

# MEETING DOCUMENT

## Wadden Sea Board (WSB 37)

26 August 2022  
Wilhelmshaven, Germany



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<b>Agenda Item:</b>	<b>6. Wadden Sea World Heritage Partnership Hub</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Final Report of the Partnership Hub Pilot Phase Evaluation</b>
<b>Document No.:</b>	WSB 37/6/6.2
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<b>Submitted by:</b>	<b>OPteamPH</b>

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As requested in Article 2 LD, during the last two months an evaluation of the Partnership Hub pilot phase has been conducted. The overall objective of the organisational and management evaluation was to formulate suggestions for the organizational optimization of the Partnership Hub towards vision, mission and objectives pursued by the Partnership.

The evaluation process included: a desk study of relevant documents and reports, a live workshop at the OPteamPH21, online interviews and online enquiries with selected stakeholders.

The present document contains the final report which summarizes the main findings of the evaluation process and includes recommendations from the consultant on the potential way forward.

The evaluation was carried out by the Dutch company WING in close cooperation with the OPteamPH. The evaluators of WING will present their results at the WSB meeting.

**Proposal:** The WSB is invited to discuss the main findings included in the report and orally presented at the meeting, give advice and agree on the next steps.

# Evaluation report



## Evaluation pilot phase Partnership Hub

Final report, 28<sup>th</sup> July 2022

Kees van Es and Marieke Verweij, Wing Process Consultancy



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## 1. Introduction

In 2019, the “Trilateral Partnership in support of the UNESCO Wadden Sea World Heritage” was established, after the Ministers instructed the Wadden Sea Board to develop this collaboration (Leeuwarden Declaration 2018). This “Partnership Hub” aims to unlock the full potential of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site by creating new opportunities for old and new partners, both from the public and private sectors as well as civil society, working together in support of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). The pilot phase of the Partnership Hub lasted from 2019 up until 2022. Wing Process Consultancy was asked to evaluate the pilot phase of this partnership approach. This report shows our evaluation method, findings and recommendations for the way forward for the Partnership Hub. Our findings will be presented at the Wadden Sea Board at the 26<sup>th</sup> of August 2022.

**Statement of impartiality** This external evaluation was carried out by independent consultants, Kees van Es and Marieke Verweij, working under contract of the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (CWSS). We have considered the views of all interviewees and enquiry respondents, but the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation are ours alone. We confirm that we have not been unduly influenced by any stakeholder, including the Contractor.

## 2. Scope and goal of the evaluation

This evaluation examined the pilot phase of the Partnership Hub (2019-2022) and aimed to contribute to the further development of the partnership. The overall objective of the evaluation was to formulate suggestions for the organizational optimization of the Partnership Hub towards vision, mission and objectives pursued by the Partnership. The evaluation should improve the Partnership and the performance of the Hub in a step-by-step approach.

Specifically, we have been asked to evaluate the following:

- Added value of the Partnership,
- Organizational and operational management and steering structures that consider status, needs and characteristics of all existing partners and leave room for expansion,
- Whether potentials and strengths that the partners are willing to bring into the partnership and into joint activities are brought to bear in the best possible way,
- Lessons learned by the partners during the pilot phase.



### 3. Evaluation method

This evaluation was carried out as follows:

1. In May 2022, we started with a desk study of (a) the Concept for a Partnership Hub (last version 4 March 2021), (b) the Memorandum of Understanding Trilateral Partnership in support of the UNESCO WaddenSea World Heritage (signed 30 June 2019), and (c) the Terms of Reference for the Operational Team Partnership Hub (“OPteamPH” for short) (last version 4 March 2019). We also examined information from previous studies (Andy Brown 2015 and Ratter 2018), progress reports and the light mid-term review carried out by the Partnership Hub Administrative Unit in 2021.
2. In June and July 2022
  - a) We had a live discussion with members of the Operational Team PH at the OPteamPH21 meeting in Bremen on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June (see Annex I).
  - b) We carried out online interviews via MS-Teams with 15 stakeholders (see Annex II). Mostly, we interviewed two people simultaneously. Interviewees were selected from OPteamPH members and from projects affiliated with the Partnership Hub.
  - c) We sent an online enquiry (survey) to 28 people, that were selected from the OPteamPH, from people who were affiliated with the Partnership Hub on a project level, signatories of the MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) and some stakeholders that had not been involved yet. The response rate was 50% (see Annex III).

All steps as well as the progress of the evaluation were discussed regularly with the Administrative Unit of the Partnership Hub. The OPteamPH members were asked for feedback on the concept evaluation report (date 7<sup>th</sup> July 2022), after which the report was finalized (this report - date 28<sup>th</sup> July 2022).

In the following chapters, we first present the findings of the desk study. We then summarize the progress reports and the main findings of the light mid-term review in 2021. Then, we summarize the results of the OPteamPH21 workshop, the interviews and the online enquiry. Lastly, we conclude on the main findings and give our recommendations on the perspective of the Partnership Hub.



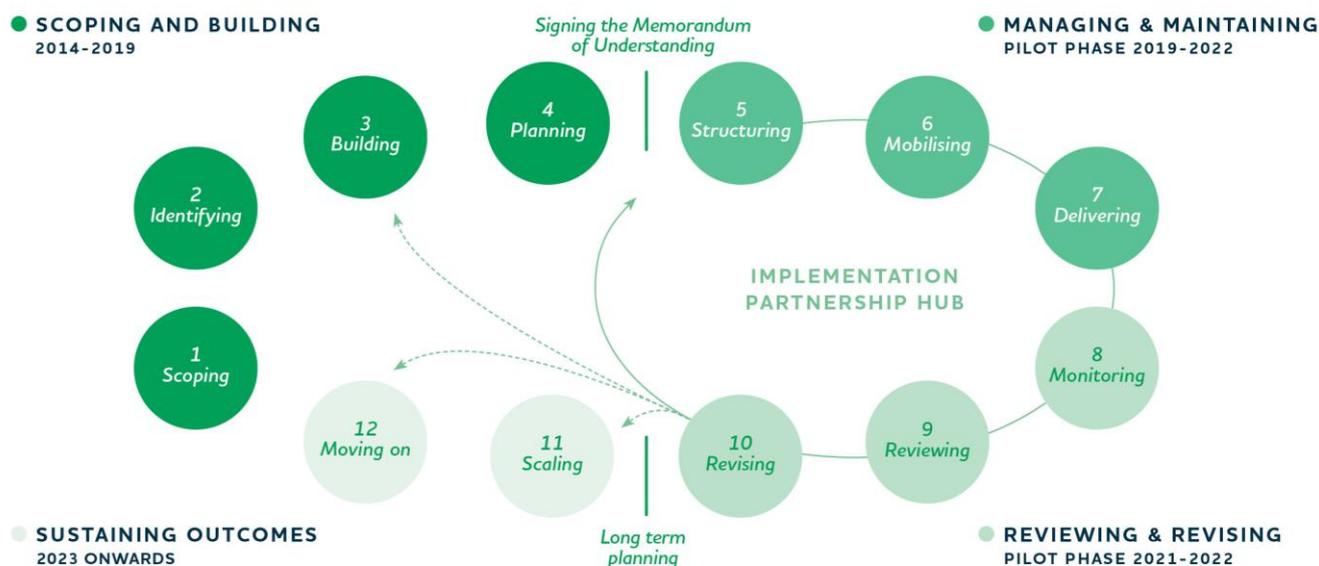
## 4. Basis of the evaluation

After the inscription of the Wadden Sea on the World Heritage list the Wadden Sea Board (WSB) and other bodies realized the need and potential of a joint approach with partners beyond the existing governmental structures in protecting and prospering this unique site.

In 2015, Andy Brown carried out a Feasibility and a Governance Study for a Competence Centre/network<sup>1</sup>. The Feasibility Study concluded that a combination of a competence centre and a new arrangement of networks would have the best prospect of achieving the Wadden Sea Site objectives, and that both are essential as part of the overarching partnership. In the Governance Study four structural arrangements were described in relation to a new Foundation and Competence Center/network. The arrangement that attracted the most support was also the preferred approach to the operation of a new Competence Centre and Network that was set out in the Feasibility report.

### MANAGEMENT CYCLE

For the Trilateral Partnership in support of the Wadden Sea World Heritage



Management cycle for the PH © CWSS

In 2016 a Partnership Center Drafting Group was installed, which was complemented by the Operational Team Partnership Hub (OPteamPH) in 2017. The OPteamPH was tasked with exploring possible options on an operational level for enhanced stakeholder engagement of possible sectors/partner networks in the projected Partnership Hub as part of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Partnership Center<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Wadden Sea World Heritage Competence Centre/Network - Feasibility Study / Governance Study, Dr. Andy Brown CBE, June 2015

<sup>2</sup> Summary record WSB20 / Meeting of the Wadden Sea Board Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation, June 2017



In 2018, Beate Ratter published a report on the integration of the Wadden Sea Forum (“WSF” for short) into the Partnership Hub<sup>3</sup>. The WSF has been an independent platform of interest group representatives from various sectors in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands since 2002. Ratter concludes that the WSF, being a functioning trilateral network unit with many years of experience and a solid trust base, can perform the tasks of the Partnership Hub as a network node, active influencer and moderator, while incorporating other network contacts.

In 2018 the Ministers of the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation (TWSC) instructed the Wadden Sea Board to develop a Partnership Hub (Leeuwarden declaration). In 2019, the trilateral World Heritage Partnership (“PH” or “Hub” for short) was established when about 30 representatives from different partner organization and sectoral networks jointly signed the trilateral Partnership Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The pilot phase of the PH is between 2019 up until 2022.

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## Vision, mission, objectives and services of Partnership Hub

The Concept of a Partnership Hub<sup>4</sup> mentions the following vision and mission:

**Vision:** The Partnership Hub helps to **enhance ownership** in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site. The hub maintains an extended and stable, multi-level and cross-border community in a **networking approach**, based on existing collaboration and structures, **complementing** governmental and intergovernmental efforts. It acts as a **catalyst** for innovative modes of collaboration in following the goals that are stated in the MoU, focusing on creation of collaborative advantages by also taking into account interests and individual value gained by the partners. It delivers **network co-ordination** and supports **network management, knowledge exchange** and **mutual learning**, facilitates the organisation of meetings, workshops and conferences, and activities to the Trilateral WH Partnership.

**Mission:** The Partnership Hub will **broaden engagement** for the Wadden Sea World Heritage beyond the state sector and **unlock potentials and resources** for delivering on the goals and intended activities of the Trilateral WH Partnership as described in the MoU. It will **build and intensify pathways for collaboration** towards realisation of the vision and thus help to extend the network of strategic partners in line with decisions of the TWSC and balanced intentions of the strategic partners.

The website<sup>5</sup> mentions the following:

“The Hub aims to unlock the full potential of the UNESCO World Heritage designation in creating new opportunities and strengthening existing cooperation for partners working together in support of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). In the Hub projects and activities are initiated, supported, or further developed and collaboration among strategic partners’ networks is facilitated. Following the guiding principles of sustainable development, within the Hub new opportunities are created for old and new partners, both from the public and private sectors as well as civil society.

The Hub started with representatives from the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation (TWSC) and the main sectors involved in the existing trilateral work: the Wadden Sea Team of Green NGOs (WST), education, research, tourism, and the Wadden Sea Forum (WSF). The administrative aspects of the Hub are handled by the Partnership Hub Administration Unit (the Admin Unit), which also has a supporting role in project and activity development.”

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<sup>3</sup> Integration of the Wadden Sea Forum (WSF) into the Wadden Sea Heritage Partnership Hub - Concluding Report - by Prof. Dr. Beate M.W. Ratter, Hamburg 15. August 2018 (English version; 10. October 2018)

<sup>4</sup> Concept for a Partnership Hub. Trilateral Partnership in support of the UNESCO Wadden Sea World Heritage / version 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.waddensea-worldheritage.org/partnership-hub>



**Key objectives** for the work themes of the Partnership Hub have been defined by the MoU, which includes the Wadden Sea World Heritage Strategy (2014-2020) as a basis to start from. In short, the hub will support the Trilateral WH Partnership in a collaborative network approach, complementing and going beyond responsibilities and efforts of the TWSC, by:

- Contributing to the protection and stimulating exchange on nature management of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site
- Enhancing international cooperation;
- Activating and credibly using the Wadden Sea World Heritage brand;
- Educating and informing about the Wadden Sea World Heritage;
- Developing and enhancing sustainable tourism in the Wadden Sea Region within limits of acceptable change whilst preserving the integrity of the Wadden Sea World Heritage
- Contributing to regional sustainable development of the Wadden Sea Region in accordance with protection goals for the Wadden Sea World Heritage;
- Stimulating research and monitoring to provide the required knowledge for management in the Wadden Sea Region;
- Integrating cultural and historical values in the management of the Wadden Sea Region.

In the Concept for a Partnership Hub the potential roles/activities (“**services and offers**”) of the Partnership are defined:

- (1) Organize network development and support network management;
- (2) Organize communication for and of the Partnership;
- (3) Communication and activation of the WSWH brand;
- (4) Facilitate knowledge production, exchange and mutual learning;
- (5) Facilitate and organize meetings, workshops and conferences;
- (6) Facilitate planning of the work and initiate of projects and common actions;
- (7) Facilitate individual agreements of cooperation on concrete projects, actions, deliverables or exchange of goods/services;
- (8) Project facilitation through fundraising and financial management.

The OPteamPH used work programs structured according to these services and offers as a planning instrument for 2021 and 2022.

Furthermore, the PH Concept mentions “general principles for common projects and activities”:

- They are Wadden Sea World Heritage specific;
- They contribute to the protection of the Wadden Sea, to safeguarding its Outstanding Universal Value and to a sustainable Wadden Sea Region with socio-economic developments and vibrant communities;
- They fit under the thematic lines as defined in the WH strategy;
- They closely relate and contribute to the fulfilment of goals and objectives of the Trilateral WH Partnership as described in the MoU of the Trilateral Partnership in support of the UNESCO Wadden Sea World Heritage and the Concept for a Partnership Hub;
- As a minimum two or three regions collaborate, inspired by or inspiring the trilateral level; whereby region is defined as involving different countries (might be on a local level such as provinces or districts);
- Different stakeholders are involved; representing different sectors;
- Partners collaborate across sectors;
- Preferably collaboration between public/ state partners/ TWSC and non-public partners;
- They might be organised decentrally under the umbrella of the Partnership Hub;
- They communicate the goals and objectives of the Trilateral Partnership and demonstrate commitment to this network in support of the Wadden Sea World Heritage;
- They shall be branded as WSWH projects and activities;
- These projects and actions shall consider the safeguarding of the OUV and the integrity of the WH site when designed, (which means its potential impact before being implemented shall be assessed);



- The quality of possible actions/projects should outweigh the quantity as it is the aim of the collaboration to promote a high standard of quality and the sustainability of the products that will be developed and promoted.

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## Current organization of the Partnership Hub

Currently, the Partnership Hub consists of an Operational Team Partnership Hub (“OPteamPH” for short) supported by a small Administrative Unit (“Admin Unit” for short). The OPteamPH consists of government representatives from the three countries, and of liaison persons to the different sectors and working fields. The Admin Unit is associated to the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (CWSS) and the current staffing situation ends at the end of this year (2022). The Partnership Hub Concept (March 2021) mentions: *“The Partnership Hub Administration Unit associated to the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat acts as secretariat and support team to Partnership Hub Committee and partners insofar as engaged with common projects within the partnership. The management of projects and other deliveries of the trilateral partnership are carried out in close cooperation between the partners involved, like in project partner consortia, supported and/or facilitated by the PH Administration Unit.”*

The Operational Team Partnership Hub (OPteamPH) facilitates the start of the Partnership Hub by a pragmatic operational network approach together with selected actors/ representatives from sectors/ partner networks. The tasks, deliverables and membership are described in TOR TWSC groups (WSB28)<sup>6</sup> and can be summarized as follows:

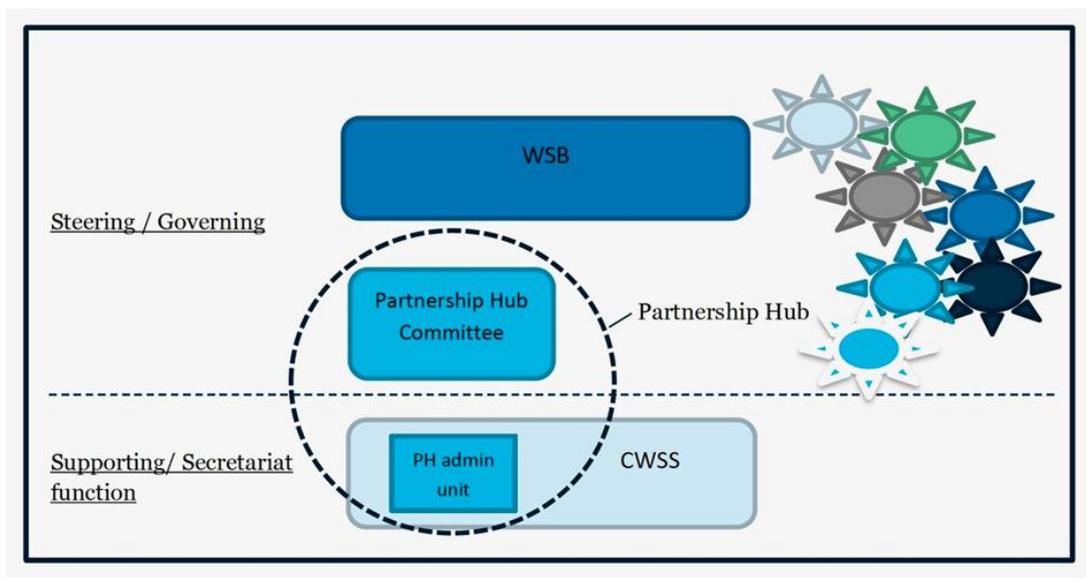
- **Tasks:** to approach potential strategic partners, to undertake a targeted quick scan of further sectors/partner networks, to explore new potential strategic partners from sectors/networks, to analyze fields of common interest/ project ideas, to initiate, arrange and prepare tailor-made strategic partnership agreements, agreements of cooperation or memoranda of understanding with the future partners in the Partnership Hub, to conduct a pilot phase for the Partnership Hub and an evaluation, to act as interface between WSB and PROWAD LINK-activity 4.4 (develop Partnership Hub), and to develop a concept for the Partnership Hub.
- **Deliverables:** (1) Outline of continuously updated work programme; (2) Regular progress reports on implementation of tasks; (3) Proposals for tailor-made partnership-agreements and memoranda of understanding; (4) Draft evaluation of the pilot phase; (5) Draft Concept for the Partnership Hub.
- **Membership:** Chairperson plus 1-2 representatives per region (NL, LS, HH, SH, DK); 1 from CWSS; invited representatives from potential strategic partner’s sectors: starting with 1 Wadden Sea Forum; 1 green NGO; 1 Research; 1 Education; 1 Sustainable Tourism network.

In 2021 it was decided that the OPteamPH will evolve into a Partnership Committee<sup>7</sup>. According to the Partnership Hub Concept: *“The Terms of Reference and rules of procedure of the OPteamPH will be revised and amended in agreement with the WSB to serve the new function of the committee. The composition of the group will also be revised by the signatories of the MoU/partner-consortium, nomination of who to sit on the committee will be (re-)confirmed. The Partnership Hub Committee shall be chaired by the executive secretary of the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat. / The committee shall report the outline of an annual work programme and proposed changes and updates of the Partnership Hub concept to the Wadden Sea Board for approval. Representatives of the partner networks within the committee report into their network organisations, consult with them and vice versa feed in their positions within their own responsibility and capacities. Decision making within the Partnership Hub Committee in general follows the consensus principle. It aims at ensuring agreement and participation by all partners.”* This Board decision on the installment of a PH Committee has not yet been implemented so that it can benefit from outcomes of this evaluation to reach an optimal organizational setting.

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<sup>6</sup> Terms of Reference TWSC groups / WSB 28 / Date: 04 March 19

<sup>7</sup> WSB31 Board decision with amendment of the concept, March 2021



Structural setting of the Partnership Hub. Source: PH Concept, March 2021. Stars represent stakeholder or sector networks.

In the **Memorandum of Understanding**<sup>8</sup>, signatories agreed to:

- cooperate and offer support to sustain the Wadden Sea World Heritage and its regional components, like National Parks and other protected areas, for future generations;
- support protection, and, if necessary, revitalisation, of the unique biodiversity and natural assets of the Wadden Sea World Heritage area by effective and coherent conservation efforts;
- continue collaboration, exchange of information and experience on preservation measures and site management;
- enhance communication and awareness about the Wadden Sea World Heritage as well as support environmental education in the Wadden Sea Region;
- support research activities with a view to maintain, exchange and expand information levels and knowledge on ecological functions, cultural history and societal developments in an open spirit of cooperation;
- pool and actively communicate World Heritage activities in the region and strengthen joint communication and consistent marketing;
- contribute to regional sustainable development of the Wadden Sea Region;
- collaborate, encourage and facilitate effective and trustful working relationships and networks among each other, while sharing knowledge and experiences;
- play a part in and contribute to the Partnership Hub, which (will) function(s) as networking unit for the partnership in particular through network co-ordination and –management, organisation of meetings, workshops and conferences, knowledge exchange and mutual learning, fundraising and initiation of projects;
- complement and support national and regional partnership initiatives and –programs for the Wadden Sea Region;
- consider concluding individual agreements of cooperation on concrete projects, actions, deliverables or exchange of goods/services where necessary or appropriate.

<sup>8</sup> Memorandum of Understanding / Trilateral Partnership in support of the UNESCO Wadden Sea World Heritage (signed in 2019)



## 5. Results

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### Progress reports

In the pilot phase the OPteamPH produced several progress reports to the Wadden Sea Board<sup>9</sup>. They describe:

- The progress of the projects and common activities: Shipping; Dark Sky / light emission; Seals and Tourism; TriWadWalk (trilateral initiative for students and university staff); Prowad Link activities for the Partnership Hub; Other project ideas: Flyway cooperation, research, education, tourism.
- The progress of Partnership itself: Concept for the trilateral Partnership Hub; General principles for common projects and activities; (Draft) Outline Work programme for the Partnership Hub 2021; Staffing of the partnership Hub; Light midterm review (2021) and progress final evaluation pilot phase.
- Other themes, such as a Partnership Centre Building and the registration of the partnership at UN platform “Partnership for the Sustainable Development Goals”.

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### Results light mid-term review 2021

In 2021, the Administrative Unit carried out a light midterm review<sup>10</sup> (12 individual interviews with OPteamPH members). The overall opinion was positive, the work of the Administrative Unit well appreciated. Challenges pointed out can be summarized as follows:

- Remaining unclarity, especially in overall communication (what is what);
- Questions about whether the OPteamPH has the right membership composition and representation;
- Liaison persons should become more active in representing the sectors and vice versa;
- More strategic and targeted approach and dedication of resources (need for focus due to limited capacities). Strong wish for a strategic workshop rescoping common goal and perspective;
- Concrete targeted action/project ideas should be developed;
- Visibility of the Hub should be enhanced, the added value and the success clearly communicated;
- More on-site meetings in different areas: more interaction and open discussions.

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### Results OPteamPH workshop

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 2022, we met with the OPteamPH in Bremen (participants in Annex I). We discussed the perceived successes and challenges of the Partnership Hub (as a whole), followed by successes and challenges of the OPteamPH.

The Partnership Hub was perceived to be successful in establishing the partnership, in the philosophy of the general concept, and in engaging new partners. The emergence of concrete projects was also mentioned as a success, projects “act as glue”. The Hub played a role in different projects, including Dark Sky, Sediment solutions, Triwad Walk, PROWAD link, and the NGO-shipping project. See interview and enquiry results for more opinions on these projects and the role of the Hub.

Challenges for the partnership pointed out were: how to engage partners (existing and new ones) around the concept where the added value is not quite clear yet and must be proven first, and a high threshold and (maybe too?) strict

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<sup>9</sup> Progress-reports d.d. 07-04-2022, 28 10-2021, 11-02-2021, 21-06-2020, 30-10-2019, 29-05-2019

<sup>10</sup> Report light mid-term review Partnership Hub, version 22.12.2021



selection criteria for new initiatives. For example, we discussed whether the OPteamPH should help other sectors to organize themselves on a trilateral level (such as fishing, sailing associations).

OPteamPH successes mentioned were open discussions with multiple stakeholders, being persistent in paving the way, keeping the spirit (despite the coronavirus), and project development.

OPteamPH challenges mentioned were a relatively low team spirit and ownership, the relationship with the Wadden Sea Forum, the relation between the Wadden Sea Board and the future PH Committee, and the need for structural funding and capacity for the core activities of the PH. The relationship between the future trilateral Foundation and the PH also needs to be clarified. Some see the Foundation as the future main financial provider of the Hub's activities. The role of liaisons also requires attention: liaisons should become more active in representing the sectors. At the same time, the role of liaison is inherently complicated when a sector is not well organized on the national or trilateral level.

The OPteamPH discussed the wish to open up to more partners, such as shipping and fisheries, and to have more freedom on which topics are discussed. All OPteamPH members present agreed that the PH should provide seed money for projects, not fund complete projects. We also discussed the possibility for the PH to focus on selected themes, such as the key human pressures/threats (fishery, industrial facilities, harbors and maritime traffic, residential and tourism development, and climate change) related to the Outstanding Universal Values, and to link with the Single Integrated Management Plan (SIMP).

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## Results interviews and online enquiry

We interviewed 15 stakeholders (see Annex II) and the online enquiry was filled out by 14 persons. In this section, we summarized the results from the interviews and online enquiry. **To provide more context and clarity, illustrative anonymous quotes have been added.** For the online enquiry, answers to relevant multiple-choice questions can be found in Annex III. These answers have also been summarized in this results section.

Suggestions for optimization and the way forward have been considered in our recommendations. **Please Note** When we say "respondent", this could either be an interviewee, or a respondent to the online enquiry.

### Potential added value and the Hub concept

All respondents support the general idea of the Partnership Hub and see potential future added value. The philosophy of the Hub was cheered for its focus of attention on the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site, and the societal approach to engage non-governmental sectors and enhance ownership.

**Quote:** *"The added value of the Hub is that some national challenges, such as Dark Sky, are common at a Trilateral level. In the Hub we can learn from others and solve shared problems together."*

**Quote:** *"Scaling advantages can be reached through the trilateral approach. Especially for niche-subjects that everyone thinks are important, but no one finds the time to attend, such as monitoring of darkness. By a trilateral approach you may multiply national funds and get more value for public money."*

### Current added value

The respondents to the online enquiry attributed most points to the hub having added value by increased involvement and cooperation of partners in the Wadden Sea Area, and by strengthened knowledge exchange (see Annex III). From a selected number of services, enquiry respondents found the Hub most successful in project initiation, facilitating and



organizing meetings, and in involvement of partners. The Admin Unit also mentioned the Hub as helpful in cross-sectoral network relations and increased exchange between governmental and non-governmental parties.

On the other hand, the current added value was questioned by many respondents, because (a) it is a young initiative which is still in the development phase, (b) for two years, the COVID-19 pandemic inhibited physical meetings, which are essential for network building, new relationships and developing trust, and/or (c) because no added value is seen in the way the Hub is organized at the moment, which was thought to be too complex, too bureaucratic and with high expectations not fitting the limited resources and capacity at hand.

**Quote:** *“The PH Concept maybe is a bit too abstract and high level. It is over-sophisticated, and not easy to understand. It is difficult to convey what is really intended to happen”.*

**Quote:** *“Why approach the Hub with a good idea? They do not have funding and alternatively you can ask support from expert groups or the Wadden Sea Forum. At the moment, in my opinion not much can be found at the Hub”.*

### Role of the Hub

The primary task of the Hub was seen as a **project initiator** (“incubator” or “catalyst”), a **connector of networks** (a “partnership of partnerships” or a “network of networks”) and a **think tank**.

The Hub should help partners **initiating and developing** intersectoral, trilateral projects, and **organizing the information-exchange** between networks. Most respondents agreed that the Hub should provide seed money to kick-start projects, but should not fund complete projects. In the beginning, some partners perceived the Hub as a “funding machine”, which was not the idea behind the Hub.

**Quote:** *“Ideally, the Hub sets the agenda, brings key players together and builds coalitions, in the end institutionalizing key issues, because at a certain point other parties embrace them. [...] The Hub should embrace subjects that have not reached maturity yet”.*

**Quote:** *“Regional partners can learn from each other; we have joint challenges. The Hub can show them that they are part of a bigger picture. Also, local initiatives matter and contribute to the World Heritage site on a trilateral level.”*

### Tangible results so far

Most respondents mentioned projects as current successes and tangible results, although some said they had not seen any successful features yet.

In specific, the Dark Sky Initiative and Sediment Solutions were mentioned as examples where the Hub had been helpful in upscaling to the trilateral approach. The projects were initiated by the Program towards a Rich Wadden Sea (the Dark Sky initiative together with the WSF) and were further developed with the help of the Partnership Hub. For these initiatives, the Hub was seen as helpful in understanding the trilateral cultural aspects and the political sensitivities, and knowing the right contact persons from all three countries. Especially the project-role of Cristina Nazzari was mentioned to be very valuable in connecting partners on a trilateral level and getting activities rolling.

**Quote:** *“A very diverse group of people is interested in Dark Sky, and it is very important that one organization ties those people together. The same is true for sediment solutions. So, it is important that the Hub exists, especially when you want to raise awareness around a new issue, with governmental and non-governmental parties.”*



The NGO shipping project was also mentioned as a concrete result of the Hub, though quite a few respondents questioned whether it really could be described as a success of the Hub. Some said the parties involved in the shipping project merely used the Hub as a vehicle to get government funding. Other views can be seen below (quotes). The PROWAD Link project was also mentioned often as being supportive of further development of the Hub.

**Quote:** *“The sustainable shipping projects are exemplary of the formalistic and slow approach of the Hub. Discussions went on for one year and then finally it was decided to split it up into two parts.”*

**Quote:** *“We ended up with two shipping projects with different funding. The NGOs see it as a positive result, but the realization and funding has become too complex”.*

New projects ideas for which respondents see a role for the Hub were also addressed. Examples include studying the effect of seal spotting tours on seals, and supporting the establishment of a trilateral research platform. At the same time, the selection criteria for new initiatives may be too strict, which was pointed out during one of the interviews, just like during the Bremen workshop (see following quotes).

**Quote:** *“Sediment solutions is an example of an initiative that fulfills the criteria to certain extends. It has a link to the OUV, it is cross-sectoral and cross-national. The PH can offer the trilateral contacts and perspective. But in the OPteamPH we discussed: ‘do we have enough capacity, this is politically sensitive, how mature is the network of sediment solutions?’.”*

**Quote:** *“There were also other projects that did not meet our criteria. Maybe we rejected some projects too soon. But we also need capacity to support them, for instance to help them to organize themselves at a trilateral level.”*

Respondents mentioned that the Hub should not be afraid to tackle politically sensitive subjects, such as fishing, sediment, and the energy transition. At the same time, the Hub was advised not to overlook obvious chances for kick-starting projects on less sensitive subjects, such as engaging young citizens or young scientists with the World Heritage Site.

### Relation to the Wadden Sea Forum

The relationship with the Wadden Sea Forum (WSF) was touched upon by almost all respondents. It was often called “a very sensitive one”. Many respondents struggled with the difference between the Hub and the Forum, because of perceived overlapping tasks, and could not pinpoint the complementary nature of the Forum and the Hub. It was however clear that the Hub focuses on the Wadden Sea World Heritage, whereas the Forum focuses on the broader Wadden Sea Region.

**Quote:** *“Should the WSF do its job, a partnership Hub would not be needed. The WSF is represented in the OPteamPH, but they struggle to find their role. It feels competitive. But the WSF is very important to connect with, because they represent so many sectors.”*

The Forum itself struggles with the existence of the Hub and experiences the Hub as trying to fulfill a similar role as the WSF, while at the same time being unclear about the added value of the Hub. The WSF also pointed out that it is difficult to find people and organizations with ample funds and capacity to engage in trilateral and cross-sectoral activities. Because this pool of capacity is limited, the competition between the Forum and the Hub was felt to be even stronger.

**Quote:** *“If the Hub is trying to convince other partners to be part of the Hub, ports for instance, then the WSF membership is eroding. Because why should they take part in two trilateral organizations?”*



## Funding

Many respondents mentioned the need for long-term structural funding and capacity to continue the core activities of the PH. These are now carried out by the Admin Unit, for which funding and capacity ends this year. Also, seed-money supporting initiation and development of new projects and initiatives was also mentioned as crucial. Some respondents mentioned the Foundation that is under development having an important role in the future funding of the Hub.

## Organizational and operational management

The current OPteamPH was seen as civil servant dominated, and lacking some exemplary stakeholders, such as harbors. It was pointed out that this is logical due to the pilot phase stadium of the Hub. The wish exists to add more sectors to the OPteamPH (see next section).

The necessary competences of OPteamPH members were also discussed. When talking about the OPteamPH as a creative thinktank, this requires participants who are open-minded, who don't shy away from difficult discussions, who are curious and willing to work together, and have a good understanding of other sectors. The Admin Unit perceived some OPteamPH members as quite passive during the pilot phase, which possibly was enforced by the necessary online meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Admin Unit expressed a deep wish for all OPteamPH members to become active and achieve results by common efforts.

**Quote:** *“Some liaisons acted like a spokesperson in the OPteamPH, carrying messages and positions back and forth into and from their network. Other liaisons felt like a representative from a certain sector but had significantly less intense contact with their own network. The Admin Unit did not communicate directly with the sectoral stakeholder networks, relying on the liaisons. Maybe that was a mistake.”*

The decision making process (steering mechanism) of the Hub was mentioned as one of the first things to improve. Currently, the OPteamPH and the WSB make the decisions concerning the Hub.

**Quote:** *“In the OPteamPH it has been first come first serve for initiatives and projects. And we follow a unanimous approach, so one OPteamPH member can veto against. This should not be the way forward.”*

There are different opinions about the independence of the PH. Some say it is good to stay connected to the CWSS, others say it should be separate from the TWSC.

**Quote:** *“In essence I support the concept of a PH as a networking group, not as an independent body. Better coordination should not lead to new administrative structures. Many of us are already overloaded with meetings.”*

Specific other management struggles pointed out were bureaucracy and managing too high expectations compared to the insufficient availability of money and capacity. Lastly, some respondents pointed out the importance of a physical Partnership Centre where partners can meet physically and work together for several days. Although others, who wished for a leaner organization, disagreed (see next quote).

**Quote:** *“More coordination is helpful, but I wish for less centralization. For three countries, keeping all the meetings in Wilhelmshaven is not possible nor desirable. Let's keep it informal, now it is way too formalized.”*

## Outreach and engaging other sectors

The Hub should work on visibility and communication, according to many respondents. The Hub is young and unknown, and the role and the added value is not adequately communicated.



**Quote:** *“Due to the pandemic lots of activities have been postponed. What is needed now is for key persons in the network to visit and engage on a local level. It takes some effort to restart the engagement in a post-covid situation.”*

**Quote:** *“The Hub has not been launched properly yet. We have been very preoccupied with creating the hub. We must mark the beginning of the Hub going into business.”*

Most respondents expressed the view that more sectors should play an active role in the Partnership Hub (see enquiry results in Annex III), for instance by inviting them to join the OPteamPH. The Hub should clearly explain the added benefit of becoming a partner - what can be expected and what are partner responsibilities?

**Quote:** *“If the Hub is viewed as an entity that does things for others (one-way street), it will not succeed. We must collaborate on an equal basis, as partners. A mutual exchange is needed to generate outcomes no one organization could achieve on its own.”*

On the other hand, we encountered hesitance to involve “strong industrial” partners such as the shipping sector, even amongst OPteamPH members. The following quote shows this hesitance (“embrace our enemies”). The fishery sector specifically was perceived as a sector that was difficult to engage in a productive way.

**Quote:** *“In the OPteamPH, we started with five sectors that we knew relatively well. We should expand. We could add shipping, fisheries, and the energy sector to the OPteamPH. You should “embrace our enemies” and collaborate, because they live and work in the world heritage site too.”*

The risk was pointed out that if the Hub starts attracting more sectors to engage in an active way, the competition with the WSF will be strong (see also “Relation to the Wadden Sea Forum”).

**Quote:** *“You could invite the water sport sector to the Hub, but then the Hub will be in competition with the Wadden Sea Forum and that's also the case for the other sectors mentioned (shipping, fishery, ports and harbors)”.*



## 6. Conclusions

As the Partnership Hub is a fairly young organisation, and live meetings were not possible during the COVID-19 pandemic, it seems relatively early to judge the functioning of the Hub. Nevertheless, several conclusions can be drawn that can contribute to the further development of the Partnership Hub.

### **The Partnership Hub as a strategy**

The TWSC wants to involve parties through a network approach and entice them to take ownership of the goals for the Wadden Sea World Heritage. A Partnership Hub has been set up for this purpose. The concept of the Partnership Hub is supported widely, and most parties see the potential added value in the Partnership Hub. The Hub has the best of both worlds in a sense of being attached to the CWSS and the WSB on the one hand (i.e. a strong connection with governments and politics), while connecting stakeholders and freely discussing new initiatives on the other (a more independent role). Further attention must be given to the relationship between the Hub and the Wadden Sea Forum, as both are network organisations. The Forum and the Hub should examine further who does what, on a practical level, and how both can strengthen one another.

### **The working method of the Partnership**

This strategy needs a certain way of working, through special roles (“offers and services”). The Hub wants to connect parties to the Wadden Sea network by initiating projects, facilitating knowledge production, exchange, and mutual learning, and organizing meetings, workshops and conferences (the “intervention method”). There is agreement on the main roles of the Partnership Hub as a catalyst for developing intersectoral and trilateral Wadden Sea World Heritage projects, and as being a platform for information exchange (“network of networks”).

### **The style and organization of the Partnership Hub**

The above has consequences for the style of working and the organization of the Hub. The Hub and the OPteamPH are currently perceived as being too bureaucratic, in a sense that there is the tendency to write thorough and concise papers and plans at forehand, while a network approach needs a hands-on mentality and a great deal of flexibility. The expectations that rise from the Partnership Hub Concept are not a match for the limited capacity and funding. The role that the Hub wants to fulfill requires clear mandates for decision-making, and working methods that can timely respond to questions from a large variety of sectors. This includes a way of working that is connecting, untraditional, and adaptive, and people that can empathize with the interests of other parties, that are open-minded and curious, have the courage to tackle sensitive topics and difficult conversations, etc.

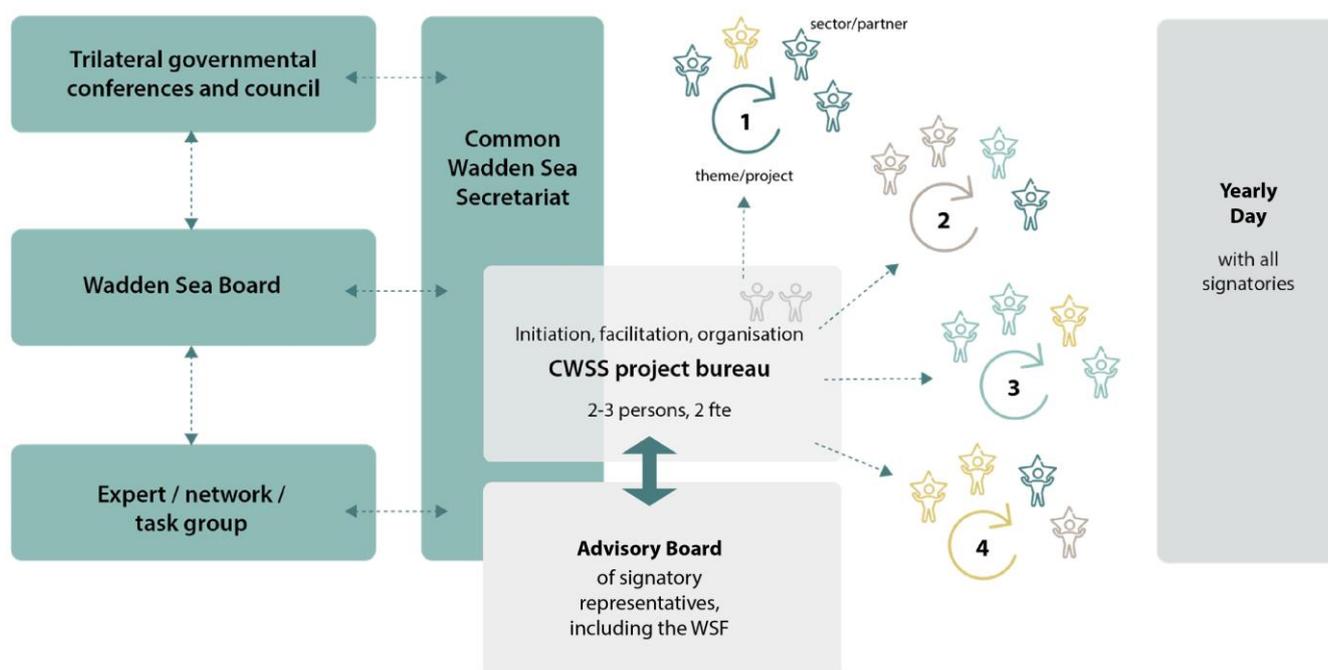


## 7. Recommendations and perspective

### 1. Keep it simple (for now)

For the next phase of the Partnership Hub, we recommend a simple organizational model. The Hub must first further prove its added value and therefore the organization should be lean and mean and focus on clear communication and concrete results. In this organizational model the core of the Hub, a “project bureau”, is embedded in the CWSS (see figure below). Carefully select the right persons for this project bureau, because the networking approach requires certain specific competences and attitudes (see conclusions). This project bureau has strong ties with the CWSS, but at the same time it also operates independently in a way that it should be granted leeway and freedom to discuss politically sensitive subjects and work on creative, innovative, and sometimes unconventional solutions and coalitions. Connections with stakeholders are alive outside of the bureau where cross-sectoral discussions are centered around concrete thematic projects. The cross-sectoral discussions at large take place e.g. once a year, when all Partnership Hub signatories, and possibly other new parties, meet on a specific day (e.g. the “Trilateral Partnership Day”).

In this model, the Chair of the project bureau has the mandate to make decisions, for instance on allocating money and choosing thematic lines to work on. The project bureau should regularly seek advice and feedback on its activities and strategy from an Advisory Board of Signatory Representatives, including the Wadden Sea Forum. Both Hub and Forum should continue to work on their allegiance and further investigate the complementary value of both entities. Discuss who does what, and how you can enforce and help one another. We see the value of having both; the Hub focusing on the Wadden Sea World Heritage, and the Forum attending to the larger Wadden Sea Region. Also, the Hub is more closely tied to the TWSC and the CWSS, whereas the Forum has a more independent role.



Recommended organizational model for the next phase of the Partnership Hub. The estimated 2 fte needed for the project bureau is based on the current needs of the Administrative Unit



We think this phase should last around four years (2023-2027), or until the end of the next Board's Presidency, after which you can present the outcomes at the Trilateral Conference. Once the organization is more mature, the Hub has sprouted more concrete results, and other sector networks are more organized too, consider moving on. As a possible growth model, the Advisory Board of Signatory Representatives could evolve into a Partnership Hub Committee with decision making power. For instance, in the future such a Committee can decide on the work program of the Project Bureau and the allocation of financial resources.

## **2. Be ambitious, but selective**

Great ambition, vision, and mission have been formulated for the Partnership Hub. At the same time, resources are limited. In our view, the mission and vision do not need to be adjusted, but acknowledge that the Hub needs time to grow, provide good examples, achieve small successes, etc. The principles for projects and activities as formulated in the PH Concept all seem legitimate, but be careful not to apply them too strictly. Start working from clear thematic lines, such as the human pressures related to the OUV stated in the SIMP. Focus on projects that unquestionably show the added value of the Hub in practice. We furthermore recommend revisiting the objectives as formulated in the Concept against the background of limited resources and the suggested focus on a limited number of thematic lines. Finetune them and be selective on which objectives you put center stage communicate about.

## **3. Be flexible**

A network approach requires flexibility to respond to the questions and developments in the network. The partnership Hub mainly wants to provide support during the early stages of projects and collaborations. People working at the core of the Hub should feel at ease with this flexible approach, also because the Hub operates in two worlds at the same time, bridging the TWSC/governmental side and the stakeholder side. Taking the administrative and bureaucratic approach by first finetuning issues and processes in reports is counter-intuitive and counterproductive to a network approach. Also, the Hub needs some mandate in decision making to respond to developments in the network – meaning that the Hub can swiftly decide which initiatives to respond to, without asking permission from others in the TWSC.

## **4. Be visible and crystal clear**

Communicate about the added value of the Hub and the complementary nature of the Hub compared to existing entities, such as the Expert Groups and the Wadden Sea Forum. Formulate your added value in one or two sentences. Showcase early successes and concrete projects. Explain in unambiguous and selective terms what partners looking for support from the Hub can expect, and what not. With this strong and concise narrative, relaunch the Hub in an official way.

## **5. Organize the basics**

The Partnership Hub needs more time to grow and further finds its role. Organize structural governmental funding for the tasks and staffing of the core of your work (now carried out by the Admin Unit). You also need to organize seed money for developing new initiatives and projects, and a mandate to decide on that money.

## **6. Be bold**

Challenge yourself to also discuss politically sensitive topics and attract the partners of those sectors, in consultation with relevant parties. If a sector is perceived as challenging, such as the fishing sector, choose a relatively low-profile topic, such as working on World Heritage ownership with small scale coastal fishermen. But start somewhere, be bold, open-minded and dare to be experimental.



## Annexes

### I. Participants OPteamPH workshop

Name	Organisation
Carolin Galler	MU Lower Saxony
Pia He	BUND Lower Saxony (NGO)
Marine Perrin	BUND Lower Saxony (NGO)
Peter Ros	Ministry NL
Anne Husum Marboe	National Park DK
Anja Domnick	NG-Sustainable Tourism (CWSS)
Thomas Borchers	Federal Ministry DE
Bernard Baerends	Chair (CWSS)
Cristina Nazzari	PH Admin Unit (CWSS)
Margrita Sobottka	PH Admin Unit (NLPV)

### II. Interviews - interviewees and questions

Interviewee	Affiliation / organization
Frank Ahlhorn	Managing Director of the WSF, OPteamPH member
Bernard Baerends	Chair OPteamPH (CWSS)
Maren Bauer	German Ministry, OPteamPH member
Preben Friis-Hauge	Chair WSF, Wadden Sea Board advisor, Danish municipality
Karst Jaarsma	Dutch Ministry, OPteamPH member
Janne Liburd	Univ. SDU, Wadden Sea Board member of Danish delegation, Professor Tourism and sustainable development
Cristina Nazzari	CWSS, PH Admin Unit
Katja Philippart	Wadden Academy (research)
Thomas Borchers	Federal Ministry DE
Henrik Pind Jørgensen	Danish Environmental Protection Agency, OPteamPH member
Hans-Ulrich Rösner	WWF, Wadden Sea Team, Advisor WSB



Wim Schoorlemmer	Dutch Ministry, Program towards Rich Wadden Sea
Margrita Sobottka	Lower Saxon Wadden Sea National Park Authority, PH Admin Unit
Sonja van der Graaf	Dutch Ministry, Program towards Rich Wadden Sea (PRW)
Holger Wesemüller	Wadden Sea Team, Coordinator for Lower Saxony

### Interview questions

- A. Role and position of the interviewee**
1. Name, organization and function
  2. When did you (your organization) join the Hub?
  3. Which sector/network do you see yourself attached to?
  4. What is your current role towards the Partnership-Hub?
  5. What is your perceived sphere of influence within the Partnership Hub?
  6. In what way has the P-Hub been successful so far?
  7. What should be the first thing to change/improve about the P-Hub
- B. Vision, mission, objectives (outcome)**
1. What's your perspective for the PH in 3-5 years' time? What is needed for that, or what hinders reaching the ideal situation?
  2. What can we learn from the pilot phase with respect to the way forward to the long-term vision, mission objectives of the Partnership Hub?
- C. Projects, activities, and role (output)**
1. What has been the most important achievement (added value) of the Hub so far?
  2. Can you mention concrete actions/results of the Hub so far?
  3. In what way has the Hub been helpful in activating the World Sea Heritage Brand?
  4. What are your thoughts on visibility of the Hub / external communication?
  5. What is needed for the Hub to become more action-oriented?
  6. How has the hub supported (for instance) the Wadden Sea Forum, the Wadden Sea Team and the TWSC?
  7. What should the Hub deliver by common efforts to make it a success and to offer additional value?
- D. Organisation (throughput)**
1. What do you see as the main role of the OPteamPH?
  2. How can partners in the OPteamPH become more involved? How to strengthen the feelings of ownership?
  3. To what extent did liaisons link their network and the OPTeamPH?
  4. How does the Administrative Unit support the work of the Hub?
  5. What has been the biggest struggle in the organization of the Hub so far? How can this be overcome?
  6. How should the partnership be governed and managed after the pilot phase, and why?
  7. What is your opinion on the degree of dependence resp. independence of the Hub in relation to the CWSS and the TWSC?
  8. How do you rate the influence of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the development of the partnership?
- E. Composition and resources (input)**
1. What is the current input of the different partners in de Hub (people and financial resources)?
  2. What are your thoughts about the representation of different stakeholder groups in the OpTeam?
  3. How can the connection with the signatories of the MoU be improved?
  4. Should the input and engagement of certain partners, stakeholders or sectors be enforced, or should new partners be attracted? What/who is needed? What dilemma's do you see?



### III. Online enquiry – respondents and questions

Respondent	Organization and function	
Arjen Bosch	Advisory Board Dutch Wadden Seaports	General secretary
Christian Buschbaum	Alfred Wegener Institute, Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research	Scientist
Karin Lochte	Chair Wadden Sea Board	Chairperson
Cristina	Common Wadden Sea Secretariat	Partnership project Officer
Anja Domnick	CWSS, here presenting tourism sector	Programme Officer Trilateral Cooperation
Kristine Meise	CWSS	Programme Officer - Flyway and Biodiversity
Peter Ros	Dutch Ministry	Program manager Nature
Karst Jaarsma	Dutch Ministry	Policy Adviser Wadden Sea
Carolin Galler	Ministry for the Environment, Energy, Building and Climate Protection Lower Saxony	responsible for the National Park Wadden Sea Lower Saxony, Department for Natura 2000 and protected areas
Christina Føns	Municipality	Head of Environmental department
Anne Husum Marboe	Nationalpark Vadehavet	Development manager
Peter Südbeck	Nationalparkverwaltung Niedersächsisches Wattenmeer	Head Officer
Pieter van Kuppenveld	Trilateral Wadden Sea Sailing Association TWSSA	Board member
Ursula Sieberts	Univ. of Veterinary Medicine Hannover	Institute leader

#### Enquiry questions

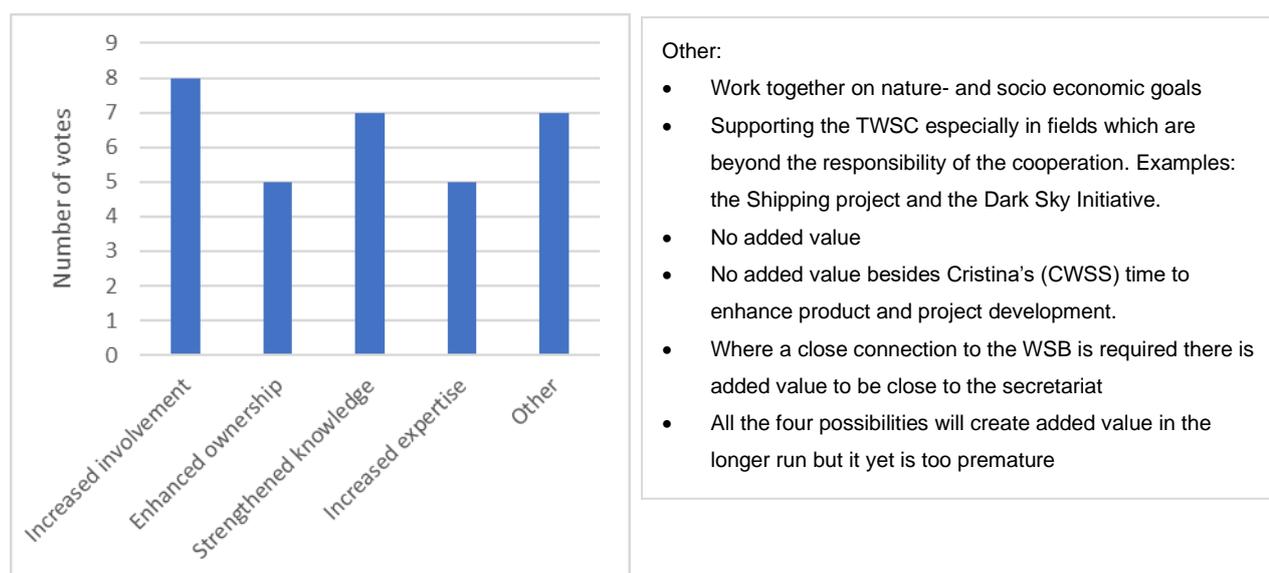
*Note – for relevant multiple choice questions, the answers are shown too. These have also been summarized in the results section, as have the answers to the open ended questions.*

1. Please state your name, organization and function
2. What is your involvement in the Partnership Hub? (*multiple choice – multiple answers possible*)
  - A. I/my organization signed the MoU (memorandum of understanding)
  - B. I am part of the trilateral partnership/partnership hub
  - C. I involve on a project/initiative level
  - D. Other, ...
  - E. None – *jump to question 7*



3. Which is the added value of the partnership hub and/or its activities or projects, from your perspective? (*multiple choice – multiple answers possible*)
1. Increased involvement & cooperation of partners in the Wadden Sea Area
  2. Enhanced ownership in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site
  3. Strengthened knowledge exchange throughout the Wadden Sea Area
  4. Increased expertise and resources available to protect, conserve, and sustainably develop the World Heritage Site
  5. Other, ...

Answers Q3:

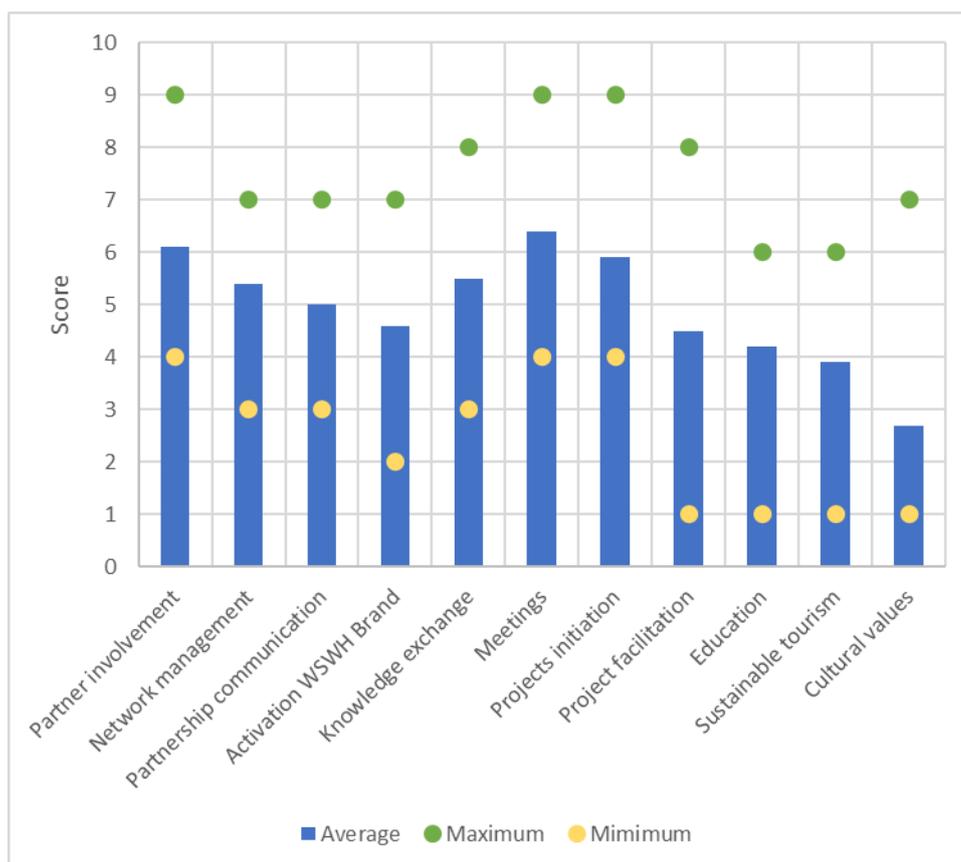


4. Where do you see potential to unlock further added value and what is needed to reach this?
5. What are the biggest lessons learnt from the pilot phase, to your opinion?
- What has been the most successful feature?
  - What has been the biggest struggle?
  - Do you have suggestions for optimization of the organization and management of the Partnership?
6. On a scale of 1-10, how well do you think the Hub has performed during the pilot phase?
- 1 Involvement of partners
  - 2 Network coordination and network management
  - 3 Communication for and of the partnership
  - 4 Communication and activation of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Brand
  - 5 Facilitate knowledge production, exchange and mutual learning
  - 6 Facilitate and organize meetings, workshops and conferences
  - 7 Facilitate the initiation of projects and activities
  - 8 Project facilitation through fundraising and financial management
  - 9 Educating and informing about the Wadden Sea World Heritage
  - 10 Developing and enhancing sustainable tourism in the Wadden Sea Region
  - 11 Integrating cultural and historical values in the management of the Wadden Sea Region



Answers Q6. **Please note:**

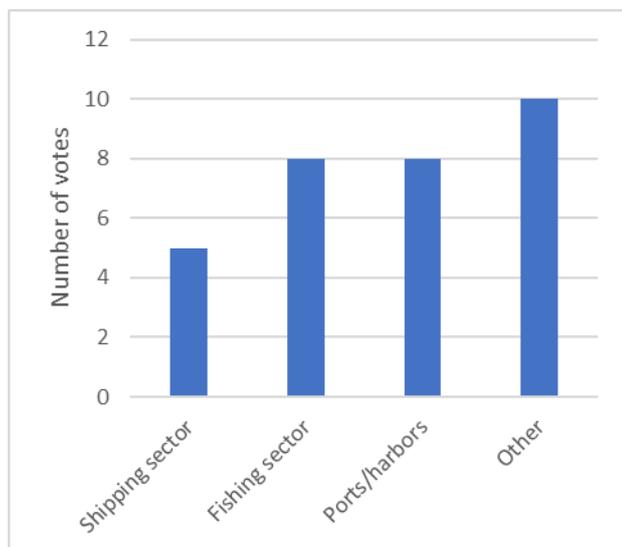
- Two respondents attributed the score of 1 to all fields, and were very critical on the PH as a whole. These values have been omitted here
- One respondent mentioned not to be directly involved in the Partnership Hub projects, so his/her assessment was based on hearsay
- One respondent called the scoring realistic, but not fair taking the pandemic into account



7. Where do you see a specific potential for you, your organisation or sector, for future activities and initiatives within the Partnership Hub?
8. Which other partners or sectors could merit from joining the Partnership Hub (and vice versa), to your opinion?



### Answers Q8



#### Other:

- Cargo users, insurance companies
- Research Institutions
- Energy, youth, health sector
- Energy sector
- No new partnership could merit the hub in its existing form
- Cooperation between harbors, fisheries and shipping exist on the trilateral level. There is no added value for them to join the TWSC
- Real tourism partners from the three countries. They are not really represented in the NG-ST
- I could add Water Sport but then the PH will be in competition with the WSF and that's also for the other sectors mentioned
- Offshore industries and ammunitions

9. Any other remarks or suggestions?

10. Please state your e-mail address if you are OK with us contacting you with a follow-up question, if needed.