



## 1. Editorial



As Lead partner of the NOSTRA project, I'm very glad to present you with the first issue of the project newsletter.

NOSTRA, or Network Of STRAits, is a European project funded by the INTERREG IVC programme and is the result from the European Straits Initiative signed in 2010 by 15 local authorities bordering European straits.

The straits of Europe face similar challenges in areas including transport, maritime safety and economic development. The NOSTRA project is examining these areas, focusing on the environment and biodiversity as the common theme

NOSTRA partners have decided to collaborate and exchange experiences in order to implement more efficient and environment-friendly policies at strait level. In this context the NOSTRA project brings together 16 partners bordering 8 European straits in a common objective to protect their natural environment and address challenges around sustainable development.

This 3-year project (2012-2014) aims to bring a contribution to the improvement of European, national and local policies with an impact on straits and to build up a system of integrated and multi-level cross border governance as basis for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, in line with the EU 2020 strategy.

A lot of good work has taken place since April 2012; this bi-annual provides an update from across the partnership on these developments and achievements.

I hope you'll enjoy reading this first project update.

**Dominique Dupilet**  
President  
Pas-de-Calais County Council  
NOSTRA Lead partner



## 2. NOSTRA : key objectives and activities

NOSTRA aims to show how joint governance (bi-national) of straits based on an integrated and inclusive approach can improve public policies in respect to the protection of biodiversity and natural environment and can allow a sustainable economic development of the area.

The partnership is based on the will to work for the preservation of biodiversity and natural heritage on the straits areas.

Project activities will focus on three main themes:

- Environmental impact of point-to-point maritime transport and logistics devices;
- Local partnerships for a sustainable and environment-friendly economic and tourist development;
- Marine and terrestrial planning to combine preservation of the environment, inhabitant's quality of life and economic development.

NOSTRA is organised in three main steps along the years:

- **2012** is the year dedicated to "see and learn".
- **2013** is the year dedicated to "analyse and study".
- **2014** is the year dedicated to "think and act".

These steps will be carried out through:

- Study visits and study sessions in order to identify the best practices implemented by the partners;
- Workshops, seminars, conferences and territorial meetings to analyse and share with local stakeholders the data acquired to adapt best practices to local needs;
- Collection of good practices and policy recommendations guide for regional, national and European policy makers;
- Design of implementation plans for international and local partners;
- Publications, a website, leaflets, newsletters, press releases to disseminate the knowledge acquired and reach all stakeholders at local, national and international level.

## 3. A INTERREG IVC program

NOSTRA is a project financed under the INTERREG IVC program, which is the European Union program for interregional cooperation across Europe. It is implemented under the European Community's territorial co-operation objective and financed through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), for the period 2007 – 2013. The overall objective of the INTERREG IVC Programme is to improve the effectiveness of regional policies and their instruments.

The areas of support are "innovation and the knowledge economy" and "environment and risk prevention": the programme aims to contribute to the economic modernisation and competitiveness of Europe through an improvement of local and regional policies.

More information on: <http://www.interreg4c.eu/>



## 4. Straits and partners

The project is composed of local authorities and bi-national bodies which border 8 straits in Europe as well as a research institute on the Danube delta which has great experience in cross-border governance of sensitive natural areas. The NOSTRA project gathers 16 partners from the Dover Strait, the Strait of Fehmarn Belt, the Gulf of Finland, the Strait of Kvarken, the Strait of Bonifacio, the Strait of Otranto, the Strait of Messina, the Strait of Sicily and the Danube Delta.

### ► Strait of Dover:

#### Pas-de-Calais County Council & Kent County Council

The Strait of Dover (in French: Pas de Calais) is the narrowest part of the English Channel (34 km). The strait is the busiest international seaway in the world, used by over 600 commercial vessels daily; the majority of maritime traffic between the Atlantic Ocean and the North and Baltic Seas passes through it.

### ► Strait of Messina:

#### Province of Messina (Provincia di Messina) & Province of Reggio Calabria (Provincia di Reggio Calabria)

The Strait of Messina (Stretto di Messina) lies between Messina and Reggio Calabria: it connects the Tyrrhenian Sea with the Ionian Sea, at the centre of Mediterranean Sea. Its narrowest point measures 3.1 km in width and maximum depth is 250 m (830 ft). The hydrogeological conditions of the Strait of Messina are unusual and its flora and fauna are equally rare.

### ► Kvarken Strait :

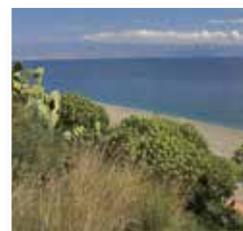
#### Kvarken Council (Kvarkenrådet rf.)

The Kvarken Archipelago (Finnish: Merenkurkk, Swedish: Norra Kvarken), is situated in the Gulf of Bothnia, a northern extension of the Baltic Sea. The archipelago is formed by 5,600 islands, moraines, shoals, reefs, called 'De Geer moraines', formed by uplift of the land following the melting of the continental ice sheet, 10,000 to 24,000 years ago. This is one of the rarest examples of ongoing "isostatic rebound" and the area is listed by UNESCO as a binational World Heritage Site. The strait is one of the busiest in Europe for the traffic of merchant ships.

### ► Gulf of Finland:

#### Harju County Government (Harju Maavalitsus) & Uusimaa Regional Council (Uudenmaan liitto)

The Gulf of Finland (Finnish: Suomenlahti; Estonian: Soome laht; Russian: Финский залив; Swedish: Finska viken) is the arm of the Baltic Sea between Finland and Estonia and Russia. It touches Helsinki, Tallinn and Saint Petersburg. Its length is 400 km and the width ranges from 130 km at the entrance to the 12 km of the Neva Bay. The gulf is usually frozen from late November to late April. It contains numerous banks, skerries and islands and the deltas of numerous rivers (the bigger being the Neva).





▣▣▣ **Fehmarn Belt:**

**Region Zealand (Region Sjælland) & County of Ostholstein (Kreis Ostholstein)**

Fehmarn Belt (Danish: Femern Bælt) is a strait connecting the Bay of Kiel and the Bay of Mecklenburg in the western part of the Baltic Sea between the German island of Fehmarn and the Danish island of Lolland. The strait features an 18-kilometre (10 nmi) wide area with depths of 20–30 metres. A bridge connects the two shores of the strait, and the Danish and German authorities have planned to build a tunnel for the commercial and private traffic through the channel. Work on this road/rail tunnel will start in 2015 and be completed in 2021.

▣▣▣ **Bonifacio Strait:**

**Corsican Environment Office (O.E.C.) (Office de l'Environnement de la Corse), Province of Sassari & National Park of Maddalena Arcipelago (Parco Nazionale dell'Arcipelago di La Maddalena)**

The Strait of Bonifacio (French: Bouches de Bonifacio, Italian: Bocche di Bonifacio) lies between Corsica and Sardinia. It is 11 km wide and its maximum depth is 100 metres. The strait is known to be dangerous to shipping due to winds, currents, shoals, reefs. The strait comprises one national park and one natural reserve. After a tanker disaster in 1993, policies have been put in place to limit the passage of shipping in the strait prohibiting vessels with dangerous goods.

▣▣▣ **Strait of Sicily:**

**Regional Province of Trapani (Provincia Regionale di Trapani)**

The Strait of Sicily lies between Sicily and Tunisia. It is about 145 km wide and its maximum depth is 316 m. The strait has an unusual oceanography, with two currents running at different depths and in opposite directions. The island of Pantelleria lies in the middle of the strait. The strait is one of the main marine highways in the Mediterranean and one of the most concentrated fishing areas also..

▣▣▣ **Danube Delta:**

**Danube Delta National Institute for Research and Development (Institutul National de Cercetare Dezvoltare Delta Dunarii)**

The Danube Delta (Romanian: Delta Dunării) is the second largest river delta in Europe, and is the most protected one on the continent. The greater part of the Danube Delta is a low alluvial plain, mostly covered by wetlands and water. It consists of an intricate pattern of marshes, channels, streams and lakes. It hosts 23 natural ecosystems, and it is populated by a largest variety of aquatic and terrestrial flora and fauna.

## 5. Back to 2012 – “See and Learn”

### 2012 was the year dedicated to «see and learn».

The launch conference for the project took place in Wimille (Pas-de-Calais) on April 3rd 2012. The event was an opportunity to present the objectives and the 16 partners to local institutions, civil society, enterprises and mass media. Local stakeholders also debated on the topic of “cross-border governance straits: a solution to preserve biodiversity and natural heritage”. At the end of the meeting, the political representatives of the partners signed the partnership agreement for the implementation of the project.

Two straits were the focus of study tours in 2012. One strait already has a bi-national governance tool in use (Kvarken). The second was working on the setting up of a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation or “EGTC” (Strait of Bonifacio). Both study visits enabled partners to ask questions about these tools and consider their efficiency for delivering NOSTRA objectives.. During these events, partners met all the local actors involved in the different issues straits face (environment, transport...) and studied their involvement in the cross-border governance.

#### ► June 2012 - Study visit n°1: Kvarken

The first study visit of NOSTRA was held in June in Kvarken, as this strait has the oldest bi-national organisation, which controls regulation of maritime traffic, development agency and environmental protection policies. Kvarken Council was founded in 1972.

During the study visit, various points were presented to partners concerning the structure and functioning of the bi-national managing authority. The Kvarken Council is involved in regulating systems of marine traffic and works with the ports and their connections with the hinterland. The project partners also learnt about the Kvarken Archipelago World Heritage Site. This UNESCO designation is a source of national and international pride and recognises a unique geology, characterised by an extreme example isostatic uplift, with the archipelago rising a little every year. The High Coast (Sweden) and the Kvarken Archipelago (Finland) together form one of very few trans-national world heritages in the world.

#### ► October 2012 - Study visit n°2: Strait of Bonifacio

Partners visited both sides of the Strait of Bonifacio, including France (Corsica) and Italy (Sardinia) for this second study visit. The main objective was to analyze the management of maritime cross-border territories, focusing on the protection of biodiversity. The Park of La Maddalena, in the Strait of Bonifacio is a marine area rich in biodiversity, where maritime traffic and the demands of a growing tourism industry have been carefully managed. 20 000 people through the area in the summer; 33,000 divers per year use the area and 4000 ships per year pass through.

Because of its precious biodiversity, two protected areas were established within the strait of Bonifacio: the natural reserve of the strait of Bonifacio and the National Park of the Archipelago of La Maddalena. In order to develop a coherent management of the two protected areas, the creation of an EGTC (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation) was decided by both territories in 2012. Beyond establishing joint environmental policies, the EGTC will rely on European programs to develop new projects and to enhance the international status of the strait. This study visit was an opportunity for partners to discover these ambitious approaches to managing a strait.



## 6. 2013 – “Analyse and study”

This is the year dedicated to analyse and study; 4 workshops have been organised, with the aim to identify and analyse good practices for the sustainable development of straits.

### The first NOSTRA workshop focused on “Seascape and Maritime Spatial Planning” and took place near Dover (UK) in January. It was coordinated and chaired by Kent County Council.

Presentations from the Marine Management Organisation, Natural England and English Heritage set the scene on UK Marine Planning, before Land Use Consultants went on to present the pilot Seascapes Character Assessment (SCA) for Dover Strait, which was completed for the workshop. SCA is a technique which has been developed from Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) in the UK and is about to be incorporated into the first ever Marine Plans, which are being drawn up in the UK under the Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009. Utilising a wide variety of data, seascapes can help to identify the natural, cultural and aesthetic characteristics of an area to assist with better informed decision making and policy development.

Follow up to the workshop has included analysis of how this approach could be applied for other straits. In the EU context, the adoption of a seascapes approach could also help to deliver the aims of the European Landscape Convention and Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

### The second workshop focused on “Tourism and Cultural Heritage” and took place in Otranto in April. It was coordinated and chaired by the province of Lecce. All partners shared their practices and experiences in the field of Tourism and Cultural Heritage, with a focus on sustainable tourism. As follow up to the workshop, partners will be analysing the practices presented and will be considering transfers from one strait to another.

At the invitation of County of Ostholstein and the Danish region of Zealand, **a third workshop was organised in the Fehmarn Belt in order to discuss the safety of shipping in the straits and green traffic policies.** The coasts on both sides of the Fehmarn Belt - like all sea routes - are at risk of maritime accidents. The participants noted that there are many good examples of how to avoid accidents, damage control and the organization of cooperation across national borders.

The Central Command Unit in Cuxhaven was presented as a local example of ensuring maritime safety. It was described as an “a positive example for others” by the English colleagues from Dover. From their side the Anglo-French unit MIRG (Maritime Incident Response Group) reported that it is equipped for a coordinated response to accidents on ships in the Channel area, through deployment of shared operational resources, such as helicopter rescue. Further exchange between the partners on extending MIRG was discussed.

The already dense and increasing traffic through the Fehmarn Belt makes it necessary to take action on the safety of shipping. Here, the experience from other regions in Europe can be very helpful.

Naturally, the plans for the fixed link across the Fehmern Belt were of great interest, this will be a road/rail tunnel under the strait and the biggest infrastructure project in Northern Europe. In planning the tunnel, numerous working groups are focusing on future safety measures. This includes the introduction of a German-Danish monitoring unit.

The phrase “more transportation - less traffic” moved on the discussion to the “green traffic” issue, the Danes reported from an Interreg project concerning the traffic corridor - Oresund-Femern-Hamburg. The aim of the project is to reduce the negative environmental consequences of the growing freight traffic. This is being done in collaboration with public authorities, companies and transport businesses.





## 7. Provisional timetable 2013 - 14

October 2013 : the final workshop will focus on sustainable economic development and take place in the Gulf of Finland. In 2014 NOSTRA will be consolidating the work so far and considering policy recommendations under the title of "Think and Act":

▣▣▣ **February 2014:**

seminar on the link between coast and hinterland – Strait of Messina

▣▣▣ **June 2014:**

seminar on capitalisation of INTERREG cross-strait project – Corsica

▣▣▣ **September 2014:**

cross-cutting seminar – Romania

▣▣▣ **October 2014:**

final conference – Brussels

More information on <http://www.nostraproject.eu>