

Experience Note



Photo: Marko Prem

National Marine and Coastal Strategy for Croatia

AT A GLANCE

The Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem (MedPartnership) is a collective effort of leading environmental institutions and organizations together with countries sharing the Mediterranean Sea to address environmental challenges that Mediterranean marine and coastal ecosystems face. The project's 78 demonstration and the promotion and replication of good practices will maximize impact and ensure the sustainability of the project beyond its lifespan.

Total budget: 48 millions USD.
13 million USD: Global Environment Facility
35 million USD: Participating countries, executing agencies, and donors.

ABSTRACT

To provide an integrated policy for the sea and the coast that takes into account climate variability and change and that is harmonized with the National Water Strategy, the Croatian government decided to prepare an integrated Marine and Coastal Strategy for Croatia. In this way the country will meet its obligations from the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and the ICZM Protocol for the Mediterranean, both inviting the countries to prepare relevant strategies. PAP/RAC developed this proposal for MedPartnership's Mediterranean Environmental Replication Strategy (MeReS), which recognized this idea as a potential showcase for the Mediterranean. The territorial coverage of the Strategy extends from the marine area in which Croatia has jurisdictional rights to the administrative borders of 134 coastal municipalities and towns on its land territory.

The Strategy should be completed by the end of 2015. At the same time, the Croatian government is preparing two more strategies – the spatial and the regional development strategies. Coordination and integration of these three strategies is one of the important objectives to be achieved.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

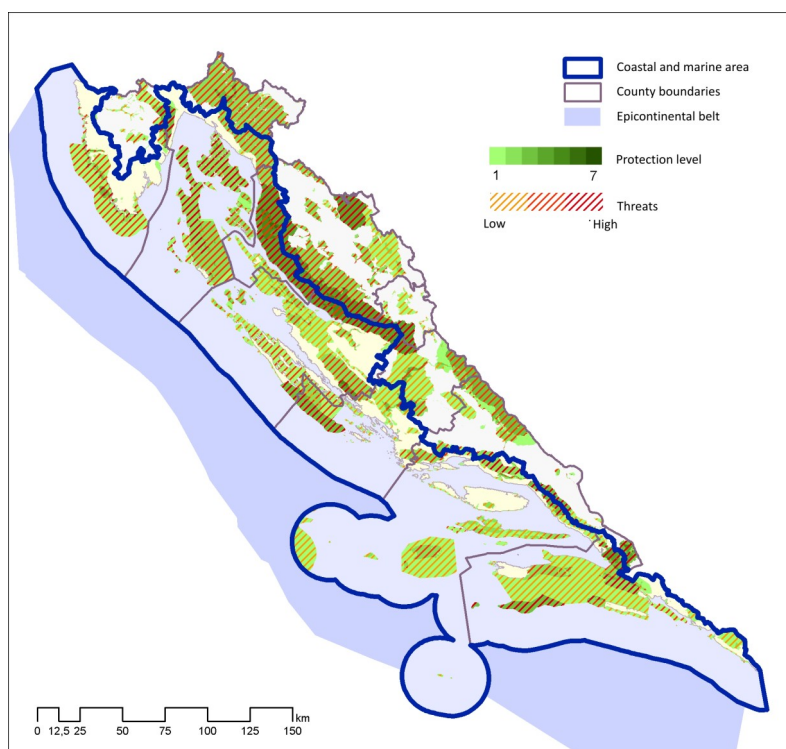
The goal of this activity is to prepare a national strategy, as mandated by the Article 18 of the ICZM Protocol for the Mediterranean. The national strategy will set the objectives, determine priorities, and develop measures and instruments to achieve these objectives. In this case, ICZM approach must demonstrate its adaptability by producing an integrated strategy for Croatia's sea and coast, following the EU MSFD and the ICZM Protocol.

THE EXPERIENCE

Knowing that 80% of marine pollution comes from the land-based sources, the Croatian government has integrated two strategies requested by international legal documents into a single Marine and Coastal Strategy. The Strategy takes into account the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) implemented by Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) and addresses impacts from climate variability and change. It may be an excellent example for the rest of the Mediterranean.

Methodology

When the decision on an integrated Marine and Coastal Strategy was made, several steps regarding the marine environment had already been completed, such as an initial assessment of the state of the marine environment, while the goals, targets and indicators were agreed. The Croatian government had also established an Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) to prepare and implement the Strategy.



Croatian marine and coastal area with threats and protection levels

Meanwhile, Croatia ratified the ICZM Protocol for the Mediterranean. One of the requirements of the Protocol is the adoption of a coastal strategy. To avoid duplication, Croatia decided to prepare an integrated strategic document. The IMC was expanded to include coastal stakeholders. Today, it has more than 50 members from ministries and agencies involved with the sea and coast. The Croatian parliament passed a legal act on the new Marine and Coastal Strategy, which extended the territorial coverage from the marine areas in which Croatia has jurisdiction to the borders of 134 coastal municipalities and towns on land.

In the framework of MedPartnership, PAP/RAC secured the first joint output, an economic and social assessment of the Croatian sea and coast. In addition, an assessment of potential costs of sea-level rise was completed within the ClimVar & ICZM project. Finally, to undertake a harmonized approach, a problem analysis included the major aspects of coastal natural resource use and protection, coastal spatial development, and coastal governance mechanisms. The results of these and other analyses will be presented for adoption by the IMC and discussed at participatory workshops.

RESULTS

The preparation of the marine strategy began in 2012. The coastal analysis started in 2014. The studies confirmed that the state of the Croatian Adriatic is good but that it may be difficult for the Croatian economy to support all of the country's requirements and obligations from the EU accession process.

Croatia's bathing water quality is ranked third in the EU (after Cyprus and Malta). On the other hand, Croatia can be ranked among countries with the greatest pressure for coastal urbanisation per population density. Croatia is one of the least populated countries in the EU. Since the 1960s, its population grew by only 3%, while the urbanization of the coast was extremely rapid i.e. 4 times more was built than by all previous generations.

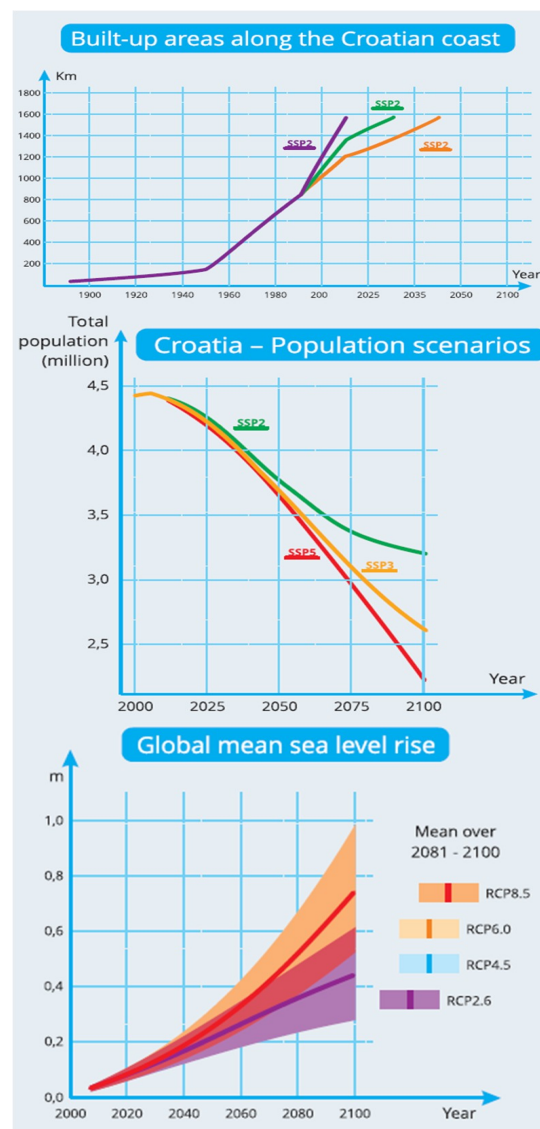
Although national and international population projections for Croatia indicate a decrease in population, spatial plans allow for an increase of the urbanized coast 10 times greater than before the 1960s. As is the case for many other Mediterranean tourist destinations, the highest density of construction is in the zone closest to the sea. This zone also has the highest risks of being impacted by sea-level rise and storm surges.

LESSONS LEARNED

The preparation of the Croatian Marine and Coastal Strategy is still in its analytical stage.

By applying a systematic participatory approach it is expected to identify key issues for successful management and to involve all relevant stakeholders. The ownership of the Strategy is being built during the participatory workshops, increasing the chances for its successful implementation. Participants were content to have the opportunity to express their views, needs and desires, and to integrate them into a national strategy. This only confirms that building consensus is one of the top priorities for Croatia's coastal population, and that the integration over sectors for something as important as the future of the coast will be a major challenge for the national Marine and Coastal Strategy.

During 2015, the Croatian government should finalize strategies in three important fields for the country's future: regional development, spatial development and marine and coastal management. One of the objectives of PAP/RAC's efforts is to create enabling conditions for the integration of these three strategies. In this, a key characteristic of the ICZM – its adaptability – will be crucial: the integration of analytical findings, together with the harmonisation of objectives, targets and indicators, and the future monitoring process, are going to result in more sustainable strategies for the future.



Opposing trends in Croatia

IMPACTS

Due to the fact that 80% of the marine pollution comes from the land-based sources, integrating strategies dealing with the sea and land is a step towards consistent solutions. It is particularly important to integrate development, spatial and economic strategies with environmental protection strategies; that is a key reason why ICZM strategies have management and governance as their central theme.

In the framework of the MedPartnership project PAP/RAC prepared Guidelines for preparation of the national ICZM strategies. These were used to prepare the integrated Marine and Coastal Strategy for Croatia. The Croatian case demonstrates that it is possible to merge requirements of the EU MSFD and the ICZM Protocol for the Mediterranean.



Photo: Marko Prem

REFERENCES

Priority Actions Programme/Regional Activity Centre (PAP/RAC); <http://www.pap-thecoastcentre.org/>
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KEYWORDS

National strategy; ICZM Protocol; MSFD Directive

EXECUTING PARTNER

PAP/RAC was established in 1977 in Split, Croatia, as part of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). PAP/RAC's mandate is to provide support to Mediterranean countries in the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, and in particular of the Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management. PAP/RAC is oriented towards carrying out activities contributing to the sustainable development of coastal zones and strengthening capacities for their implementation. Thereby, it cooperates with national, regional and local authorities, as well as with a large number of international organisations and institutions.



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Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem

Together for the Mediterranean Sea

MedPartnership



Executing partners: FAO, UNESCO/IHP, UNIDO, GWP-Med, MIO-ECSDE, WWF MedPO, UNEP/MAP's MEDPOL programme and regional activity centres (SCP/RAC, SPA/RAC and PAP/RAC).

Participating countries: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Montenegro, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey.