

Minutes of meeting with local stakeholders

PASSAGE project

Programme "INTERREG EUROPE"

On 30.10.2017 the meeting of regional stakeholders of the PASSAGE project was held in the meeting room of Regional Council of Vlora.

Project Purpose: The project aims at joint initiatives of the regional authorities of the European straits, for the reduction of carbon (CO₂) in maritime straits.

Project outputs:

- 2 joint action plans with Italian and Greek partners for reducing CO₂ in the maritime straits of Otranto and Corfu.
- Update of the Strategic Plan of Vlora District 2010-2020 in strategic lines whose activities negatively affect the level of carbon in the maritime straits.

At the meeting of the stakeholders, there were 22 representatives of the Port Directorate, the Office Harbour Master and the Border and Immigration Branch of Vlora, representatives of Environmental Inspectorate, "Ismail Qemali" University - Scientific Research Center and Chemistry Branch, National Coast Agency - Water Supply and Sewerage Directorate, Chamber of Commerce Vlorë, Touristic Boat "Teuta" - Tour Operators, Bajkaj Land - Joint Stock Company for Waste Management, Christine Torres - Volunteer Peace Corps at the Chamber of Commerce, Local Economic Development Agency AULEDA, Arhus Center, PPNEA Vlora, representatives of the Vlora Region administration.

Local journalists and local media operators also participated in the meeting, such as One TV, 6 + 1 Vlora and Real TV.

In accordance with the agenda sent in advance to the participants, the meeting was opened by the Chairman of the Regional Council of Vlora, Mr. Ervis Mocka. He acquainted the participants with the Passage Project, the goals and objectives it seeks to address, the methodology that the Regional Council as the project's official beneficiary will pursue to realize the project's objectives in close collaboration with local stakeholders. The update of the 2010-2020 Strategic Plan, with the bottom-up approach and the involvement of all stakeholders in and around the straits territory, under the Kyoto Protocol's approach to climate change, will be one of the most important outputs of the PASSAGE project.

The study to calculate the carbon level in the maritime straits, whose findings will be presented today, will precede the orientation of focus group discussions that the Regional Council will set up to draft joint action plans in order to reduce the level of carbon in close cooperation with Greek and Italian partners and the updating of Vlora Regional Strategic Plan. He requested the active co-operation of representatives of the participating institutions during discussions with focus groups. Stakeholder engagement in this process will be a great opportunity for each of them to propose joint ideas, projects and initiatives with the Regional Council, later to present them for funding in various EU programs.

PASSAGE Project Coordinator, Ms. Anila Hitaj acquainted the participants in the meeting with the Project Passage, the role of the Regional Council as a beneficiary of this project, the activities developed so far in the framework of the PASSAGE project as well as the activities that will be developed in the future for the next three years. The Project Coordinator also presented the best practices so far identified in the field of maritime transport, marine environment and biodiversity, social and environmental friendships and cross-border cooperation.

Technical Assistant of the PASSAGE project, Ms. Mirela Koci - Director of the Local Economic Development Agency - Auleda, presented to the participants the findings of the first phase of the study conducted for the Strait of Otranto and Corfu Channel.

The Regional Council of Vlora has e-mailed and officially collected, processed, translated and initiated initial data from all major ports in the maritime straits.

She informed the participants about the study methodology, the primary data collected from the main ports in the above mentioned maritime ponds, their methodology of processing, calculating the total CO₂ level in the storms, and the level of CO₂ that comes from local seaborne transport in the narrow streets, the international and transit of ships, ferries, cruisers, cargo freight, cargo, Ro-Ro, the CO₂ level that comes from the population based on the number of inhabitants around the seaside and the services offered to them, the CO₂ level comes from industrial activity, the level of CO₂ that comes from economic activity in the field of tourism. All the identified data serve as an input for the orientation of the Action Plan

Participants in the meeting addressed questions about the methodology and some figures from the study, particularly with the number of pollution in the Strait of Otranto, which presented a very high pollution from the industrial sector in the Italian Strait, amounted to 87%. They also questioned about the level of pollution due to the processing of goods in the two Albanian ports of Vlora and Durres. The participants were skeptical about the figures, based on the volume of goods processed by the Port of Vlora and Durrës, 15 times more.

The representative of the Environmental Inspectorate and Technical Assistant of the project explained that the figures are related to the technological level of processing of ships that in Vlora Port is very low, as well as the geographic characteristics that the Vlora Bay has, that of a natural dump that collects everything, while the Port of Durrës is open and allows the circulation of CO₂ in areas outside the perimeter of the strait.

The PPNEA Representative, Mr. Niko Dumani, welcomed the initiative, but stated that despite the fact the study has generated data that determine the degree of CO₂ pollution, Albania is still within EU standards, so CO₂ pollution is not a problem for the Vlora region, as compared to other regions this pollution is much lower.

The Chairman of the Regional Council explained to the participants that the figures are relative but are very orientative in the perspective of the Strategic Plan orientation and the drafting of the Compatibility and Action Plan with the partners.

The strategic plan is general or specific?

The more detailed the data is, the more the Regional Council of Vlora is orientated even during the discussion on the table with the Italian or Greek partner authorities for the signing of bilateral agreements. If in the Strait of Otranto 13% of CO2 pollution comes from Albania and 87% of pollution comes from Italy, then during bilateral discussions we can now ask our partners for a concrete plan of measures for bringing the level of pollution within European norms, as it adversely affects the economic activity of the strait, but we do not limit our businesses to their activity because they are growing and expanding. Each of us needs to draw the right factors that affect the project.

The Environmental Inspector Specialist pointed out that in Albania environmental pollution with CO2 is a problem as even though the European Community has allowed rates, we notice that there is irrational pollution, for example, tire burning. So if we do not underline today that we are within the norms allowed, tomorrow it will be too late, since year-on-year CO2 pollution is rising.

The participants noted that in general we do not have an industry to worry about compared to other European Union countries. CO2 reduction should remain a preventive objective and it is worthwhile in this regard. The study also applies to the fact that: The action plan is accompanied by financial funds to realize it, where each participating actor, including the authorities of the neighboring countries, has their share of the contribution. During the two-party talks we can ask for this contribution from the populace for as long as their population and industrial activity cause pollution above the allowed norms.

After discussions we went through the methodological specification of meetings with the stakeholders. It was proposed to create four focus groups respectively:

- ***Maritime Transport, local, international and transit transport, participating:***

1. Sonila Kane – “Ismail Qemali” University
2. Anisa Myrtaj – “Ismail Qemali” University
3. Bledar Sakaj – Office Harbour Master, Vlore
4. Laureta Dervishi – Border and Immigration Branch of Vlora.
5. Nestor Gavani – Port Authority, Vlore
6. Ermal Sina – AKB Vlore
7. Port Authority Sarande
8. Port Authority Himare
9. Office Harbour Master, Sarande
10. Office Harbour Master , Himare
11. Mirela Koci – Auleda, Vlore

- ***Economic activity in and around the strait***

1. Merita Murati – Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Vlore
2. National Tourism Association, ATA, Vlore
3. Valentina Habilaj – Touristic Boat “Teuta”, Vlore
4. Arjana Bubeqi – Auleda, Vlore
5. Klaud Gjipali – Supervisory Board, Bajkaj Land js.
6. Representatives from the fishing sector, Vlore

- ***Population and environmental services***

1. Albina Xhyheri – Water Supply Company of Vlora
2. Pjerin Dema – Aarhus Center
3. Simo Ribaj – SEEP Center
4. Infrastructure services in the Vlora, Saranda and Himara municipalities
5. Coast Guard

- ***Land transport and air pollution***

1. Ilinden Maze – Environmental Inspectorate
2. Hodo Kabelle – SHINVTCl
3. Representative of the University of Vlora
4. Niko Dumani – PPNE Vlore
5. Besmira Hoxha – Auleda, Vlore

At the end of the meeting it was announced that each of the participants should be informed in a more detailed way with the study data sent in advance, in order to identify a problematic to address for solution in the Action Plan. The focus group meeting will be notified by the Project Coordinator.

Prepared by: Anila Hitaj

Project Coordinator