

CoastLearn: a training tool that facilitates international cooperation

Maria Ferreira & Carolina Perez (*Coastal & Marine Union - EUCC*)

Hugo Niesing (*Rijkswaterstaat/Ministry I&E, the Netherlands*)

Summary

CoastLearn is an innovative pilot learning package that meets the needs of those requiring a free, multilingual, user-friendly Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) vocational training tool. CoastLearn's prime objective is to introduce ICZM principles, benefits, options and processes in countries where they are not yet widely used; to transfer the experiences and lessons learnt; support ICZM processes in central and eastern Europe countries and beyond and develop and test new technologies. The course materials, even though not yet complete, may continue to act as the starting point for an exploratory learning process.

The development of CoastLearn

During an inter-ministerial meeting in Split, Croatia, in summer 2000, 18 governmental representatives of the Baltic, Black, Mediterranean and Caspian Seas made a call for a distance vocational training tool to communicate ICZM information, experience, and ideas. EUCC took responsibility for this request and began the development of CoastLearn, in cooperation with a large international partnership composed of 22 partners from 15 countries. The former Coastal Zone Management (CZM) - Centre of the Netherlands Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, was one the partners at the beginning of the CoastLearn process. The development of CoastLearn has also been built on the CZM-C's NetCoast Open Learner.

What is CoastLearn

CoastLearn is a multilingual distance vocational training programme for ICZM. It is openly and freely available on CD-ROMs and the internet (www.coastlearn.org).

CoastLearn targets are primarily:

- Professionals working for the public sector, e.g. coastal councils, administrations (national and local) and planning institutes. Civil servants need to not only be trained in ICZM, but also gain insights into the benefits of involving NGOs, citizens groups, businesses, and other non-institutional organisations or individuals interested in or affected by the management of the coast. They also need to gain insight into the importance of collaboration between central and local authorities;
- NGOs dealing with the sustainable development of the coast. NGOs need to be acquainted with the principles and procedures of ICZM, in order to know when and how to become involved in the process;
- University level students are another target audience.

CoastLearn has been tailored to the training and technical needs of countries in transition, especially in Europe and neighbouring regions, but has also proven to be of value for non-target countries in the EU, Latin America, Asia and Northern Africa as well. CoastLearn currently exists in ten European languages, and features eight modules (Principles of ICZM, Policy Analysis, GIS, Planning, Environmental Risk Assessment, Sustainable Tourism, Public participation, Biodiversity) and CoMPAS/ The CoastLearn Simulation Game. The multilingualism of the tool is highly valued and requests are received constantly for the production of additional language versions. The production of further versions is mainly a matter of identifying the national partner and obtaining the necessary funding. In this way, the Sustainable Tourism module was recently translated into Arabic. Funds have been made available recently for an Albanian version and for producing a western Black Sea version involving Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania.

Free of charge available on internet

CoastLearn makes an original contribution to existing European and international vocational training systems and practices. Other ICM training courses are expensive, very much tailored to western European and US situations and problems, and in most cases, they are part of an academic education programme. CoastLearn has become the first widely available course that is available on the internet free of charge.

The main feature of distance learning is that students can study at their own pace and anywhere they want. CoastLearn is moreover a simple tool that does not require sophisticated computers or software for its use. In order to counteract Internet connection problems, CoastLearn is also available on CD-ROM.

The English version of CoastLearn has currently 800 visitors (and many more hits) monthly with a clear upward trend; a conservative estimate for all languages is 2000 visitors/month. CoastLearn's main sponsors so far have been the European Commission through its *Leonardo da Vinci* and TACIS programmes and the Dutch Government through the MATRA and Pin MATRA programmes.

Multi-national and multi-discipline

The most original aspect of the CoastLearn approach is the co-operation between western European ICZM training experts and their colleagues in neighbouring (including accession) countries of the European Union to develop new CoastLearn products, where the needs of the non-EU partners are paramount.

CoastLearn has also been innovative in developing interdisciplinary training material. Usually, one expert or group of experts who work under the guidance of an editor

develop such teaching material. In the case of CoastLearn, a multi-discipline and multi-national partnership has developed new modules. The development process itself was also a learning experience and strengthened network development.

The Tool

CoastLearn has a modular structure. The modules can be studied independently, are illustrated with figures, exercises, and good & bad practice examples and can be supported by tutorial services.

All eight CoastLearn modules present a standardised structure, with intended learning outcomes explicitly presented. All the modules include self-assessment exercises and questions to provide a motivating and stimulating learning tool for the user. The questions relate to the training materials in the package and are included within the text. The answers to the questions are given with explanations. Modules are further illustrated with figures, tables and practical examples, which take the user as close to reality as possible. The practical examples can be accessed either via each module they relate to, or via a separate entry point where all the examples are displayed. Links to other websites, original tests, tools and information sources encourage the user to delve deeper into the subject. CoastLearn provides printing versions of some modules so the needs of those professionals who have no continuous access to a computer or internet can also be met.

Simulation game

CoastLearn partners have also jointly produced a Simulation game – CoMPAS *Coastal Management Practices to Achieve Sustainability*. The game is freely downloadable



Figure 1: Screenshot CoastLearn Sustainable Tourism Module, www.coastlearn.org

and can be played by one person, but preferably a small group of users. The CoMPAS game aims to give the player insight into essential processes related to sustainable coastal development such as the inter-relation between economy, ecology and society. The game is played in an imaginary coastal area with sectors typical of the maritime economy, such as paper industry, tourism, water treatment, fishery and aquaculture. Players are requested to invest money in different sectors on a yearly basis over a period of 20 years. After that period, it will become clear whether it was possible to develop the coastal area in a sustainable way or not. Each game session lasts for about 20 minutes, but it is always possible to improve the results in another session.

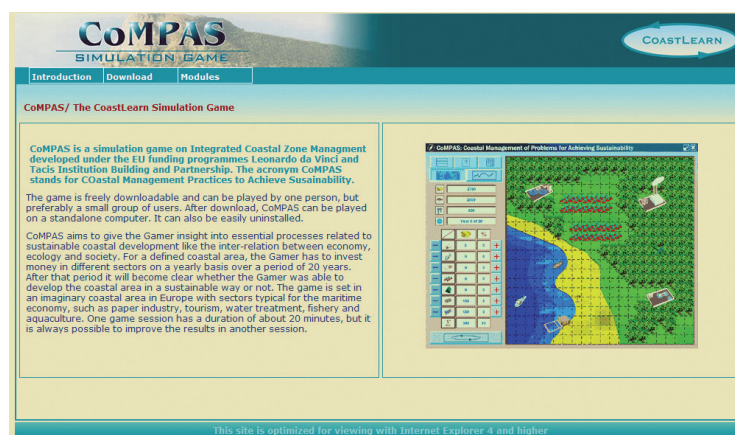


Figure 2: Screen shot of the Simulation game CoMPAS

Future

CoastLearn is not the final product. An innovative pilot learning package will continue developing according to the needs of its users. So far it seems to have responded to the need for a free, multilingual, user-friendly ICZM vocational training tool. CoastLearn will also support trans-national networks, both of ICM practitioners and trainers Europe-wide and promote trans-sectoral dialogue nationwide, in all the key elements of the ICZM process.

The Coastal & Marine Union - EUCC hopes to continue developing, updating and creating new modules while establishing and strengthening network partnerships within CoastLearn.

Try the CoastLearn out at www.coastlearn.org

For more information please contact us

Maria Ferreira, Coastal & Marine Union - EUCC
m.ferreira@eucc.net

Carolina Perez, EUCC Mediterranean Centre
c.perez@eucc.net

Website links

www.eucc.net

www.eucc.net/medcentre

www.coastlearn.org



Malta coastal view with tourist accommodations under construction. (photo: Erik Devilee)