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## **EU INTEGRATED MARITIME POLICY AND THE ADRIATIC-IONIAN**

*Anita Vella*

Paper presented at the round-table

**‘EU Maritime Policy and the (Northern) Adriatic’**

organized by the Maritime Law Association of Slovenia (MLAS)

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# EU INTEGRATED MARITIME POLICY AND THE ADRIATIC-IONIAN

*Anita Vella\**

European Maritime Day 2011, held in Gdansk, Poland, was about "Putting People First". Commissioner Maria Damanaki in her opening speech of 19 May 2011, underlined that the crucial point to address is how to boost maritime sectors – *'New people bring new ideas – and new ideas can produce new jobs for the 88 million European who work in coastal regions'*. The Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) is aimed at laying the conditions for further and sustainable economic growth from the sea<sup>1</sup>.

The efforts of the Maritime Law Association of Slovenia in organizing, for the third time, a roundtable bringing together actors from academia, research institutes, ports, as well as public authorities in Portoroz to discuss maritime issues on the occasion of European Maritime Day, demonstrate the willingness of stakeholders to see the Integrated Maritime Policy taken forward, both at EU level and specifically in the Adriatic.

The EU Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) was born in the context of the 2000 Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs, the 2011 Gothenburg Agenda for sustainable development, as well as the European Commission's strategic objectives for 2005-2009, where it was stated that the Commission sees *'the particular need for an all-embracing maritime policy aimed at developing a thriving maritime economy, in an environmentally sustainable manner. Such a policy should be supported by excellence in marine scientific research, technology and innovation'*.

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\* Policy Officer, European Commission, Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries. Paper presented at the round-table 'EU Maritime Policy and the (Northern) Adriatic' organized by the Maritime Law Association of Slovenia (MLAS), EU Maritime Day 2011, 20 May 2011, Portorož, Slovenia.

<sup>1</sup> Speech by Commissioner Maria Damanaki at the European Maritime Day, Gdansk: *An Integrated Approach to the Sea Putting People First* –, available at [http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/maritimeday/2011/damanaki\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/maritimeday/2011/damanaki_en.pdf).

The Green Paper *'Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union: A European Vision for the oceans and seas'*<sup>2</sup> was published thereafter in 2006, followed by a Blue Paper in 2007 and an accompanying Action Plan<sup>3</sup>.

The EU IMP was thereby launched, with the ultimate objective of finding positive synergies across the various policies and activities related to the sea, from industry to fisheries, energy, transport, environment and so on and so forth, together with laying down the necessary instruments and mechanisms for such synergies to actually come into effect.

A number of initiatives have evolved since then at all levels of governance. A Progress Report was presented by the European Commission in Autumn 2009, summarizing the main achievements during the first two years as well as setting forth six strategic directions for the policy for the years ahead<sup>4</sup>. These may be summarised as follows:

- 1. Enhancement of integrated maritime governance at all levels**, inviting Member States, but also regions, to chart their own national policies and integrated policy-making structures;
- 2. The further development of Cross-cutting policy tools** – in particular Maritime Spatial Planning, the integration of maritime surveillance and the marine knowledge aspect – the focus being that of bringing added-value through a common EU approach to planning of the marine space, knowledge and information sharing;
- 3. Definition of the boundaries of sustainability** – with the aim of putting in place an ecosystem approach to the way human activities are managed at sea, and implementing fully the obligations under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, i.e. the environmental pillar of the IMP;

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<sup>2</sup> COM (2006) 275 final of 7.6.2006.

<sup>3</sup> COM (2007) 575 final of 10.10.2007 and SEC (2007) 1278 of 10.10.2007.

<sup>4</sup> COM (2009) 540 and SEC (1343) of 15.10.2009.

**4. The development and consolidation of Sea-basin strategies**, allowing for the adaptation of our actions to the real needs and specificities of the EU's shared sea areas; in this context, lie the approaches being developed for the Mediterranean and the Adriatic-Ionian sub-region.

**5. A strengthening of the International dimension of the IMP**, so as to better define Europe's role in global ocean governance, as has already been done for instance in the field of piracy; this element of specific relevance to the Mediterranean, in as much as an integrated approach to maritime policies needs to be developed in cooperation with non-EU countries in the region on the basis of the existing multilateral frameworks.

**6. And lastly, setting a renewed focus on sustainable economic growth, employment and innovation**, so that maritime economies and sectors may effectively contribute to the Europe 2020 Strategy. A study on scenarios and drivers of sustainable growth from the oceans, sea and coasts is being undertaken and the results will feed into an overarching initiative on "Blue growth" to be presented next year.

The development of sea-basin strategies is at the basis of the discussions held in Portoroz on the occasion of European Maritime Day 2011. The EU IMP is not a 'one-size-fits-all' policy. What applies for the Baltic Sea cannot necessarily be re-produced in the Mediterranean. Then again, the Mediterranean basin in itself is rather specific given the number of neighbouring Mediterranean partner countries, varying ecosystems and sub-regions, as well as the particularly intense maritime traffic taking place, including oil transportation. Maritime safety and security cannot remain pure buzz words – we have the responsibility of ensuring the necessary grounds and capacities to ensure a cleaner, safer and more secure Mediterranean Sea.

As a first phase and given the plethora of maritime-related policies, activities and projects already being developed in the Mediterranean, the European Commission has taken the initiative of launching a dedicated process for improving maritime governance in the region<sup>5</sup>, focusing on better management of the marine space, development of the IMP cross-cutting tools, as well as a dedicated Working Group with all Mediterranean Coastal States and an

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<sup>5</sup> COM (2009) 466 of 11.09.2009.

accompanying project of technical assistance for those non-EU partner countries interested in this new approach.

Given the need for improving growth and jobs from maritime sectors in the region, especially Southern partner countries, a tripartite project between the European Commission, the European Investment Bank and the International Maritime Organizations was also recently launched. This initiative will aim at improving cooperation, and possibly developing pilot actions in the three fields of maritime training, maritime safety and surveillance, as well as investments in infrastructure. A feasibility study is being carried out under the FEMIP Trust Fund in this regard<sup>6</sup>.

These small but targeted steps should also enable Member States and regions to better understand the existing gaps and opportunities for cooperating in the development of their respective maritime policies, and maybe also provide more solid foundations for the use of EU funding possibilities under the next multiannual financial framework.

In parallel to this broad regional approach, and as announced by Commissioner Maria Damanaki last February in Ancona, DG MARE is also currently working on developing a smaller-scale maritime strategy/strand for the Adriatic-Ionian Seas. The objective is that of devising more practical cooperation and concrete projects at the level of the sub-region. A significant degree of cooperation exists in the region since years, notably under the umbrella of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, but also in the framework of the Euro-region, and also the territorial cooperation projects developed under the EU Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA). The Sea is the prime connecting element in the region, and thereby a unique test-bed for developing cooperation on marine environment protection, sustainable transport routes, tourism, fisheries, and so on and so forth.

Contributions from the three EU Member States concerned - Italy, Slovenia and Greece – as well as all other coastal States and major players, will be crucial in shaping this process in the coming year. The endorsement of a set of concrete projects by 2012, framed under agreed priority areas, could also provide a more consistent basis for financial support for maritime affairs during the next multiannual financial framework.

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<sup>6</sup> Press Release at: [http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/press/20110322\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/press/20110322_en.pdf) .

The roundtable organized in Portoroz is a very good example of how Slovene maritime stakeholders may sit together and bring forward ideas for further, and more practical, maritime cooperation in the Adriatic-Ionian Seas.