1. Mechanisms to support management
   1. Partnership *(548 words)*

The inscription of the Wadden Sea on the World Heritage List represents a unique opportunity to pool and strengthen existing skills and experiences under one umbrella, to ensure protection and preservation of the Wadden Sea, whilst continuing to foster sustainable regional development within the entire Wadden Sea Region. Only if these skills and experiences are jointly and mutually reinforced and linked by a high-quality level of collaboration and engagement of actors and society in the Wadden Sea Region, will the full potential of the World Heritage designation be achieved for the benefit of nature, but also for the society.

To realize such a practical engagement, a Memorandum of Understanding was officially signed at the 10th anniversary of the inscription of the World Heritage Wadden Sea in June 2019, in Wilhelmshaven. The signatories of trilateral strategic partners were: the Wadden Sea Forum e. V., the Wadden Sea Team of green NGOS, the trilateral Network Group Sustainable Tourism, the trilateral science community and the TWSC. Their objective is to establish jointly the multi-stakeholder “Trilateral Partnership in support of the UNESCO Wadden Sea World Heritage” (*in short: Trilateral WH Partnership*). The initiative aims to enhance ownership for the Wadden Sea World Heritage and to build an extended and stable, multi-level and cross-border community in a networking approach, complementing governmental and intergovernmental efforts in delivering on the goals of the WSWH strategy/ *the WSWH management plan (to be discussed among partners later, once the SIMP draft is published)*. The initiative is open to further stakeholder networks and organisations, which commit to the objectives and are willing to collaborate within the framework of the MoU.

The Trilateral WH Partnership is based upon existing, proven structures and networks with a long history of achievements and contributions of stakeholders’ and partner‘s networks. Furthermore, the initiative aims at complementing national and regional, site specific partnership initiatives for nature conservation and sustainable development.

Developing and sustaining a successful Trilateral WH Partnership, particularly across sectors and existing collaboration structures, is challenging and requires a significant investment of both time and resources. It needs an organisational set-up to further develop, support it and keep it up and running effectively: A Partnership Hub.

The trilateral Partnership Hub supports management and organisation of the trilateral WH partnership as a networking unit. It strives to act as catalyst for innovative modes of collaboration, focussing on creation of collaborative advantages by also considering interests and individual value gained by the partners.

The structuring and setting-up of the Partnership Hub follow a stepwise approach to secure flexibility and adaptability as the partnership develops further. During the three years start-up-phase, the team of the Partnership Hub is associated to the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat to the TWSC, which provides a backbone during this phase. The hub will support the strategic partners to collaborate, encourage and facilitate effective and trustful working relationships, while sharing information, knowledge and experience. It will facilitate planning and initiation of specific trilateral projects, common actions and assist partners with applications for funding. The start-up phase of the Partnership Hub will be concluded by an evaluation, including a review of the governance and management structures. Based upon the outcome of the evaluation, the Partnership Hub will be developed into a more or less independent organisation for the long-term perspective.