Europe develops its vision on maritime issues: the example of the Integrated Maritime Policy

With regards to maritime issues the European Union had so far adopted only legislative acts addressing specific issues related to the environment, the energy sector or regional development. The fact that the European Union is now considering maritime issues is most welcomed as for long its vision was restricted to a few specific areas of action and suffered from a lack of long-term visibility.

In the meantime, the development of maritime activities has accelerated:
- Increase in maritime trade,
- Use of underwater resources (oil, minerals),
- Use of fishery resources to meet the food challenge,
- Development of renewable energy systems offshore production,
- Establishment of intercontinental submarine cables,
- Economic development of coastal areas and their infrastructures.

Against this background and given the large size of the EU’s maritime space, it has become an emergency to establish a long-term maritime strategy based on putting all Member States’ resources together. Implemented by the Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE – European Commission), the "Integrated Maritime Policy" (IMP) is the response provided by European policymakers.

This policy aims at coordinating all European sectorial maritime policies in the following areas:

- Marine Safety
- Fishing
- Data and information systems
- Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)
- Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP)
- Marine and Maritime Research
- Marine Energies
- Naval and Maritime Industries

The seas and oceans are now considered driving forces of the economy, revealing a great potential for growth and development. This is why, the European Union has started to develop its maritime economy in order to achieve the objectives of the "Europe 2020" strategy for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Through its "Blue Growth" strategy, the European Union intends to "harness the untapped potential of Europe’s oceans, seas and coasts for jobs and growth".¹

According to the European Commission\textsuperscript{2}, the blue economy of the European Union accounts for 5.4 million jobs and for a gross added value of nearly 500 billion EUR per year. Hence economic growth in the European Union is with no doubt related to the sea.

A challenge well understood by Greece, President of the EU for the next six months

Greece, given its history and maritime orientation, put maritime issues high on its agenda for the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The Greek authorities have already asserted that “maritime policies correspond to a thematic that will run horizontally through the Presidency’s priorities”. These efforts are sure to be relayed by the Italian Presidency in the second half of 2014\textsuperscript{3}.

More specifically, the Hellenic Presidency’s program considers the following maritime issues:

- **Maritime Policy**

  Greece will intend to endorse the Council’s conclusions adopted on June 25. These achievements relate to the Structural Funds and the European Investment Fund’s operational programs, the action plan for maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal zone management and macro-regional strategies.

  In general, the Hellenic Presidency will act in line with the program enacted during the Limassol Declaration of October 2012\textsuperscript{4}. In addition, Greece stated that specific attention will be paid to issues related to insularity.

- **Migration**

  The overall European approach to migration refers to the control of EU maritime borders. Greece will maintain the European involvement in maritime surveillance.

- **Maritime and Coastal Tourism**

  The European strategy on "Challenges and Opportunities for Maritime and Coastal and Tourism in the EU" proposed by the European Commission will receive the support of the Greek Presidency. This strategy aims at improving the overall competitiveness of the sector. A conference\textsuperscript{5} on this topic will be organized by the Greek authorities.

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{5} Conference to be held on 14-15 March 2014 in Athens. More info: http://gr2014.eu/fr/events/conferences-and-seminars
Maritime Transport

Greece will act to facilitate the maritime traffic within the internal market and committed to revise the European Strategy on maritime transport. The Greek Presidency will promote initiatives for the development of new intelligent systems for the management of maritime transport.

The Greek authorities are hoping to advance discussions in the Council on the proposal for a Regulation establishing a framework for ports’ financial transparency and port services’ market access.

Maritime Equipment

Another priority for the Greek Presidency is the simplification of the regulatory framework for marine equipment as well as the harmonization of implementation of the International Maritime Organization’s requirements.

The next step would be to reach an agreement with the European Parliament on the Directive on marine equipment.

Maritime Security

The work of the Greek Presidency on maritime equipment is closely related to maritime security issues. Greece will prepare a Communication on maritime security which would address both internal and external aspects of the topic. A genuine European maritime security strategy should emerge and be adopted by the Council in June 2014.

Some stakeholders are already calling for a greater integration of security and defense issues within the Integrated Maritime Policy. According to the association “EuroDéfense France”, the creation of new sea routes should be accompanied with an international commitment to secure the vessels.

Maritime Spatial Planning

On 13 March 2013, the European Commission published a proposal for a Directive on maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal zone management. On 12 December, during its plenary session, the European Parliament defined its position at first reading in order to initiate trialogues with the European Commission and the Council. The Rapporteur of the Committee on Transport, MEP Gesine Meissner (Germany, ALDE) has been entrusted to start the negotiations with the Council on this proposal. It is

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expected that Greece will encourage the dialogue between the Parliament and the Council on this Directive.

**State of play of the implementation of this policy**

Until now, the main achievements concerning the European maritime policy were conducted in the field of knowledge and protection of the environment. Some examples of it are the "Marine Knowledge 2020" initiative on seabed mapping or the Directive "Strategy for the marine Environment" of 17 June 2008, which introduced an ecosystem-based approach.

For the Integrated Maritime Policy to be appropriate and effective it must be implemented at the level of European sea basins (e.g. the Atlantic, the Baltic, the Arctic, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean regions). It is indeed by adapting its policy to the specificities of the different maritime areas that the EU will fully benefit from the economic potential of the oceans and the seas. This is why, the European Commission has unveiled on 13 May 2013\(^8\) an action plan for a Maritime Strategy in the Atlantic region.

The EU also looks for international coordination in this field. On 24 May, a cooperation agreement was signed in Galway between the European Union, Canada and the United States concerning oceanic research in the Atlantic.

The European Commission has identified five areas where additional efforts should be provided to stimulate long-term growth in the maritime economy\(^9\):

- Marine energy,
- Aquaculture,
- Marine and maritime tourism,
- Marine mineral resources,
- Blue biotechnologies.

There is a need to better coordinate the work of the European maritime agencies and to foster dialogue with the different authorities of the Member States. The European Union must speak up with one voice when it comes to defend its maritime interests, for instance, before the International Maritime Organization.

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Considering the importance of the challenges related to the security of maritime transport routes, climate change and economic development, the development of a European vision on maritime issues is more than ever of outmost importance.

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