

49th meeting of the Wadden Sea Board (WSB 49)

Meeting Document No. WSB 49/5.2

16 April 2026
Online

Agenda Item	5.2 Manage and Communicate Effectively (Paras 44-56)
Document Title	WSB 49/5.2 Strategic Note TPC-WSR
Submitted by	Trilateral Programming Committee of Wadden Sea Research (TPC-WSR)
Submitted on	1 April 2026
Proposal	The WSB is invited to note the document and to support the proposals within and to advise on a potential consideration of the document or its content during the Ministerial Council Meeting.

In preparation for the 15th Trilateral Governmental Conference, the Trilateral Programming Committee for Wadden Sea Research (TPC-WSR) submits a strategic note with the aim of requesting general support and a potential consideration during the Ministerial Council. In this note, the group a) briefly reminds on the background of its appointment, b) summarizes the main achievements during the current period and c) requests support for proposals for the future period.

STRATEGIC NOTE TO THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL MEETING

Intention

In preparation for the 15th Trilateral Governmental Conference on the Protection of the Wadden Sea, the **Trilateral Programming Committee for Wadden Sea Research** (TPC-WSR) hereby submits the following strategic note to the Wadden Sea Board (WSB). The TPC-WSR respectfully requests the Board's endorsement of the proposed recommendations and, as appropriate, their incorporation into the further implementation of the Ministerial Declaration of the 15th Trilateral Governmental Conference.

Rationale

The Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation has its origin in research (i.a. Schiermonnikoog conference 1975, organized by Wim Wolff) and scientific findings have always formed the basis of the joint efforts to protect the Wadden Sea.

In order to implement the Trilateral Research Agenda for the Wadden Sea Region (2018), which is aiming to maintain natural and cultural values and to find a sustainable course for natural, societal and economic developments, the competent Ministers of the three Wadden Sea States finally decided to establish the Trilateral Programming Committee for -Wadden Sea Research (TPC-WSR). This group of experts from science and policy was intended to broaden the scientific basis for sustainable management to protect and conserve the World Heritage Wadden Sea, to strengthen cooperation with the scientific community, and to explore possibilities for establishing a joint trilateral research programme, which has been pursued for decades.

Composition and Tasks were adopted during the 31st meeting of the Wadden Sea Board (WSB) in June 2020 as Terms of Reference (ToR), including:

Composition: *Three national delegations, consisting of 4 members*

- *one research scientist from the social sciences and humanities,*
- *one research scientist from the ecological sciences*
- *one policy representative from national authorities*
- *one policy representative from the sub-national governments or regional organizations*

Task: *To establish a joint trilateral programme on research...;*

- *Work towards the implementation of research issues ... including to stimulate and seek funding possibilities;*
- *Discuss and agree on the prioritisation of joint research lines ... ;*
- *Provide scientific and strategic advice to the Wadden Sea Board (WSB) ... ;*
- *Provide ... advice to organisations implementing the joint research programme.;*
- *Provide strategic advice on the design of ... research funds and funding mechanisms;*
- *Monitor ... the implementation of the joint trilateral programme on research ...;*
- *Provide advice to the development of a research platform within the Partnership Hub;*
- *Support the International Wadden Sea Scientific Symposia (ISWSS).*

Achievements

The TPC-WSR has

- presented trilaterally aligned research priorities and a corresponding proposal for a first Wadden Sea research programme at WSB 33 and the Trilateral Governmental Conference (TGC) 2022.
- subsequently initiated the process to secure funding for Wadden Sea research projects amounting to €15 million for the years 2024 ff in negotiations with relevant funding institutions.
- professionally accompanied the announcement and call for proposals for the programme and continues to accompany the process.
- enabled a Wadden Sea World Heritage Summer School for young scientists in 2024, 2025 and 2026, initiated by the Common Waden Sea Secretariat together with representatives from various research institutions.
- developed a first concept for a Trilateral Science Platform to best guarantee Wadden Sea wide exchange of science and research activities and findings in order to safeguard the Outstanding Universal Value.

Open issues

For the coming years, the TPC-WSR intends to:

- continue providing expert support for the ongoing research project;
- design and negotiate a follow-up call for the years 2028 onwards and ensure an expansion of the thematic spectrum;
- consolidate the Wadden Sea World Heritage Summer School and introduce elements to foster longer-term engagement with graduates;
- realise a Trilateral Science Platform (TSP);
- strengthen collaboration with and advisory support to the WSB.

Proposals

The TPC-WSR recommends to the WSB / TGC to:

- mandate the TPC-WSR to continue its successful work of defining research priorities;
- utilise the TPC-WSR as a professional advisory body in the substantive work of the WSB and engage it accordingly (e.g. in preparation of the ISWSS and the TGC);
- involve the TPC-WSR, in its capacity as an advisory body, in the preparation of the QSR, e.g. in an editorial capacity;
- safeguard and stabilise the Waden Sea World Heritage Summer School as a particularly successful model for involving youth in trilateral Wadden Sea protection, and earmark € 40.000 per year in the budget for this purpose;
- foster the development and effective operation of a Trilateral Science Platform.

¹ Main task of a TSP would be funnelling information to facilitate trilateral interactions, e.g. overview of active scientific experts, projects, and relevant programs. Sharing of information could also include organizing trilateral scientific (thematic) meetings, announcement of scientific calls, and newsletters including information on recent scientific papers and reports.