

PERSPECTIVE PAPER FOR THE FUTURE OF THE COOPERATION

Possible follow-up after NOSTRA project at strait level and partnership level



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Introduction

In 2010, 16 local authorities bordering European straits gathered within the European Straits Initiative around one major ambition: exchange ideas in order to improve their public policies. In 2012, NOSTRA project was accepted by the INTERREG IVC programme, with the main objective of protecting biodiversity and the natural environment. During three years, this project enabled 16 partners from 9 European countries to meet and exchange good practices and policy experience for a cross-border sustainable governance of European straits. The results of NOSTRA project are rich and numerous.

First, a baseline study was launched in 2012 to undertake an assessment of the 8 straits involved in NOSTRA. A specific attention was paid to biodiversity and socio-economic issues. The reports produced by a consultant team also looked at what types of governance exist in straits, especially in a cross-border context. The objective of this baseline study was to assess the main issues faced by European straits and the answers that have been given to these issues by local stakeholders and European regulations. To go further, recommendations have been made by the consultant team for future actions and potential areas of cooperation, at the scale of each strait and at the scale of the partnership.

A guide of good practices has also been produced in 2014. It gathers 50 good practices identified within NOSTRA project around 7 themes in direct link with the protection of biodiversity:

- Joint governance – 6 good practices
- Seascape and marine spatial planning – 2 good practices
- Sustainable tourism – 7 good practices
- Sustainable transport – 9 good practices
- Maritime safety – 7 good practices
- Responsible economic development – 13 good practices
- Direct actions in favour of natural environment – 6 good practices

Finally, 15 implementation plans in total have been produced by the partners of NOSTRA in 2014. Each of them aims at transferring a few good practices from one strait to another in order to improve the local and regional public policies and to work towards a sustainable management of straits' territories. Most of the plans are at least partly at the cross-strait scale: it shows the real commitment of local authorities from both sides of each strait to work together in the future.

At the end, the situation is clear: the local authorities involved in NOSTRA want to continue to work together to further explore some topics discussed during the project..

The objective of this perspective paper for the future of the cooperation is to present the possible follow-up of NOSTRA project at partnership level and at strait level.

Perspectives at partnership level

One of the peculiarities of NOSTRA project is to be part of a larger network, the European Straits Initiative (ESI). This network is crucial for NOSTRA because it enables a wider dissemination of its results, especially towards the European bodies and institutions, and ensures sustainability in the cooperation. Thanks to the good results of NOSTRA project, 4 new partners joined the European Straits Initiative in October 2014.

Following the final conference of NOSTRA project on 22nd October 2014, the European Straits Initiative's Memorandum of Understanding has been renewed for four years by the political representatives of each local authority involved in the network: it materializes the wish of the partners to continue working together. The European Straits Initiative reaffirmed its will to lobby for the recognition of the straits' specificities towards the European bodies, with the evidence-based results of NOSTRA project as a tool to convince the policy makers. Among other things, the political representatives of NOSTRA partners agreed on an Action Plan which includes the possibility to prepare the application for a new INTERREG EUROPE project



“The networking of the local authorities bordering European straits has been reaffirmed by all the partners through this signature; it should continue to encourage exchange of experience while becoming a mean to improve the modes of governance in these areas. The European Straits Initiative will continue the actions lead for 4 years now”

Michel Dagbert, President of Pas-de-Calais County Council (France), co-lead partner of the ESI and lead partner of NOSTRA project

In order to materialize the political decision to continue the cooperation, NOSTRA partners gathered at technical level in Trapani in December 2014 to work on this perspective paper. At the centre of the discussion was the possibility to prepare the application for an INTERREG EUROPE project, as foreseen in the ESI 2014-2017 Action Plan.

Towards a new project for exchange of experiences

After 3 years of intense cooperation through NOSTRA project, the partners have learnt to work together and are well aware of the European straits' main issues. At cross-strait level, NOSTRA project also enabled local stakeholders to be involved and to get to know each other through regional and cross-border territorial meetings. The idea of working towards a new project is not to extend the work undertaken within NOSTRA, which has proven good results already. The purpose is on the contrary to start from the results of NOSTRA to explore some topics in a deeper way in order to achieve more specific results.

Further than the topic of a new project itself, it appears quite clear to the partners that several aspects of the methodology of NOSTRA project should be extended, such as:

- The work at cross-strait level, in order to improve the governance of these areas towards integrated maritime regions. It is important to keep in mind our specificity as maritime cross-border areas and to demonstrate the need to work for a better integration of both shores of the straits.
- The involvement of local stakeholders, which has started through NOSTRA project's territorial meetings and will be a compulsory element of INTERREG EUROPE projects. It seems necessary to continue to inform the local stakeholders and to collect information from their field-based experience to feed the exchange of experiences at partnership level and improve our public policies. This will to sustain the territorial meetings has been clearly expressed within the ESI Action Plan.

Based on the recommendations of NOSTRA baseline study and on the good practices database, the partners decided to focus their thinking for a new project around two thematically oriented scenarios:

- Further explore the topic of sustainable transport, which was an important sub-theme of NOSTRA project.
- Further explore the issue of straits' attractiveness as integrated maritime cross-border areas.

These two scenarios will be the basis of the work of at the scale of the partnership in the coming weeks, in order to determine what should be the topic of a new project.

Scenario 1

The first scenario arises from the finding of NOSTRA project of the importance of transport in straits areas. Being by definition narrow parts of sea between two areas of land, straits are key passageways and most of them know a very important traffic. The specificity of this traffic is to be twofold.

First, all the straits of the partnership have an important cross-strait traffic which corresponds to the need of having a link between the two parts of land, whether it is for its inhabitants' mobility, for tourism or for freight. Looking at the map of the European TEN-T strategy, it appears quite clear that straits are strategic routes for the overall European infrastructure policy, but also breakpoints within the current networks (in particular, some straits of the partnership are key points of this strategy: Dover Strait, the Fehmarn Belt, the Gulf of Finland and the Strait of Messina). This particular position of straits in the European network turns them into areas where traffic is particularly concentrated, with consequences in terms of air pollution and congestion, but also in terms of economic development. An important issue for several straits of the partnership is the possibility to have a fixed link between the two shores, especially to reduce the environmental impact of marine traffic.

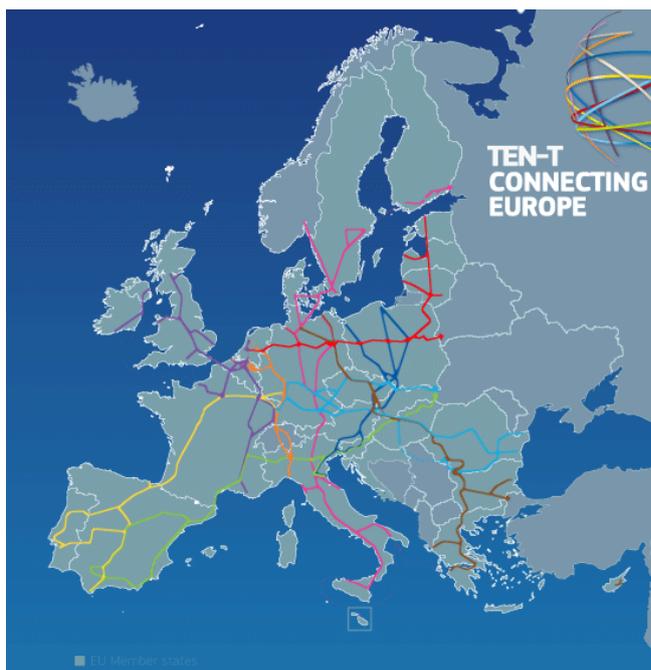


Figure 1 TEN-T map by the European Commission

Second, straits are important maritime passageways in between the lands, especially in the global network of ports, as shown in Figure 2. By their position as shortcuts in the maritime routes and their geographical characteristics, straits are regions where maritime transport is particularly concentrated and where innovative experimentation has always existed (for e.g. Dover Strait experienced the first Traffic Separation Scheme approved by the IMO from 1967). This concentration

of traffic has many consequences on the bordering regions, such as air pollution, high risk of accidents etc. Therefore, maritime transport is a key issue for all the straits of the partnership.



Figure 2 Map of the European shipping routes by CLS (ESA 2002-2009)

Based on this observation, the partners of NOSTRA drafted a first scenario for a possible INTERREG EUROPE project on sustainable transport and mobility in straits. Considering the peculiarity of straits as (for most of them) cross-border areas, the global idea is to come out with cross-border sustainable transport strategies in these areas. Several working tracks have been proposed, such as the study of cross-border governance of transport issue for joint mitigation measures (governance model for marine traffic management, cross-border working groups on air pollution...). Another important aspect to study in a project tackling the issue of sustainable transport could be the impacts and benefits of transport infrastructures such as tunnels and bridges for tourism, logistics corridors etc., especially in terms of protection of the environment and air pollution. Finally, a project on sustainable transport could tackle the issue of maritime traffic in straits, especially in terms of air pollution and maritime safety, in order to study solutions for adaptation to regulations (such as the Sulphur Directive) and find out innovative tools to reduce these impacts of maritime traffic in the bordering regions.

Many partners have an important experience in one aspect of sustainable transport in straits. For example, the Kvarken Council is responsible of the management of a TEN-T infrastructure considered as a Best Practice by DG Move, which focuses on cross-border multimodal transport systems, low-carbon transport and transport innovation. Dover Strait and the Fehmarn Belt both have an experience in fixed links which matches with the interest of partners from the Gulf of Finland (TALSINKFIX project) or from the Strait of Messina. The Strait of Bonifacio is currently experimenting new tools for maritime safety following NOSTRA project and further exchanges could be fruitful on this subject. In short, it appears clear after NOSTRA project that the partners have lots of experiences

to exchange in the field of sustainable transport in order to go much further than within NOSTRA and to come out with more concrete results.

Considering the Cooperation Programme of the INTERREG EUROPE programme (in process of being validated), such a project could be relevant to answer the thematic objective “Switch towards low-carbon economy in all sectors”. Keeping in mind the new objective of the programme to make links with Structural funds and ETC programmes, the partners already started to identify the possible links between the topic of sustainable transport and the thematic objective and investment priorities of their Structural funds and of the ETC programmes they are eligible for.

Scenario 2

The second scenario comes from the fact that despite most of the straits of the partnership are cross-border regions and that all of them are maritime borders between two lands, the two shores of each strait share a common natural and cultural heritage, which richness has been assessed during NOSTRA project. The baseline study enabled the identification of the main features of each strait of the partnership, especially in terms of natural heritage and eco-systems. More specific results of the project also contribute to this knowledge, such as the Seascape Character Assessment (completed on the French shore of Dover Strait thanks to NOSTRA and in process of being transferred in the Gulf of Finland as part of the implementation plan of Uusimaa Region).

However, due to their maritime border, straits often suffer from a lack of recognition as integrated areas to live in or to visit, despite good transport connections and shared features such as common landscapes and eco-systems, similar traditions or historical links. Therefore, there is a need to deeper explore the issue of joint protection and valorisation of straits' natural and cultural heritage: this could be the main objective of a new project. Such a project could for example include studies for identification and valorisation of the eco-system based traditions such as fisheries or studies for the feasibility of an application for an international designation at the scale of a strait.

Another aspect of this scenario is the idea of developing cross-border attractiveness strategies for the joint promotion of straits. This would require the involvement of all the local stakeholders at cross-border level through extended territorial meetings. Finally, the idea is to raise awareness around straits as integrated areas for living, investing or visiting, for example through the development of cross-border tourism offers based on the joint natural and cultural heritage.

Several partners are experienced in the field of joint protection and valorisation of the natural and cultural heritage and this could give birth to interesting exchanges. The example of the Kvarken is interesting as both shores of this strait have been successively recognised as UNESCO World Heritage sites and now benefit from a joint promotion thanks to the specific cross-border governance of this area. Other partners have experimented in this field, such as the National Park of La Maddalena Archipelago and the Corsican Environment Office, which jointly manage and promote the single International Marine Park of the Strait of Bonifacio thanks to a unique structure of cross-border governance: the EGTC-PMIBB (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation of the International Marine Park of the Strait of Bonifacio). In Dover Strait, Pas-de-Calais Tourisme and Visit Kent already work for several years together to promote the strait as a single destination. A new project in this field could be very useful to deepen and materialize the first exchanges on this topic within NOSTRA into concrete results.

Considering the Cooperation Programme of the INTERREG EUROPE programme (in process of being validated), such a project could be relevant to answer the investment priority "Protection and development of natural and cultural heritage". Keeping in mind the new objective of the programme to make links with Structural funds and ETC programmes, the partners already started to identify the possible links between the topic of valorisation and protection of the natural and cultural heritage and the thematic objective and investment priorities of their Structural funds and of the ETC programmes they are eligible for.

The renewal of the European Straits Initiative

Further than a new project, the cooperation between the partners of NOSTRA project will continue within the European Straits Initiative, which Memorandum of Understanding has been renewed for four years in October 2014. Thanks to the evidence provided by NOSTRA project, four new members recently joined the network. As already mentioned, the two objectives of the network are to sustain the cooperation around straits through an INTERREG EUROPE project and through lobbying actions. But the idea of the network is also to develop parallel cooperation between some of its members, especially through projects financed by other European programmes/tools on particular subjects. Several ideas have already emerged such as cooperation on avifauna between partners from the Strait of Bonifacio, the Fehmarn Belt and Dover Strait, cooperation on the impacts of human migrations in territories bordering some straits or cooperation with a cultural and artistic prism. Such cooperation could involve other stakeholders from the partners' regions, in order to mobilise as much as stakeholders as possible on the question of straits, including the relevant stakeholders or policy makers for particular questions.

Perspectives at strait level

NOSTRA project is ending but each partner wrote an implementation plan and will work towards its materialisation in the coming months and years. The objective of this perspective paper is to provide a synthesis in English of all the implementation plans at strait level to give an overview of the possible follow-up of the work undertaken within NOSTRA project at regional level.

The NOSTRA implementation plans have been written in the perspective of improving the partners' policies and actions related to their strait. Therefore, some of them include good practices which have not been directly mentioned within the Guide of good practices of the project but which have been identified by some partners during bilateral exchanges. The objective is to maximise the results of NOSTRA project in the coming years; it explains why the formats of the plans are not exactly the same, depending of the particular situation of each strait and each partner. Some implementation plans are part of a larger strategy, especially if written at cross-border level. Some of them are less ambitious in their overall objectives but nonetheless tackle very specific and important issues.

The work at cross-border level has been encouraged during all the project life-time and the writing of the implementation plans is not an exception to this rule. Most of the partners took the opportunity of the cross-border territorial meetings to give to their plan a cross-border and multi-stakeholders dimension. Even if this overall approach seems to make the achievement of the implementation more difficult, the partners are convinced that it will on the contrary be key for the success of their implementation plan given the peculiarities of straits as cross-border territories involving very cross-cutting issues.

Strait of Bonifacio

In the Strait of Bonifacio, choice was made to have three identical implementation plans for the Corsican Environment Office, the National Park of La Maddalena Archipelago and the Province of Sassari. It demonstrates the real will of these partners to continue to work together at strait level in the coming months and years.

MIRG-EU



MIRG-EU is a European project with the objective to implement a cross-border intervention structure gathering together different kinds of maritime rescue services acting through the Channel (France, England, Belgium and Netherlands). These teams have common knowledge, skills and procedures to effectively respond to accident on board passenger ships and cargo vessels.

Under international regulation, the Strait of Bonifacio is particularly concerned by maritime traffic which is controlled by a Vessel Traffic System called Bonifacio Traffic. Moreover, this strait has outstanding environmental characteristics illustrated by a significant number of protected areas (about 30 coastal NATURA 2000 sites, Nature Reserve of the Strait of Bonifacio, National Park of La Maddalena Archipelago, PELAGOS sanctuary, European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation – International Marine Park of the Strait of Bonifacio). This is why, in 2011, the International Maritime Organization adopted a resolution classifying the Strait of Bonifacio as a Particularly Sensitive Sea

Area. In this framework, in July 2014, France and Italy have implemented a recommended pilotage for ships transiting the Strait.

Furthermore, in case of maritime accident, both states have their own national intervention system but can also share their means in the context of RAMOGEPOL plan. Despite these devices, the response measures against marine accident are relatively remote from the strait, due to the distance from the home ports of naval vessels (Golfo Aranci, Ajaccio, Porto-Torres). Consequently, the speed of intervention on a huge maritime accident still remains limited.

Therefore, to organize a common training for both marine protected areas employees, in compliance with intervention plans already implemented, should enable to create a first maritime intervention team. Moreover, both structures could make their nautical means available and acquire first aid equipment (human rescue and antipollution equipment). This would enable a fast intervention until the implementation of national and/or international means and devices.

The Baltic Flyway



The Baltic Flyway is an observation network for migratory birds located in the Fehmarn Belt. Thanks to this network, public can discover an important migratory bird area.

The Strait of Bonifacio is also a significant site for avifauna, illustrated by the presence of numerous protected areas in which there are eight special protection areas (Bird Directive 79/409/EEC). Moreover, some parts of this strait are classified as Important Bird Areas (birdlife

international) in which several species live and transit. The Strait of Bonifacio belongs to the main migratory routes of western Mediterranean.

Thus, species such as the Cory's shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*, the Yelkouan shearwater (*Puffinus yelkouan*), the European shag (*Phalacrocorax aristorelis desmarestii*) or the Audouin's Gull (*Ichthyaetus audouinii*) are studied for many years in both marine protected areas and benefit from regular monitoring. The strait also benefits from the cross-border structure EGTC-PMIBB (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation - International Marine Park of the Strait of Bonifacio): one of the priority actions of the EGTC-PMIBB targets bird populations.

The implementation of an avifauna network of observation in the Strait of Bonifacio, especially concerning marine species, can already be considered with the creation of observation sites along the coast or in the islands. In addition, it could be interesting to set up observation sites for less studied environment, like the lagoon ecosystems. This network would be the opportunity to improve knowledge on less studied species, like the common tern (*Sterna hirundo*) or the little egret (*Egretta garzetta*). Moreover, some actions as the reintroduction of the Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) could be promoted.

For this network, we could use already existing infrastructure on both sides of the strait (e.g. sites of Pertusato on the cliffs of Bonifacio and the sites of Punta Sardegna or the already existing structures of Lavezzu and Caprera islands) or creating observation stations in other sites such as Ventilegne and Stagnali lagoons. The significant presence of marine birds' populations could also enable to organize sea excursion on areas used by these species.

Beyond that educative purpose, this network would be an opportunity to promote participative science. Operations of communication (signs, brochures and vulgarization books) could also support the project. This activity would be a way to develop a kind of eco-tourism that might encourage new economic activities on these territories. The coordination of this cross-border network could be ensured by the EGTC-PMIBB that could also invest in the research for European funds in order to concretize the project.

Dover Strait

The implementation plans of Pas-de-Calais County Council and Kent County Council are identical and have been produced in full cooperation. They represent the shared vision of the two authorities for the maritime and coastal area of Dover Strait:

In 2034 Dover Strait will have greater recognition by people across Europe, which will help to achieve an improved management of the area, through committed joint actions between French and UK authorities.

It will be recognised as a cohesive maritime and coastal area, with a rich natural environment combined with a long and fascinating cultural history as an area of exchange and conflict.

The features representing this strong identity will be part of innovative economic activities, including a recognised tourism offer, which will be fully realised through proximity to the Channel Tunnel and ports.

This economic activity will provide sustainable jobs on both sides of the strait, enabling communities to fully benefit from close proximity to outstanding landscape features such as the Two Caps and the White Cliffs.

Through consistent actions to conserve and enhance the natural environment, the area will continue to be valued as a place to live, work and relax.

The natural and cultural character of the area will be embedded into planning policy and threats such as air and marine pollution will be properly understood and mitigated through joint actions.

This unique and joint implementation plan will be used as a strategic guideline on how this vision may be achieved, through committed joint actions.



The opportunity to act in a collaborative way

Action 1 “Adoption of common governance tools” aims at creating a regular event at the scale of the strait, on the examples of the Gulf of Finland Year or Fehmarn Belt Days, to enhance the sense of belonging to Dover Strait and answer the current lack of common identity, despite the collaboration of Pas-de-Calais and Kent County Councils since 2005. It could be implemented by the two authorities thanks to a cross-border organising board, with INTERREG IVA funds. In a long term perspective, this could lead to a more institutionalised governance of the strait inspired from the Kvarken Council and the EGTC-PMIBB.

Action 2 “Seascape Character Assessment” has been implemented on the French shore of Dover Strait thanks to funding from Kent County Council and NOSTRA project. This means that there is now a complete assessment of the whole Dover strait area, with an action plan. The work will be used within Marine Plans on the Kent side of the strength, the opportunity is to use it as a decision making tool for the entire strait.



A rich natural and cultural heritage

Action 3 “Achieving international recognition of Dover Strait” was inspired from the UNESCO World Heritage status of the Kvarken Strait. It aims at continuing the joint efforts of the two authorities to obtain an international designation for their strait (UNESCO, Geopark or Ramsar), in order to change the perception of the region, improve environmental management and

develop the tourism offer. The action will be work with partners to explore the opportunities and threats of such a designation, along with the evidence base and process for designation.

Action 4 “Improving the identity of Dover Strait” aims at encouraging economic development of the cross-border territory thanks to the development of a sustainable tourism activity based on the values of the territory. The idea is that Dover Strait should become a chosen destination for tourists, not a crossing-point. Several good practices could inspire a new INTERREG IVA project involving Pas-de-Calais Tourisme and Visit Kent: Development of tourism economy in the region of Salento, UNESCO World Heritage by storytelling and BALTIC FLYWAY project.

Climate change and the development of a sustainable transport corridor

Action 5 “Establishment of a multiagency, cross-border working group on transport and air pollution” is inspired of the Fehmarn Belt Days and Kvarken Council. It aims at anticipating the opportunities and threats of the Sulphur Directive and other transport trends (all pointing to a massive increase in traffic on the strait and the adjacent territories) while answering the baseline study recommendation of working on the important issue of air pollution. Exploration of solutions around getting a better balance of rail/road freight will be part of this action.

Action 6 “Encouraging local public policies to support actions and projects aiming at mitigating and adapting to climate change” is inspired from “Safe and green boats” and “Adaptation to climate change in the coastal area” good practices. The idea is that both authorities should work with associated stakeholders such as universities and local structures to:

- Implement research and experimental projects with help of public funding
- Promote actions of management of the coastal erosion (sand dunes management, etc.) and limit the marine submersions risks (use of the wateringue system, etc.)
- Raise awareness

Fehmarn Belt

In the Fehmarn Belt, the County of Ostholstein and Region Zealand decided to write identical implementation plans to show their commitment to work together in the coming years.



The EGTC of the International Marine Park of the Strait of Bonifacio and its cross-border action plan for biodiversity

The Fehmarnbelt Region's baseline study concluded that there is limited exchange of experience and know-how between nature conservation and nature tourism stakeholders across the border between Denmark and Germany.

The Danish and German partners of NOSTRA project believe that an improved cooperation on nature quality, recreation and sustainable tourism could be of benefit for the respective stakeholders. They have been inspired by the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation of the International Marine Park of the Strait of Bonifacio and the idea of an action plan on nature quality and sustainable tourism and would like to initiate a process of building up a stakeholder network.

Their joint implementation plan has 3 objectives:

- Mapping of relevant stakeholders, through a cross-border network study
- Bringing together interested stakeholders and working out an application for an Interreg 5 A project for the Danish-German programme
- Information to relevant stakeholders about the possibilities of an EGTC and answering the question, if and how an EGTC might fit the Fehmarn Belt region.

The cross-border network study was carried out during the summer 2014. The results of the analysis showed interest among the stakeholders of developing a network aiming at an increased/improved nature based sustainable tourism in the region with focus on:

- Innovation of sustainable tourism products and branding of sustainable tourism
- Developing a common nature heritage knowledge base
- Describing a common understanding (Charta or Memorandum of Understanding) on the “economy of nature” (value of ecosystem services)
- Sustainable management of nature and tourism (scope: onshore and offshore)
- Nature guides and tourism
- Involvement of volunteers

On the basis of the network analysis and the 3 cross-border territorial meetings held in 2014, the core stakeholders have agreed on developing an application to the German-Danish IINTERREG VA programme with the following work packages:

- Development of common nature and cultural heritage knowledge base
- Cross-border cooperation between nature centres/destinations and nature guides
- Development of innovative sustainable nature tourism products
- Involvement of volunteers (support and teaching)

The partners of the working group for an INTERREG IVA application are:

- The municipalities of Lolland and Guldborgsund (along the Danish coast)
- NIT (German Institute for tourism and tourism research)
- Association of nature protection at Dummersdorfer (along the German coast)
- Biomedica (Danish consultants specialized in nature and biodiversity issues)

The overall aim is the development of a long lasting self-maintaining network structure and preparing spin off projects. Once having established this cross-border network structure, the question of establishing an EGTC will be more relevant as a next step.

Strait of Otranto

In the Strait of Otranto, the Province of Lecce and Vlorë Regional Council decided to write their own implementation plan, but both of them have a cross-border dimension.



The implementation plan of the Province of Lecce

The project proposal aims at the creation of a Network of cross-border agencies for local development in all the areas of the program at the sub-regional level, with the mission of providing services to businesses and to develop synergies between the territorial areas of the program. The network will be coordinated by a permanent board of inter-territorial coordination.

The specific objectives of the Network are:

- Competitiveness, the business environment and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, trade and investment through the promotion and support of entrepreneurship, and the development of local, cross-border and international markets;
- Encourage tourism and cultural and natural heritage, connect the tourist demand with the regional production chains;
- Promote the local and regional governance in terms of organization and provision of business services;
- Strengthen research, technological development, innovation and technology, through the sharing of human resources and enhancing structures for research and technological development available to businesses.

The Province of Lecce's idea and proposal could be to submit this project to the IPA CBC Programme II Italy - Albania – Montenegro, which is the new CBC Programme 2014-2020 funded under the Instrument EU Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II). It aims to promote the integrated and sustainable development of two Italian regions (Puglia and Molise), and two in Pre-accession countries (Albania and Montenegro) through the financing of joint initiatives in areas of primary interest for cooperation.



The implementation plan of Vlorë Regional Council

The good practices selected to adopt in the region of Vlora are the experience of Salento Region, part of the Otranto Strait (“Tourist economic development in the Salento area”) with particular attention to the environmental sustainable activities and the fine example of the Danube Delta in the management of the Natural Protected Areas.

The reasons can be found in the strategy of the central government for the development of the natural destination of the south coast of Albania and the strong push towards the growth of the economy based on tourism. This is a long-term strategy that requires a framework of sustainability for the territory with special regard to natural resources. This new approach produces important challenges, especially at the environmental level, such as biodiversity conservation or protection of the natural heritage, that need to be considered at a larger scale than the national boundaries.

Region Vlorë found a successful example for the application of this strategy, in our strait partner, the Province of Lecce. This region managed to double the number of the tourists in a decade, following a well prepared strategy in different parallel directions like: reevaluation and improvement of the local products; promotion and strengthening of the small typical communities; creating attracting activities using a mix of tradition, historical monuments and natural environments in a framework of conservation or sustainable development of the environment.

Through NOSTRA project, Region Vlorë had the opportunity not only to see and understand these practices but also to connect with key experienced partners.

With the support of its cross-border partner, the Province of Lecce, Region Vlorë plans to proceed to the implementation of this practice through:

- identifying target groups (where the region can compete with its neighbours – Montenegro, Croatia and the western coast of Greece) based on the resources and characteristics of its territory
- defining a local and integrated tourist supply, for each target group, combining culture, environment and typical gastronomy linked to local productions;
- organizing agricultural food chains in order to achieve suitable quantitative and qualitative levels of production, including through quality certifications;
- defining a system of actions designed to organize and strengthen the tourism and spread it organically outside under a common direction
- creating a brand to identify the unique combination of tradition, culture, typical food and uncontaminated nature
- promotion in different platforms and in national or international operators groups

The objectives of Region Vlorë are to:

- create or strengthen chains of small activities using local productions with focus on the production of touristic supply
- enlarge the tourist stay period outside the summer “sea and sun “
- strengthen local micro-economy to encourage the local population in the negative immigration from big cities to small towns
- encouraging local people in the independent research of new trends for tourism and economic development

For the part of experience of the Danube area that Region Vlorë plans to apply to the protected area of Karaburun – Sazani, there is already a draft Management Plan where are identified the areas and the activities suitable with the conservation of the natural environment. The actions following the approval of the draft will be the identification of the operators who can have access to each zone; the set of rules that each operator will need to follow; the certifications and periodic controls and the duties of each key actor; the promotion of the values and natural characteristics of the area.

By following this strategy, it is hoped that the number of the tourists visiting Vlorë region will increase at least by 25 - 30 % in four years.

Strait of Messina

The Strait of Messina is represented in the partnership by the Province of Reggio Calabria and the Province of Messina. Unfortunately, the Province of Messina had to leave NOSTRA project before the end. However, the Province of Messina is still involved through the European Straits Initiative and by working at cross-strait level with the Province of Reggio Calabria. Therefore, the implementation plan of the Province of Reggio Calabria fully integrates the two sides of the strait.

The two provinces have worked closely with the academic world and several professors of the University of Reggio Calabria (Urban planning, biodiversity etc.) participated in writing this very detailed plan of 160 pages.



Joint governance

In 2013, the Province of Reggio Calabria and the Province of Messina have signed a Memorandum of Understanding, as part of the activities of territorial cooperation and exchange of good practices within NOSTRA project; this Memorandum of Understanding seals a shared plan of joint initiatives aiming at influencing the economic and touristic development, transport, logistics and environmental protection, in the awareness that an inclusive strategy will be a prerequisite to support the development of the integrated “Strait Area”.

The community insists for the Strait Area to adopt balancing policies between representatives and participatory decision-making body in order to consolidate local activities and attractiveness strategies of enterprises, research centres and tourism businesses, within a territorial

marketing integrated plan aiming at combining individual and collective actions to locate new activities in this area, to promote a favourable image and to provide high-level training, even for the outdoor areas. It is necessary to affirm a strategy of direct interventions for the sustainable and balanced development of economy and territory thanks to social achievement of their self-defining values and identity and to urban and ecological requalification. The policy should include measures on the connection systems: the heavy and light infrastructures, but also and above all, the connective structures, which allow the different elements composing the territory to carry out their duties and to take on the added value, through measures which promote the dimensional growth and the creation of networks and districts.

If we accept the theory that the Strait Area is a new level of territorial government, it will be necessary to define its tasks and functions. The solution, ascribable to the current regulatory framework and in harmony with a system of multilevel governance, could be the creation of an authority that would be a guarantor entity of the regulatory functions of the integrated area of the strait.

This independent administrative authority can be defined as an administrative entity provided with particular technical expertise, coined for the care, depending on the case, of sensitive and technologically oriented areas, and for neutralizing the political management of economic life and for recovering a truly impartial and technically adequate action for the protection of individual rights. This organizational model, safeguarding the general interests, has no administrative nor control functions, but regulatory and security ones. It is arbitrator, not synthesis, of public and private interests. In some cases, it exercises regulatory powers; in other it places the “rules of the game” through provision acts. The authority should not be an impartial authority, but rather a partial one, based on the principle of urban governance, which is a mobility of territorial management in which there are, alongside institutions, other territorial authorities to ensure that no level of institution loses its autonomy. The network dimension, projection of horizontal sovereignty, is presented as an innovative and decisive model not only for the issues related to the profile of their public authorities organization, but also of the problem related to the exercise of the function. The network is an expression of a new interpretation of the relationship between public authorities and civil society in accordance with a cooperative, dialogical, equal, and therefore horizontal logic.

In the framework of this reflection about joint governance and the creation of a new authority, the two provinces will consider carefully the transfer of the EGTC of the International Marine Park of the Strait of Bonifacio.

Sustainable tourism

The reflection of the two provinces on sustainable tourism is inspired by two good practices:

- GREET: Creating a new tourist destination (France/Great Britain - Strait of Dover)
- Economic tourist development in the region of Salento (Italy - Strait of Otranto)

For the two metropolitan cities of Reggio Calabria and Messina, overlooking the Strait of Messina, the issue is to benefit from the seasons by reaching a “critical mass”. The idea is to resort to

the instrument of cooperation and of sharing the experiences in order to find effective solutions to common problems and implement more efficient and environmentally friendly policies within a shared strategic vision, aiming at enhancing the geographical location, the relational connections between Europe and the Mediterranean (according to guidelines both north-south and east-west) and the many resources that are mainly underutilized.

It also aims at enabling sustainable development processes of the region to become a single competitive “urban region” able to bridge the gap which separates the Strait of Messina from other historically stronger European regions. As resources are competitive if not rare, inimitable and irreplaceable, the uniqueness of the Strait, from a geographical, landscape, natural, environmental and cultural point of view, is a key factor within a global context in which there is growth of social well-educated and with higher incomes groups which tend to increase a quality consumer demand and, in particular, to increase tourism demand mainly focused on the use of natural and cultural heritage. The economic activities based on the enhancement of cultural, tangible and intangible goods, unlike many others, cannot be exported, because they are deeply rooted in the territories of which they are an expression; therefore, the local authorities of the strait need to focus on them in the formulation of policies, strategies and innovative actions that are able to trigger harmonious processes of growth by pursuing, at the same time, the objective of territorial cohesion in the three dimensions of balanced territorial development, territorial integration and territorial governance.



Sustainable transport

The Strait area is one of the main transport knots of the Mediterranean space. It affects an area that spreads, in the broadest sense, between the whole Provinces of Reggio Calabria and Messina, and then it gets narrower, in some contexts, and refers to the systems of the two

Communes of Reggio Calabria and Messina (Province capitals). The integration between the two shores has always been one of the most discussed themes, becoming, in the last years, subject of researches and studies, which have produced, concerning this issue, results of scientific importance. Some summary data related to the mobility in the Strait Area, also gathered from these researches, are reported in this Action plan.

The reflection of the two provinces on sustainable transport is inspired from the strategy for sustainable mobility of Pas-de-Calais County Council (Dover Strait).

Kvarken

The Kvarken Council is a cross-border structure: therefore, this strait benefits from a single implementation plan.



EGTC of the International Marine Park of the Strait of Bonifacio

The NOSTRA Baseline study concluded that there is lots of cooperation across the Kvarken Strait, but that there are differences in governance structures, decision making processes etc. on both sides of the Kvarken strait. This is both a problem and an opportunity. There is a need for knowledge exchange between authorities, common action plans and technical capacity building within sustainable energy, transport and infrastructure, biodiversity etc.

The cross-border exchange in the Kvarken region already functions reasonably well within the cross-border body Kvarken Council, but there is an expressed need to strengthen cross-border governance in the region. A good way of doing this would be by exploring the establishment of an EGTC (European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation), which would be the first of its kind in the Nordic countries.

The EGTC of the International Marine Park of the Strait of Bonifacio (EGTC-PIMBB) is a good model for the Kvarken strait, as it involves public organisations from each part of the Strait in a single

organisation with a legal personality. It contributes to good management and promotion of the Strait.

As stated in the NOSTRA Good Practices Guide, the EGTC-PMIBB model could well be transferred to other straits in order to improve joint governance and facilitate a common vision and strategy for a strait; it does not necessarily need to focus on environmental issues and can be adapted to other local issues.

It has also been concluded that it would be desirable for the future cross-border cooperation in the Kvarken Region to implement an official governance tool that is recognized by the EU, such as EGTC.

The establishment of an EGTC area in the Kvarken region has been discussed for some time already, but the discussion has been accelerated through NOSTRA project.

The good practice of the EGTC-PMIBB has been discussed by politicians and civil servants during NOSTRA territorial meetings in the Kvarken region. The Kvarken Council's strategic plan for the years 2014-2016 states that the possibility of establishing an EGTC should be further explored. Actions have also been taken for instance by having legal experts to study how the Kvarken Council's structure, STADGAR etc. could be implemented in the EGTC system.

During the autumn of 2014 a pre-study has been carried out in order to gather opinions from municipalities, regional authorities, political representatives etc. regarding the future of cross-border cooperation in the region. A SWOT analysis of the current cross-border cooperation in the region has also been carried out within the pre-study, which shows that there is a pronounced wish for and a need to deepen the cross-border cooperation, to have a clearer structure for ownership and responsibility issues etc.

The wish of the Kvarken Council would be to take part in a follow up of the NOSTRA project within the INTERREG EUROPE programme, with the aim of deepening the cross-border governance cooperation in strait areas. A project like this would make it possible to further explore the EGTC possibility (or other cross-border regional governance tools), with the aim of deepening and strengthening cooperation in the strait, and possibly establishing an EGTC area.

Gulf of Finland



The implementation plan of Helsinki-Uusimaa Region

The Gulf of Finland is the easternmost arm of the Baltic Sea that extends between Finland and Estonia to Saint Petersburg in Russia. Major cities are Helsinki and Tallinn. The Gulf of Finland is a crucial sea route and maritime area to the regions of Harju and Uusimaa from an economic, environmental and social perspective.

The Helsinki-Uusimaa Region has around 1.5 million inhabitants. The region is a growing centre for new European business and politics, because of its location on the Baltic Sea, its cultural climate and its green landscapes. Harju County includes the coastal capital Tallinn. The regional population counts a little over 500 thousand.

Growing competing actions in seascape need more studying and common planning, therefore we are interested to transfer to our strait the good practice of Seascape Assessment and marine spatial planning that Kent County Council presented.

The pilot Seascape Character Assessment (SCA) that the Kent County Council undertook to inform marine spatial planning in the Dover Strait represents an interesting initiative. Such initiative follows the principles of the European Landscape Convention (ELC), which confirms the importance of 'seascape'. The aims of the ELC are to "promote landscape protection, management and planning, and to organize European co-operation on landscape issues".

The SCA can be used as a Marine Planning tool also. The SCA can contribute towards the requirements of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

In the context of the Gulf of Finland, the SCA could help to achieve good environmental status of the area and could result in a spatial framework for decision-making, which will highly support coordination actions. The SCA will provide an assessment of sensitivity as a way of understanding how vulnerable or resilient a seascape is to change. The information contained within a SCA can provide a comprehensive evidence base for assessing sensitivity to change. This will be useful for managing the area and for designing future projects, having in mind the ideal of building logistics roads.

The overall objective of the implementation plan purpose is to use Kent County council's experience in marine planning work in Helsinki-Uusimaa Region. Sub-objectives of the implementation plan are to learn the ways to make a Seascape Character Assessment and find which kind of solutions in Europe there are for connections to cross the strait between two countries/regions.

The beneficiaries of the good practice will be the land use planners of the region, all actors in the marine area and in the end all the cities and municipalities in the area.

Focusing on a seascape and marine spatial planning Dover Strait and Gulf of Finland are somewhat similar regarding to territorial attractiveness and economic dynamism. The biggest difference from the one of the partner purveyor of the good practice with regards to territorial attractiveness and economic dynamism is in the size of the economies and population.

The advantage of Helsinki-Uusimaa Region in implementation of the good practice is that the Region does have a long history in regional land use planning, which it has been developing all the time. Helsinki-Uusimaa Region is willing to learn new methods in tackling rising new challenges.

Helsinki-Uusimaa Region does not plan to transfer the entire good practice on its territory. Helsinki-Uusimaa Region will study the experiences of Kent and transfer the suitable models to our land use planning. The Region also has things to learn, how maritime spatial planning is done in other European countries.

The Region will use regional and national funding and study the possibilities to use European Union funding to implement the good practice.

Helsinki-Uusimaa Region is targeting to get better evidence based planning and decisions concerning seascape and its biodiversity and natural heritage in its territory. One key indicator is better level of seascape and maritime spatial planning in the next regional land use plan. Helsinki-Uusimaa Region plans to start the maritime character assessment from 2015 onwards. Next phase of the land use plan of Helsinki-Uusimaa Region will be done in 2016-2020.

There is hope to continue a very fruitful collaboration with the Kent County Council. The Region hopes that their expertise can be used for the implementation of the good practice. The possibility that Kent County Council could participate to Uusimaa workshops through video connections has already been discussed.

Harju County Government selected the Fehmarn fixed link as the good practice to implement in its region.

Both Fehmarn Belt tunnel project and Tallinn-Helsinki axis are an integral part on European TEN-T corridors (Tallinn-Helsinki is part of North Sea Baltic corridor). Just like the Fehmarn Belt Tunnel project, Harju County Government aims to develop an environmentally sustainable transport corridor, contributing to increased accessibility. In regards to accessibility to the Central-Europe, Estonia and Finland can be regarded as “peripheral island”. With the high-speed railway Rail Baltic being developed to connect the Eastern Shore of Baltic Sea to European logistics network, the connection between Helsinki and Tallinn is a missing link within North Sea Baltic corridor.

The idea of a fixed link between Helsinki and Tallinn is being developed since Estonia regained independence in 1991. Since then there have been created strategies and vision documents that suggest investigating the potential of such fixed link further and fixed link has been integrated into planning documents (HTTransPlan project, National Spatial Plan “Estonia 2030+” etc.). Helsinki-Tallinn twin-region concept suggests that better accessibility and integration contributes to the growth of both economies and Finnish-Estonian joint market.

For all the similarities of this type of mega investment into the infrastructure, the Fehmarn Belt Tunnel serves as a really good case study for similar projects. Strong experience in executing similar infrastructure projects in Denmark (Great Belt bridge and Øresund bridge in addition to Fehmarn Belt Tunnel project) gives best possible reference for other comparable development undertakings as it is a great resource to study and implement. The “TALSINKIFIX” project is investigating the Fehmarn Belt Tunnel experience to benchmark potential governance solutions and to have a roadmap to the Gulf of Finland project.

Project TALSINKIFIX evaluates feasibility and viability of the Helsinki-Tallinn fixed link, the rail tunnel to connect Finland and Estonia. The aim of the project is to determine if it is justified to carry out a full scale feasibility study and to start technical planning of this mega project. The possible future tunnel project will complete the development of a transport corridor along one of the Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T), core network corridors in the Baltic Sea Region. The project has aimed to investigate the economic and social development potential of Tallinn-Helsinki fixed link. TALSINKIFIX has looked at socio-economic benefits and challenges related to the construction of a fixed link, as well as outlined how to integrate the fixed link to existing transport networks in both countries. Benchmark study with the Fehmarn Belt Tunnel project is an integral part of TALSINKIFIX project.

Since 1991 and independency of Estonia, the contacts between Helsinki and Tallinn have grown very tight. Today, there are 15 daily ferry departures carrying 8 million yearly travellers cross the bay, over a million passenger cars and quarter of a million trucks. There are more and more companies having their premises in the both sides of the bay combining the human and material resources of both countries. It can easily be said that both countries, Estonia and Finland, are very dependent on people travelling for work, leisure and study from the other country.

These frequent travels bring enormous opportunities as well as challenges for city and region developers. Traffic on the Gulf of Finland is very heavy and growing (environmental and security risks). Now, it takes about 2 hours to cross the bay by fast ferries. Project investigates the macro regional benefits if travel time would be less than one hour by a fixed link and gives suggestions on integrating the fixed link with the transportation systems on both sides of the Gulf of Finland.

As studies suggest then well-linked twin-region of Tallinn-Helsinki can further enhance the competitiveness of the area. The Tallinn-Helsinki region together has a potential to become one of the centres of innovation and wealth in the Northern Europe.

Strait of Sicily

The Strait of Sicily is the only strait of the partnership to have only one side represented, with the Province of Trapani. However their implementation plan fully considers the cross-border dimension of the area.



Governance and Marine Spatial Planning

The location of the Strait of Sicily, which interfaces with Tunisia and with the countries of North Africa, has made so far particularly difficult to create a unique formal structure of governance for the development of a common strategy for the protection of biodiversity and the protection of natural heritage.

On the example of the EGTC-PMIBB (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation of the International Marine Park of the Strait of Bonifacio), it is proposed to involve the local and regional authorities from both sides of the strait, but also private companies and research sector, within the creation of a unique structure with legal personality, not exclusively targeting environmental issues.

The idea is to reach a political agreement between the ministries of the countries bordering the strait, on the measures and actions to be implemented for a sustainable development of the strait.

Marine spatial planning stems from the need to balance the use of resources with the protection of an exceptional natural heritage. The various activities (tourism, coastal defence, ports, transport, military activities, extraction of oil/gas, fishing etc.) must be jointly evaluated in order to verify their sustainable coexistence within the cross-border region. An exemplary project is highlighted: the strategic BIOVecQ project (Marine biotechnology vector of innovation and quality) between Italy and Tunisia. This project is an example of a transnational project, between Sicily and Tunisia, for the implementation of shared actions for the development and the sustainable exploitation of fishery resources, which is getting very positive results.

Sustainable tourism

The idea is to control the flow of tourists (who, among other things and because of transport difficulties, leaves important margins) and encourage environmentally friendly tourist behaviors.

Therefore, it is necessary to consider the mapping of needs and gaps in order to improve the supply, and plan more specific interventions, on the example of what was done with CAST project (Coastal Actions for Sustainable Tourism) in Dover Strait.



Sustainable mobility

The Mediterranean Sea is one of the busiest waterways in the world: 15% of total world traffic passes through the Strait of Sicily, with more than 325,000 transits every year – according to WWF Italy, this traffic is expected to grow 3 or 4 times in the next 20 years. 200,000 commercial ships crossing the Mediterranean are directed to the 300 ports of the basin. This traffic generates

various forms of pollution (water, air and noise) that can threaten biodiversity and the environment of the coasts.

In completion of a search and rescue device such as MIRG-EU (Maritime Incidents Response Group, in Dover Strait), it is suggested that the current project CALYPSO in the Malta Channel could be extended to the whole Sicily Channel and that its results could be used in the field of navigation safety, Search and Rescue, etc.

CALYPSO is a pilot project for the "Surface Hydrodynamic Conditions Monitoring In The Sicily Channel By Means Of Hf Radar Measurements". It is a two years project co-financed by the EU (Programme Italy-Malta 2007-2013). The Calypso HF radar network is a system set up to monitor the surface currents of the Malta channel and its potential applications. The main output of the project is the setting up of a permanent HF antennas observation network able to collect surface current distributions and waves at hourly scale and in near-real time (2 antennas are located in Malta and 1 in the south of Sicily). The main aim of the CALYPSO project is to provide an operational tool to be used against the oil spill sea pollution phenomena. In fact in the Sicily channel the risk of oil spill pollution is very high, due to the intense oil tankers traffic affecting this area of the Mediterranean Sea. The integration of HF Radar observations to the hydrodynamic numerical modelling allow to provide precise information in case of accidents or disasters. Furthermore, once a slick is detected by satellite platforms or other systems, the HF data could be used to go back in time (backtracking), thus allowing the intersection with the available Vehicle Tracking System (VTS) data: in this way the responsible of the oil slick can be found. In this sense the presence of a HF network can be seen as a "prevention" tool.

Responsible economic development

The Province of Trapani's implementation plan includes an analysis of an industrial area (former ASI) of the City of Trapani, which is located on the border of the Natural Reserve "Saline di Trapani" and of some Natura 2000 areas (SCI and SPA).

In this area co-exist, on one hand, a number of manufacturing activities and, on the other hand, protected areas with and unique resources and habitats that annually generate an important tourist flow.

In this regard, it is proposed the holding of an international design competition for the planning of these areas, with a focus on strong connections with the neighbouring sensitive and protected ecosystem, where nest several protected species and where salt is still harvested by hand.

This competition would expand and renew the vision of this territory in the world.

