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Natural and cultural heritage in coastal regions

A Policy Learning Platform event
27 October 2022, Cagnes-sur-Mer

Summary: This thematic workshop explored the challenges and opportunities for boosting natural and cultural heritage in coastal regions. The workshop attracted 55 participants and presented many good practices and policy frameworks from across Europe allowing intense networking and knowledge exchange. The following Interreg Europe projects were represented: Blue Green City, CD-ETA, CapOnLitter, CHERISH, HERICOAST, Land-Sea and PLASTEKO. Moreover, the event featured a study visit to the renaturalisation works of the River Cagne, a walk in the footsteps of famous painters in Cagnes-sur-Mer and a visit to the jewellery museum in the city.



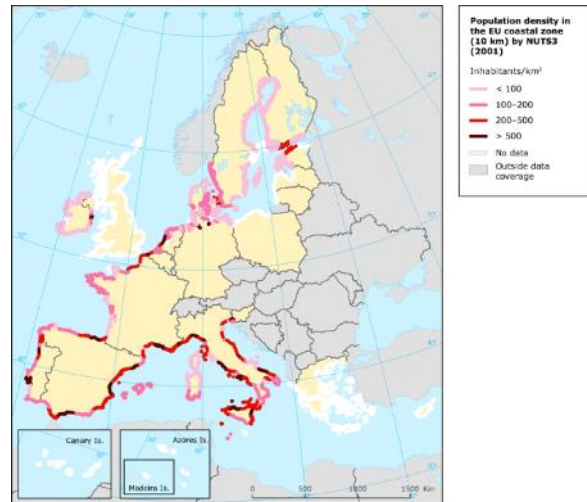


Highlights

Seas and oceans cover over 70% of our planet, hold 97% of water and [sustain 80% of all life forms](#). As the world's largest carbon sinks, they produce at least [50% of oxygen](#) and are an important food source.

The coastline of EU member states and the United Kingdom is 68,000 km long and thus 3 times longer than the US coast and almost 2 times longer than the coast of Russia. Nearly half of the EU population lives less than 50 km away from the sea and many more spend their holidays there.

Coastal and marine regions are, however, under **numerous environmental pressures**, which have significant impacts on local natural and cultural heritage. To transform the current management of these areas, the EU has published a [Sustainable Blue Economy](#) strategy, which presents an opportunity for policymakers, scientists, businesses and citizens to **create resilient seas and coastal regions**.



European Environment Agency

Maritime heritage

- Important elements of **coastal cultural heritage** are ports, waterfront buildings, shipyards, military and defence buildings, fishing fleets, lighthouses and shipwrecks. Moreover, coastal fishing villages and towns have unique architecture defining local identity and landscape. Maritime heritage is particularly vulnerable to spatial changes in transport, industrialisation of fisheries and use of coastal zones for tourism.
- **Coastal tourism** covers beach-based tourism and recreational activities. In addition, maritime tourism offers water-based activities and nautical sports. The tourism sector in coastal regions generates EUR 183 billion in gross value added and employs over 3.2 million people representing more than 1/3 of the maritime economy.

Environmental pressures on coastal regions

- **Coastal erosion:** 20,000 km of European coastline face serious impacts with 15,000 km coastline actively retreating; some despite coastal protection works. There is more risk of coastal flooding due to undermining coastal dunes and sea defences. As a result, there are increasing mitigation costs for coastline protection.
- **Light pollution:** 99% of EU population lives in areas where night sky is above the threshold for polluted status. This has an impact on both human beings (reduced sleep times & sleep quality, impaired daytime functioning, obesity) and on animals and eco-systems (alteration of animals night-time environment; changing behaviour of plants that rely on light to recognise season)
- **Marine Litter:** 500,000 tons / year of plastic waste are leaking into ocean in Europe causing devastating damage on marine & coastal ecosystems, the blue economy, animal & human health. At the same time, plastics production, use and discharge are still 'linear'. Less than 6% of plastics are recycled and the material is mostly incinerated, exported, landfilled and is thus ending up in the environment. Moreover, plastics are widely used for packaging and in industry and its production is predicted to double again by 2040.



Good practices

Following keynote presentations from Patrick Rang, Estonian War Museum, Estonia ([CD-ETA](#)) and Isabelle Poitou, Association MerTerre, France ([CAPONLITTER](#)), the workshop explored six good practices from Interreg Europe projects during two interactive sessions on 'Preserving and reviving maritime heritage' and 'Tackling environmental pressures on coastal regions'.

Maritime heritage

- The [Ecomuseum Batana \(CD-ETA\)](#) in Croatia is a project addressing the need of safeguarding Rovinj's local maritime heritage with special attention to its boatbuilding tradition. The holistic approach started as a civil-public heritage project whose safeguarding mission and main goals are conveyed and implemented through five principal elements: a) the House of Batana, a central interpretation and documentation centre; b) the Spacio Matika, a local tavern to experience the tastes, smells and the singing of the local maritime heritage; c) the Mali Škver (Little Shipyard), d) Rovinj's regatta of traditional wooden boats with mainly lateen sails and e) the Batana Way, an itinerary from the Mail Mol (Little Pier) to Spacio Matika and Rovinj's waterfront.
- Donegal County (Ireland) prepared a [Seascape character assessment \(HERICOAST\)](#) identifying and characterising areas of specific type, qualities as well as areas that require policy intervention. The assessment offers great potential for continued learning and evidence-based decision-making particularly with regard to describing, future planning and managing coastal heritage assets. The integrated approach to spatial planning allows for the allocation of space in a more efficient, effective and equitable manner. It provides policy makers with a forum of knowledge exchange from which to inform future intervention and assess opportunities. The development of such a knowledge base should be an ongoing engagement that improves understanding of the cumulative and combined effects of development along the coastal region.
- [Reinventing fishery traditions and heritage in the village of Arnemuiden \(CHERISH\)](#): Small fishery communities such as Arnemuiden (Netherlands) are in decline and need to find new ways of reinforcing their local identity as unique fishing places with a long tradition. With the help of a female think tank, the Arnemuiden Fishery Sweater was revived as modern street wear and the Zeeland Fishery Sweater Foundation was created. The community was strongly involved in promoting and marketing the rediscovery of the traditional fishermen knitting patterns. Today, the sweaters are locally produced and sold through a handicraft shop, fishery museums and online. The Arnemuiden Fishery Sweater has become a brand and a book with patterns of all sweaters in the 14 fishery communities in Zeeland was immediately sold out.

Environmental pressures on coastal regions

- [Adaptation strategies in the Ebro Delta wetland area \(Land Sea\)](#): The wetland area of the Ebro Delta (Spain) is experiencing a loss of wetlands and rice fields due to coastal regression caused by the lack of input of fluvial sediments. To address the issue, the project combined sea level rise adaptation measures with mitigation measures designed to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases. The principal pilot actions of adaptation are focused on transferring sediments from the river Ebro to the Delta. It is an integrated approach for management of water, sediment and habitats with the aim of optimising ground elevation, reducing coastal erosion, increasing the accumulation of carbon in the soil, and improving water quality.



- [Mitigating the impact of artificial lighting on bats \(Blue Green City\)](#): The region of Nice Côte d'Azur (France) assessed the negative impact of artificial light on the roosting and foraging activities of bats. To this end, streetlights were mapped and overlayed with the locations of roosting sites provided by the regional bat group. The mapping exercise revealed eleven zones of light disturbance and the municipalities subsequently employed different light pollution mitigation measures including street light extinction periods, reorientation of the lights and changes in their height, reduction of blue light, avoidance of lighting vegetation and rock walls, and the creation of light barriers to protect particularly sensitive zones. First results of the project suggest that fragile bat species benefit from the new darker territories whilst at the same time energy savings have been achieved by the participating municipalities.
- [Reducing plastic waste in marine environments \(PLASTEKO\)](#): To solve the problems related to the accumulation of plastic waste in the marine environment, the Municipality of Beloslav (Bulgaria) introduced a pilot model targeting businesses and shops, local and regional authorities, media and non-governmental organisations working in the field of environmental protection. The main activities included the development of an innovative local system for plastic recycling as well as four information campaigns and an educational campaign to raise awareness on the prevention of marine pollution with plastic waste.

After the sessions, all workshop participants were invited to comment and vote on the impact, implementation and timeframe of the presented good practices, thus triggering additional reflections and interactivity.



The workshop was organised in close collaboration with the Municipality of Cagnes-sur-Mer. The entire team of the Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform would like to express their gratitude for the experienced hospitality, and the inspiring insights provided by the team of the municipality and their local partners.



Key take-aways and next steps

The joint work of the participants and the Policy Learning Platform thematic experts resulted in the development of the following main key take-aways and next steps for regions and communities working on natural and cultural heritage:

- We can **protect heritage** and at the same time innovate!
- Heritage and new generation must walk together
- Revitalising heritage brings about new ideas to re-discover our own territory
- Improving co-design, **people participation**, awareness and commitment are major tools to meet objectives
- Intangible heritage is important to keep traditions alive
- **Nature in the city** – very good slogan to communicate the master plan of La Cagne
- Take into account how a decision will influence long-term change in the region
- **Do not leave culture or communities behind!** Both are important for impact and sustainability of environmental outcomes
- UK can still learn from and provide knowledge to the EU, we just need to think how
- Many challenges are universal across Europe – **sharing good practices and regional cooperation are very important**
- Evidence based decision-making is critical for success
- **Harnessing digital technology** helps to better deliver outcomes and reach out to young people
- Future initiatives need to be measured against their contribution to help address climate change
- Regulation, taxation and education are very important but need to be accompanied by awareness raising activities
- **Exchange of experience is the path forward** - gathering and transfer of good practices
- It takes an **integrated approach** to find solutions
- **Involve creative industries**
- Such exchange of experience helps to see one's "own" topic from a different angle and thus to develop new projects
- Reconnecting people to their territory through collective projects is very important; **involve volunteers and local population**
- Create multidisciplinary teams to ensure political support
- Use of participatory monitoring and evaluation
- Find where the energy is and **make people proud of what you are doing**
- Happy to see that culture, history, sensitive relationships between people and their territories are taken into account to improve current approaches.





Additional support

Interreg Europe and its Policy Learning Platform can provide additional support for policy makers:

- The Policy Learning Platform has produced a number of policy briefs, highlighting policy frameworks and good practices in [natural and cultural heritage in coastal regions](#), [halting ocean plastics pollution](#), or [protection and management of heritage in coastal](#) and fluvial regions
- The conclusions of the workshop on 'Preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity' is available [here](#);
- Regions and municipalities looking to improve their eco-systems framework can consider applying for a [Peer Review](#) from the Policy Learning Platform.

For more information on the workshop on natural and cultural heritage in coastal regions, visit the event's conclusions page, where you can access the presentation, attendee list and event photos.

