaps, improve population monitoring, adjust policies and develop, realise and evaluate measures. Communication and education are also important and will be integral parts of the programme to bring attention to the hidden secrets of nature below the waves. Collaboration with existing activities and programmes as well as stakeholder involvement are vital to the success of the programme.

The Swimway research approach will be developed as part of the action programme which will enable the implementation of the targets, as shown below.



Fish species which are characteristic of a particular life-cycle will be identified (flagship species), not only for research, but also as a means to

communicate the strategy – the showcases. Work done on these species will benefit other species with a similar life-cycle (fleet).

The Wadden Sea Board is responsible for the implementation of the action programme, which should be carried out in close cooperation with stakeholders. The

three countries provide capacity and resources for implementation and will work together for healthy and resilient fish populations in the trilateral Wadden Sea.

The document outlining the Swimway approach will be presented at the Trilateral Governmental Conference in May 2018 and the programme will be carried out between 2018 and 2024.