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Adriatic Ionian Euroregion joint thematic sessions:

## **AIE Environment Committee**

### **Thematic Report**

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#### **1.0 Updated overlook on the EU policies on the Adriatic-Ionian macroregion**

##### Governance of the coastal and maritime environment

- COM(2013) 133 final: Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing **a framework for maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal management**. The proposal establishes a framework for MSP and integrated coastal management (ICM) in the form of a systematic, coordinated, inclusive and trans-boundary approach to integrated maritime governance, with a view to promote the sustainable growth of maritime and coastal activities and the sustainable use of coastal and marine resources. The benefits of such a coherent governance are: 1) to reduce conflicts between sectors and create synergies between different activities; 2) to encourage investment by instilling predictability, transparency and clearer rules (this will help boost the development of renewable energy sources and grids, establish Marine Protected Areas, and facilitate investment in oil and gas); 3) to increase coordination between administrations in each country, through the use of a single instrument to balance the development of a range of maritime activities (that will be simpler and cheaper); 4) to increase cross-border cooperation between EU countries, on cables, pipelines, shipping lanes, wind installations, etc.; 5) to protect the environment through early identification of impact and opportunities for multiple use of space. MSP and ICM will help the implementation of several other EU policies relevant for marine and coastal areas. Relevant environment policies include: Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Water Framework Directive, Natura and Habitats Directives and the Biodiversity Strategy. Other relevant EU policies are the Integrated Maritime Policy, the upcoming Strategy on Climate Change Adaptation, the Renewable Energy Directive, the Motorways of the Sea Initiative and the Common fishery Policy.

- The Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Mediterranean and the **Action Plan** for the implementation of the ICZM Protocol 2012-2019 (adopted on the occasion of the 17<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties, held in Paris from 8 to 10 February 2012). The core purposes and objectives of this Action Plan are to implement the Protocol through country-based planning and regional co-ordination, namely: a) support the effective implementation of ICZM Protocol at regional, national and local levels through a Common Regional Framework for ICZM; b) strengthen the capacities of Contracting Parties to implement the Protocol and use in an effective manner ICZM policies, instruments, tools and processes; c) promote the ICZM Protocol and its implementation within the region, and promote it globally by developing synergies with relevant Conventions and Agreements.

#### Climate change: mitigation and adaptation

- COM(2013) 216 final: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "**An EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change**", that outlines the coastal zones among the particularly vulnerable to climate change (risk of coastal flooding and erosion). The overall aim of the EU Adaptation Strategy is to contribute to a more climate-resilient Europe. This means enhancing the preparedness and capacity to respond to the impacts of climate change at local, regional, national and EU levels, developing a coherent approach and improving coordination. This Strategy sets out a framework and mechanisms for bringing the EU's preparedness for the current and future impacts of climate change up to a new level. It is proposed to do this by encouraging and supporting action by the EU Member States on adaptation, by creating a basis for better informed decision-making on adaptation in the years to come, and by making key economic and policy sectors more resilient to the effects of climate change.
- The **European Climate Adaptation Platform** (Climate-ADAPT), that aims to support Europe in adapting to climate change. It is an initiative of the European Commission and helps users to access and share information on: expected climate change in Europe, current and future vulnerability of regions and sectors, national and transnational adaptation strategies, adaptation case studies and potential adaptation options, tools that support adaptation planning. The platform includes a section dedicated to adaptation in coastal zones.

- **EU Climate and Energy Package** (Europe 2020 Strategy), which benefits are: a major contribution to combating climate change; to give an example that can help to shape a new global climate agreement; more secure energy supplies; reduce oil and gas imports by 2020; increase jobs in European renewables industry and in environment-related industries by 2020; competitive advantage through significant innovation in the EU energy sector; less air pollution - significant health benefits and less money spent on control measures.

#### Quality of the environment, resources management, risks management

- Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council "**Water Framework Directive**": the 3rd WFD implementation report was adopted on 14/11/2012 and consists of: 1) a Commission report to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the WFD - River Basin Management Plans (COM(2012)670 of 14.11.2012); 2) a European Overview – Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the report: SWD(2012)379 Volume 1 and SWD(2012)379 Volume 2; 3) Country-specific assessments for EU Member States and Norway (SWD(2012)379 Volumes 3-30). Related to these WFD implementation reports, a number of facts, figures and maps have been produced.
- Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council "**Marine Strategy Framework Directive**". To take stock of the state of Europe's seas five years after the adoption of the MSFD, the European Commission organised the Healthy Oceans - Productive Ecosystems (HOPE) conference on the marine environment, held in Brussels on 3-4 March 2014. It brought together those working with or in relation to the European marine environment and provided them with the opportunity to discuss progress made over the past 5 years, the problems that still remain and the solutions for improved coherence and better marine governance. At the closure of the conference, the "Declaration of HOPE" output document has been issued.
- COM(2013) 918 final : Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "**A Clean Air Programme for Europe**". The measures in this new strategy build on those presented in the 2005 Thematic Strategy on Air Pollution and will deliver further progress towards long term objectives of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programmes. The Strategy is accompanied by a legislative proposal for a revised National Emission Ceilings Directive, and a

proposal for a Directive which will for the first time control emissions from Medium sized Combustion Plants and contribute significantly to the achievement of the necessary emissions reductions. The strategy also contains non-regulatory support measures to enhance capacity and co-operation at all political levels, with priority areas including urban air pollution, research and innovation, and the international dimension of air policy.

- World Health Organisation **Air quality guidelines** for particulate matter, ozone, nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide - Global update 2005
- COM(2011)0244 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "Our life insurance, our natural capital: an **EU biodiversity strategy to 2020**", aimed at reversing biodiversity loss and speeding up the EU's transition towards a resource efficient and green economy. It is an integral part of the Europe 2020 Strategy, and in particular the resource efficient Europe flagship initiative. The 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (India, October 2012), marked the move from policy-making to implementation. A number of important decisions were adopted, on issues such as biodiversity and climate change (relevant safeguards with regard to REDD+); better conservation and more sustainable use of marine biodiversity (ecologically or biologically significant areas – EBSAs); and the enhancement of cooperation and synergy within the three Rio Conventions and the biodiversity-related conventions. On the crucial issue of resource mobilisation, CBD Parties committed to an overall substantial increase of total biodiversity-related funding for the implementation of the Strategic Plan from a variety of sources, and resolved to achieve preliminary targets, to be reviewed at COP 12, which will take place in Korea in 2014.
- COM(2005) 666 final: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "Taking sustainable use of resources forward: **A Thematic Strategy on the prevention and recycling of waste**". It sets as long term goal for the EU to become a recycling society that seeks to avoid waste and uses waste as a resource. To this end, the Strategy sets out key actions to modernize the existing legal framework and to promote waste prevention, reuse and recycling, with waste disposal only as last resort. COM(2011) 13 final contains the Report on the Thematic Strategy on the Prevention and Recycling of Waste.

- Directive 2008/98/EC on waste (**Waste Framework Directive**) sets the basic concepts and definitions related to waste management. It explains when waste becomes a secondary raw material (so called end-of-waste criteria), and how to distinguish between waste and by-products. The Directive lays down some basic waste management principles: it requires that waste be managed without endangering human health and harming the environment, and in particular without risk to water, air, soil, plants or animals, without causing a nuisance through noise or odours, and without adversely affecting the countryside or places of special interest.
- COM(2012) 673 final: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "**A Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water Resources**". It aims to tackle the obstacles which hamper action to safeguard Europe's water resources and is based on an extensive evaluation of the existing policy. The Blueprint is based on a wealth of information and analysis including the EEA State of Water report, the Commission assessment of the Member States River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) and Review of the Policy on Water Scarcity and Droughts, and the Fitness Check of EU Freshwater Policy. Blueprint recognises that the aquatic environments differ greatly across the EU and therefore does not propose any one size fits all solution, in line with the principle of subsidiarity. It emphasises key themes which include: improving land use, addressing water pollution, increasing water efficiency and resilience, and improving governance by those involved in managing water resources.
- Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks (**Floods Directive**), whose aim is to reduce and manage the risks that floods pose to human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity. This Directive requires Member States to assess if all water courses and coast lines are at risk from flooding, to map the flood extent and assets and humans at risk in these areas and to take adequate and coordinated measures to reduce this flood risk. With this Directive also reinforces the rights of the public to access this information and to have a say in the planning process.

## **2.0 Towards the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)**

The EUSAIR will cover eight countries: four EU Member States (Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia) and four non-EU countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia). The general objective of the EUSAIR is to promote economic and social prosperity and growth in the region by improving its attractiveness, competitiveness and connectivity. The Strategy should also play an important role in promoting the EU integration of Western Balkans.

In the context of the Communication on a Maritime Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas (COM(2012) 713 final), extensive consultations with stakeholders were held in Athens (14 Feb 2012), Trieste (12-13 Jun 2012), Portoroz (17 Sep 2012) and Zagreb (06 Dec 2012). That has formed the basis for the forthcoming macro-regional strategy which will be built around four thematic pillars:

1. Driving innovative maritime and marine growth
2. Connecting the region (transport and energy)
3. Preserving, protecting and improving the quality of the environment
4. Increasing regional attractiveness (tourism)

Moreover, "Research, innovation and SMEs development", as well as "Capacity Building" are two cross-cutting aspects which come across each and every area.

On the 6-7<sup>th</sup> of February 2014, the city of Athens welcomed a high level Stakeholder Conference on the EUSAIR that concluded the stakeholder consultation phase. The two Plenary sessions and four parallel workshops on the proposed pillars of the future Strategy provided inputs that will feed into a formal proposal of Strategy (in the form of a Communication and Action Plan) to be adopted by the European Commission in June 2014.

### Pillar 1. Driving innovative maritime and marine growth

The scope of this Pillar is to drive innovative maritime and marine growth in the Adriatic Ionian Region by promoting sustainable economic growth and jobs as well as business opportunities in the blue economy sectors (e.g. aquaculture, fisheries, blue biotechnologies, marine and maritime services).

This needs to build on the regional diversity in the Adriatic Ionian Region, and take into account that there are various pathways to innovative maritime and marine growth. At the same time a number of challenges and development opportunities need to be approached through cooperation among the countries, regions and cities.

### Pillar 2. Connecting the Region

The focus is on better transport and energy connections in the macro-region. Given the heterogeneity of situations in the Region, there is an evident need to invest in (administrative, institutional) capacity building. Communication is also an important aspect to, i.a., involve population in the decision making and gain their support on initiatives to be implemented. Research, innovation as well as the involvement of the private partners are essential cross-cutting aspects for achieving the objectives of this pillar and hence those of the entire Strategy.

Actions should focus on three strategic topics: maritime transports, intermodal hinterland and energy networks.

### Pillar 3. Preserving, protecting and improving the quality of the environment

The main needs to be addressed by the Pillar are:

#### 1) Protecting the marine environment

a) Threats to marine biodiversity: overfishing, habitat and breeding grounds destruction, invasive alien species and inappropriate aquaculture, which has resulted in negative impacts for fish, marine mammals, seabirds and virtually all plant and animal life in the seas;

b) Pollution of the seas: caused by maritime transport, eutrophication and pollution from rivers resulting from insufficient waste water treatment, from aquaculture, pollution from oil-chemical industry and natural gas exploration. This has negative impacts in particular for wildlife and also for human uses of the sea (especially tourism). In addition, marine litter from land-based sources and abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear has negative impacts on wildlife. Moreover, a significant part of the sea basin is by its nature and by the vessel traffic congestion, at risk of serious damages due to human hazards (e.g. large scale pollution events from oil spills and natural gas exploration).

#### 2) Protecting terrestrial biodiversity, habitats and ecosystems

Several countries of the macroregion are home to the same terrestrial ecoregions, which stretch across borders. Cooperation is particularly relevant for protecting

large carnivores with habitats stretching across much of the macro-region, and for migratory birds along the Adriatic Flyway.

**Climate change adaptation, as well as ICZM and MSP, are horizontal activities** which are relevant in addressing several of the needs listed above.

Addressing the environmental issues and taking actions could help to achieving several EU environmental goals which are set out in the Acquis, particularly those contained in the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Water Framework Directive, Waste Directive and the Birds and Habitats Directives.

By addressing threats to both marine and terrestrial biodiversity, habitats and ecosystems, the EUSAIR is also expected to contribute to the achievement of the target of the EU Biodiversity Strategy.

The key consideration, besides the vertical environmental integration in pillar III, is to ensure environmental integration in the three other pillars of the Strategy with the view to making them sustainable.

#### Pillar 4. Increasing regional attractiveness (tourism)

Stakeholders acknowledged the need to focus the objective of the pillar towards sustainable tourism, recognising sustainability and quality as fundamental aspects to boost the competitiveness of the tourism sector in the Adriatic-Ionian Region.

The Pillar includes 4 key topics:

- a) diversification of tourism products and services
- b) quality of tourism services and products (common standards and certification)
- c) sustainable tourism management (through harmonised statistics and indicators)
- d) accessibility (travel facilitation and accessible services).