

The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and the Ionian Region: from Marginalisation to Co-Development

A. Gicala ^(a), R. Salvador ^(b)

^(a) University of Wroclaw, Faculty of Social Sciences, Poland. gicala.aleksandra@gmail.com

^(b) CICS.NOVA – Interdisciplinar Centre of Social Sciences, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal. regina.salvador@gmail.com

RESUMO

The paper describes the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) focusing on its main characteristics (problems, challenges, development potential).

The Region is described in respect to its location, coastline, main rivers, islands, flora, fauna and biggest cities and ports. The second part deals about the development potential (marine renewable energy, ex.) and the challenges of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas basins, such as overfishing, water pollution, as well as the issues of refugees. The third part presents the EUSAIR and its four pillars (Blue Growth, Connecting the Region, Environmental Quality, and Sustainable Tourism). The last part describes the maritime clusters in the Adriatic and Ionian Seas and how its features will predictably adapt to the EUSAIR guidelines.

Palavras chave: Adriatic and Ionian Region. EUSAIR.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Adriatic Sea is a semi-enclosed sea between Italy and the Balkan Peninsula. It is part of the Mediterranean, but it is treated separately by the European Union. While the western coast belongs completely to Italy the eastern runs along five countries: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Albania.

The Adriatic Sea extends northwest from 40° to 45° 45' N. Its longest length is around 800 km, its surface 138,600 sq. km and its water volume is around 33,000 m³. Maximum water temperature is 24 °C and the lowest 7 °C. The maximum depth is 1,233 m and the average equals 253 m. The longest rivers which are inflows to the Adriatic Sea are: Po (652 km), Adige (410 km), Drin (335 km), Neretva (230 km), Soča (138 km) Krka (74 km) and Bojana (41 km).

The Adriatic Sea Croatian coastline is about 6,000 km, almost 75% of the total length, due to the amount of islands - around 1,200 (about 69.5% of the Croatian coastline). The biggest Adriatic islands are: Krk (405.8 km²), Cres (405.8 km²), Brač (394.6 km²), Hvar (299.7 km²), Pag (284.6 km²) and Korčula (276 km²).

The biggest cities belong mostly to Italy (14). Not every country with the Adriatic coast has coastal cities with population over 50,000 (it's the case of Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro). In the Adriatic Sea coast live around 3.5 million people.

The biggest ports (in tonnage) is Trieste, followed by Venice and Rijeka. On what touristic passengers are concerned, the main ports are Split (4.8 million passengers), Venice (1.8), Bari (1.7), Durrës (760,000) and Trieste (171,813 passengers).

To the south of the Adriatic is the Ionian Sea, between southern Albania, western Greece and southern-eastern Italy. At the exception of Sicily (the biggest island, with 26,000 sq.km), all the other islands are Greek: Kefalo-

nia (780 km²), Corfu (597 km²), Zakynthos (410 km²), Lefkada (303 km²), Ithaca (118 km²), Paxi (20 km²).

On the Ionian coast one finds a smaller number of cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants. The main ports (in tonnage) are Taranto, Catania and Messina. But if one considers the number of passengers, the Ionic ports are more important than those from the Adriatic: Messina (7.6 million passengers) and Reggio di Calabria (6.2).

The diversity of the flora and fauna in the Adriatic and Ionian Seas makes this areas a place needing protection. They have a rich and various marine biodiversity. Although the Adriatic is part of the Mediterranean Sea, not every form of life, typically Mediterranean, exists in the Adriatic. It is estimated that only around 50% of the Mediterranean species live in the Adriatic Sea (where live more than seven thousands species, some of them unique and endangered).

2. FISHING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

In 2009, the “General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean” (GFCM, a “Food and Agriculture”–FAO - organization) divided the Mediterranean and the Black Seas into several subareas (Resolution RES-GFCM/33/2009/2). The Adriatic Sea has two pelagic priority areas. One, in the north, is a spawning ground for anchovies and pilchards; the other is famous for sheltering pelagic sharks. The Ionian Sea has also two pelagic priority areas, both very rich in fishes. They are the habitat for more than 410 species and subspecies, i.e., 70% of the Mediterranean, the most endangered by overfishing.

The Adriatic and the Ionian Seas are also the place of living for many sea mammals (bottlenose dolphin, sperm whale, monk seal, cetacean, fin whale, Cuvier's beaked whale).

Fishing was always an important source of income for local people. Data show increasing fishing along the Balkan Peninsula, but decreasing along the Italian coast (even if Italy still represents 79% of total catches). Thanks to the Adriatic-Ionian basin moderate slope and the soft sea bottom, there's a lot of trawl fishery (Med Maritime Integrated Projects Fisheries) clams' dredgers (WWF).

Due to the clean water (especially on the eastern coast), many islands and beautiful weather, almost whole year round, both the Adriatic and the Ionian Seas are perfect places for tourism. Water sports (skiing, sailing, windsurfing, diving) benefit from exceptional conditions. Historical monuments, museums and cultural heritage in general are also a major asset for the tourism in the region.

But there are serious problems. One, already mentioned earlier, is overfishing. The main fishing areas are along the Italian coast. An average size of caught fishes could be higher without the overfishing. The recovery of fishes' resources is paramount and, as such, the EU issued new rules on the no. of days at sea and on the nets' mesh sizes. Fisheries Restricted Areas were also created: in these areas, fishing is limited or prohibited due to spawning or over-exploitation. The "Adriatic Protected Areas Network" (AdriaPAN), a bottom-up initiative, with about 40 members from all the Adriatic countries, created two marine protected areas (Miramare and Torre del Cerrano, in Italian waters).

The FAO-AdriaMed Project is a scientific cooperation network to support responsible fisheries in the Adriatic Sea. This FAO project is jointly coordinated with the EU and all the Adriatic Governments.

Water pollution is another major problem, namely in the Adriatic (a semi-enclosed sea, where water circulation is difficult). Oil spills – together with agriculture and municipal runoffs - are the major sources of water pollution. A first "Adriatic Oil Spill Conference" was organised in 2010, from which resulted the "Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea" (REMPEC). Also ship sinking is dangerous due to toxic/radioactive materials dumping.

Last but not the least, the issue of immigrants and refugees. The majority chooses the path from Greece through the Balkan Peninsula (Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Hungary) but these countries closed their borders. They also try another path, cross Albania and the Adriatic Sea to Italy, although this road is most dangerous (women trafficking) due to the Albanian mafia. This road has also been used for drug-running and weapons trafficking.

3. THE MARITIME CLUSTERS

In the Adriatic and Ionian coasts there are not a large number of formal, established maritime clusters. In fact, one was able to find just two: the Italian maritime cluster (established in 1994 with 17 member associations) and the Croatian Intermodal Transport Cluster.

The Italian Maritime Cluster has strong links with maritime institutions. In this cluster work around

471,000 employees, generating receipts of about 33 billion euros (2015), 2% of the Italian GDP. In that same year, it was the first at world level in what Ro-Ro fleet is concerned (250 ships, 5 million GT, European Network of Maritime Clusters). The Croatian Intermodal Transport Cluster is focused in promoting shortsea shipping. Its members are mainly Croatian ports, as well as the "Association of Ship Brokers and Agents of Croatia".

Traditional maritime industries are slowly beginning to lose its importance. That's particularly the case of shipbuilding and repair.

4. THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE ADRIATIC AND IONIAN REGION

The Adriatic-Ionian Euro-region (AIE) joins 28 participants (mainly regional and local authorities from all Adriatic or Ionian countries). The AIE aims to establish and develop mutual relations between this region' stakeholders, as precondition for the improvement of knowledge, understanding and collaboration. It also intends to: (i) create the conditions for a sustainable development, determining common interests and harmonising common development strategy; (ii) define cultural exchange programmes; and (iii) ensure the conditions for an effective exchange of experiences and implementation of EU programmes.

The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) has been adopted, in 2014, by the European Council. Thanks to the cooperation of all national governments it was possible to reach a strategy to promote the integration of Western Balkans.

The EUSAIR is the third macro-regional EU Strategy, after those of the Baltic Sea and the Danube Regions. Some EUSAIR members are EU MS (Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia) and others not (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia). Here it is important to remember that Serbia - which is in Adriatic Sea basin - does not have sea coast.

The EUSAIR four main pillars are: (i) Blue Growth; (ii) Connecting the Region; (iii) Environmental Quality and (iv) Sustainable Tourism. Every pillar has two countries as coordinators.

Blue Growth 'is the long term strategy to support sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors as a whole'. As such, the Blue Growth Strategy focuses on sectors, such as aquaculture, coastal tourism, marine biotechnology, ocean energy and seabed mining. In order to support innovative maritime and marine growth in the Region, the EU intends to support: (i) the brain circulation between research and business communities, increasing networking and clustering capacity; (ii) develop common standards in seafood production and consumption; (iii) improve sea basin governance, by enhancing administrative and institutional capacities.

"Connecting the Region" (Coordinators: Italy and Serbia), the second pillar, focus improving connectivity of the Adriatic-Ionian Region both between countries and with the rest part of Europe. Connectivity is understood as maritime transport and energy networks. To

improve these types of networks, specific objectives are set in the “EU Action Plan”: strengthen maritime safety and security and develop a competitive intermodal port system; develop reliable transport networks and intermodal connections with the hinterland, both for freight and passengers; achieve a well-interconnected and well-functioning internal energy market supporting the three energy policy objectives of the EU – competitiveness, supply security and sustainability.

The third pillar is Environmental Quality (coordination by Bosnia-Herzegovina and Slovenia) Its specific objectives are: (i) ensure a good environmental and ecological status of the marine and coastal environment by 2020, in line with the relevant EU *acquis* and the ecosystem approach of the Barcelona Convention; (ii) contribute to the goal of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restore them in so far as feasible, by addressing threats to marine and terrestrial biodiversity; (iii) improve waste management by reducing both waste flows to the sea and nutrient flows and other pollutants to the rivers and the sea. The marine environment and the transnational native habitats and biodiversity were defined as priorities.

Sustainable Tourism (coordinated by Croatia and Albania) focuses on promoting responsible tourism behaviour on the part of all stakeholders. Pillar Sustainable Tourism is coordinated by Croatia and Albania. The specific objectives for this pillar are: (i) diversification of the Region tourism products and services along with tackling seasonality of inland, coastal and maritime tourism demand; (ii) improve tourism offer quality and innovation, enhancing the capacities of the tourism actors across the region. Two topics were defined as priorities: “diversified tourism offer” and “sustainable and responsible tourism management”.

The EUSAIR European Union Strategy has also cross-cutting features and horizontal principles, such as: capacity building; climate change mitigation and adaptation; disaster risk management; R&D; small and medium size businesses. The EUSAIR has a key role in developing this problematic Region. But the strategy is still young and one must wait to see its results.

5. REFERENCES

- AdriaMed, <http://www.faoadriamed.org/>, (Accessed: Jan. 24, 2017).
- AdriaPAN, <http://www.adriapan.org/index.php/en/>, (Accessed: Jan. 17, 2017).
- Adriatic Ionian Euroregion (AIE), <http://www.adriaticionianeuroregion.eu/>, (Accessed: Dec. 10, 2016).
- Catacean Research & Rescue Unit, http://www.crru.org.uk/cuviers_beakedwhale.asp, (Accessed: Jan. 17, 2017).
- EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region EUSAIR, <http://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/>, (Accessed: Dec. 10, 2016).
- European Commission, (2014), *Action Plan*, <http://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/component/edocman/?task=document.viewdoc&id=34&Itemid=0>.
- European Network of Maritime Clusters, <http://enmc.eu/>, (Accessed: Dec. 04, 2016).
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, <http://www.fao.org/home/en/>, (Accessed: Jan. 17, 2017).
- Klaster Intermodalnog Prijevoza, <http://shortsea.hr/hr>, (Accessed: Dec. 14, 2016).
- Med Maritime Integrated Projects Enercoast, (2015), *Study concerning the state of the art of the renewable energy sector in the Adriatic-Ionian coastal-marine areas*,
- Med Maritime Integrated Projects Fisheries, http://planbleu.org/sites/default/files/upload/files/Alo_Fisheries_factsheet_190115.pdf (Accessed: Dec. 14, 2016).
- REMPEC, (2010), *1st Adriatic Oil Spill Conference*, <http://www.rempec.org/rempecnews.asp?NewsID=142>.
- Severini, N. (2013), *Management and overfishing problems in the High Adriatic sea and the future policy perspectives*, http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/149930/2/127_Severini.pdf.
- The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), (2009), RES-GFCM/33/2009/2, <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ax817e.pdf>.