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**Contribution to the European Commission's Green Paper on Maritime Politics:  
"Towards the Future Maritime Politics of the Union"**

## **Introduction**

The Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce Forum (AIC Forum) has particularly appreciated the European Commission's choice of publishing a Green Paper related to the new maritime politics of the Union and the will of starting a debate opened to all the people interested in it before coming to the settlement of the measures to be activated.

A further appreciation is devoted to the decision of adopting a holistic and integrated approach of all the activities weighing on the maritime or sea environment, being conscious that the sectors' division cannot guarantee by any means the safeguarding of a high level of competitiveness, the environment's protection and a suitable governance in terms of safety as it has come to the surface in the last few years.

The AIC Forum, promoted in 2001 by the Chamber of Commerce of Ancona and by the Chamber of Commerce and Economy of Split, was born with the task of facing some common problems of the area and of promoting a joined development, joining the bodies of the Chambers of Commerce of Italy, Greece, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Montenegro and Albania. This way the action of the Chamber of Commerce of Ancona inserted itself in the integration strategy of the west Balkans in the Communitarian European Bodies worked out in the year 2000 and enforced using the tools of Pre - adhesion (IPA) within the balance sheet 2007-2013.

The expanding process of EU opens interesting perspectives under the point of view of economic growth for the regions on both sides of the Adriatic sea, but it will be extremely important to pay the right attention to the tools guaranteeing the complete sustainability. The contribution that the AIC Forum was born based on this fundamental orientation and it wants to lead to the discussion about the future maritime communitarian politics.

## **Specific evaluations**

*How is it possible to effectively support innovation in the sector of the services and of the products concerning coast tourism? Which specific measures aimed at promoting a sustainable tourist development of the coastal regions and of the islands have to undertaken at the Union level?*

The Green Paper devotes a limited space to tourist sector, but it gives some suggestions that should be at the base of future evolution.

The development has to match with the need for sustainability and for environment respect and it must constantly take into account the preservation of the quality of life along the coasts first. Sustainable tourism can contribute to the development of coastal areas and of the islands, improving the companies' competitiveness and answering to social needs, though the valorisation of environmental heritage. Tourism needs an alluring environment, well-preserved and safeguarded from the damages derived from a foolish use.

In this sense the synergies that could be created with the rural development's politics could be valorised: in many situations coasts and rural environment are so adjoining that it could be quite meaningless to make the hypothesis of a disjointed protection action.

The development of cruise and of pleasure crafts tourism as well represents an opportunity to be considered, in particular for the contribution it could give to the diversification of the offer and to its being not linked to a season. It is a segment of economic activities requiring a clear politics of financial investments for improving infrastructures, making them more suitable to the environment standards and able to answer to a growing demand.

The necessity of involving all the local actors in a deeper and more constructive discussion leading to the definition of an official quality standard through the spotting of a series of objective markers seems more important. There is an interesting note by the Commission defining an approach of quality's integrated management in the sector that spots the main factors: the participation of all the actors involved, the communication of the offer, the accessibility of the area and the internal mobility, the information and the visitors' care, the level of accommodation facilities, the entertainment and the monitoring of the economic, social and environmental impact.

The Green Paper mentions the current elaboration of an Agenda 21 for tourism, but a more determined and incisive commitment would be needed in order to create the assumptions for a quality tourism, that could become a model to be replicated in other areas too, in particular in those of the enlargement or of potential entrance in the EU. It could represent the strong point of the European model of tourism.

Within the AIC Forum a Co-ordination Centre for Tourism has been created involving the 7 participating countries in a series of projects aimed at a joined tourist promotion of the macro-region. It is the place for the analysis and deepening of the information available in terms of accommodation facilities, customers' influx, tools to support the amenities, promotion activities, necessity of training for the operators, events' co-ordination, sharing the different experiences, expertise and competencies.

Among the results obtained there are the creation of a common portal and a tourist brochure to promote the territories where the adhering Chambers of Commerce operate and the preparation of a booth for the trade fairs to be set up at international exhibitions that are considered as the most interesting ones according to the spotting of a well-defined customer's target.

The Forum has also started a project that wants to help a balanced development of certain zones of the Croatian coasts having a high tourist potentiality and still poorly equipped involving local communities and sharing the quality and control systems already applied elsewhere. Another project that has started from the AIC Forum is the development of tourist systems in Albania with the goal of creating socio-economic and cultural conditions complying with an acknowledged quality level of the offer.

A further example of the capacities of executing projects by the territory is represented by Re.Port, aimed at the creation of an integrated net among the sea-shores of the territory of Le Marche region, the Croatian coast and other public and private subjects. The project's objective is to qualify and valorise the local system of tourist and cultural offer on both sides of the Adriatic sea, and to realise sector analysis to experiment some initiatives of integrated tourism, marking the beginning of the first phase of experimentation of evolved services for the tourist ports of both sides (with ICT technology). The initiative is realised within the Communitarian program called Interreg. IIIA Adriatic Transborder, together with the Province of Ancona and the Marche Region.

The project MARINAS, instead, wants to valorise an integrated tourist offer of the Adriatic starting from the marine of the coastal zone to enlarge eventually to the inland territories.

*How can the EU ensure the on-going and sustainable development of its ports the best way possible?*

The Green Paper pays attention to the integrated management of the interface sea/land and to the need of weighing carefully the choices that could have a direct influence on the state of the sea's health. The ports are considered as an essential element in the chain that connects land and sea. They are the core matter of any choice that could enable a remoulding of transports and a subsequent reduction of impact on environment.

The increase of traffic and the essential role that will be played by sea transports and by the ports needs a series of measures that could enable to avoid some inefficiencies which could affect the development of sea areas. In this sense it is necessary to:

- Invest in works that could ease the link between the land and the sea, in particular with the productive hinterlands;
- Further develop the connection networks among the ports to ease international traffic of short and medium range (short sea shipping);
- Invest in the infrastructures within the port areas to avoid that the activities and services (for which a growth is foreseen in the next years, with interesting effects on employment) would undergo delays and inefficiencies.

In addition it is essential to elaborate a clear politics of development of the ports and the Green Paper in this case leaves the matter open, suggesting two alternative solutions, either of concentration or of spreading of the activities in a greater or lesser number of ports.

The guidelines concerning the great importance of short sea shipping and of intermodality of transports are in conflict with a concentration of the activities and of the investments in few and determined ports. This solution, in addition to generating unavoidable congestions and inefficiencies, would be a blocking element to a harmonious development of the regions, to the involvement of peripheral areas or those next to the EU and to an effective and progressive moving of traffic. For this reason, we hope that the choice will be the one of helping the spreading the development in such a number of port areas not to set aside any country of the area.

Italian industrial districts, in addition, are spread all over the territory and they are often placed in peripheral areas where the connection with international routes is hard. A possible re-dimensioning of the attention towards some ports could create a difficulty to the companies located in the nearby territory, with the subsequent loss of competitiveness of those operators who use sea transport as their main means to export their production abroad.

The Chamber of Commerce of Ancona has activated an Observatory on the ports of the Adriatic and the Ionian seas with the goal of monitoring the trend of the traffic of goods and of passengers, spotting the potential lines of development and to collect some evaluations about crucial points that could restrict the use of sea transport from the entrepreneurs active in the industrial districts of Le Marche region.

The Adriatic is just marginally involved by the great European lanes: Lane V goes North, touching the town of Trieste, while Lane VIII starts in Bari and moves eastwards up to the Black Sea. Lane VIII is potentially an extraordinary tool of development of the exchanges with the Balkans and of integration of a big European region. Nevertheless it has received poor consideration so far and it lacks of the financial means for completing the several projects for strengthening infrastructures. Within the perspective, that the AIC Forum really wishes, of the strengthening of Lane VIII we could make the hypothesis of involving the Italian Adriatic side, which would be otherwise marginalised, by strengthening the railway goods transport and a credible and economically alluring alternative for the companies of road haulage, enabling in this way the realisation of the Sea Motorway concerning the Adriatic.

The planning called Marco Polo II is directly aimed at the Italian territory going from Civitavecchia to Ancona. This has already been the subject matter of analysis and suitable interventions by the local Ministry of Infrastructures, as a transit area of the goods following a transversal route east-west in the Mediterranean area. In its Italian part this axis needs a serious intervention aimed at the improvement of the equipment of railways' infrastructure to speed up the transports' timings, ease modal transfers and not to interfere with passengers' transport.

*How can maritime clusters contribute to strengthen competitiveness, in particular of small and medium-sized companies, and to increase sea professions' allure? How can EU help synergies in the related sectors? Which role could the regional centres of maritime excellence perform?*

The Green Paper spots in the integrated management of the sea and coastal areas a favourable element suitable for helping the local territorial development harmonised with the needs of environment safeguarding. In some coastal areas some productive specialisations have developed. They are linked to sea activities of peculiar excellence, in particular in the shipbuilding industry (either of big dimensions, or in the sector of luxury boats).

It is necessary to preserve the economic and social value of these clusters, by supporting their competitive capacity through investments aimed at creating networks, at reducing geographic distances and at creating interconnections that give the possibility of considering the sharing of experiences like a possibility for improving and not to consider it as a market threat. Some areas of peculiar excellence, among which the coastal area around the port of Ancona, could be supported as leaders of networking projects.

The case of Ancona and of its project of Sea district is particularly interesting to show the potentialities of development of the section in the short term. The sector has been able to convert in the last few years, becoming an excellence centre in the production of huge yachts, getting visibility and fame at the international trade fairs. The entrepreneurial fabric of Le Marche region in the sector of shipbuilding industry is characterised by the simultaneous presence of shipyards and of companies of the sub-supply and for the width of the range of activities, products and market segments.

The companies active in the sea-shore nautical sector are 686, of which 12 (of which 10 are craft companies) are referred to the field of sea engines, while in the field of accessories (in the same period) the companies are 158 (of which 96 craft ones). The exports of the sector have increased much and rapidly in the last few years and they settled on about 354 million Euro in 2006 (just 5 years before they were about 84 million Euro).

The Chamber of Commerce of Ancona has been working next to this sector for years, promoting an open comparison on the role of the institutions to support a sector with high technological content and able to protect itself from international competitiveness through innovation and quality, stimulating co-operation among manufactures, sub-suppliers and chain operators.

The sector of shipbuilding industry has a high potential of growth also in terms of employment, but the complexity of the competitive challenges at an international level that the EU shipbuilding industries companies have to face shows the need for a tangible and effective support of the subjects that could contribute to its growth, in particular those committed in scientific research.

The AIC Forum has also started a project to help technological innovation and competitiveness in the Adriatic area (ITAC) to activate forms of transborder aggregation among small and medium-sized companies, to be transferred and replicated in other areas, aimed at planning, at experimenting and development of new products, processes or services and to help improvements in the companies' competitiveness. This project, particularly effective in the case of the Sea district, sees the Chambers of Commerce as intermediary between supply and demand of technological innovation.

The networks should be composed of companies, associations, Universities, research centres and political bodies coming from different geographic areas, in order to share ideas and points of view.

Some actions of upgrading and evaluation of manpower are also necessary, in particular for the high added value activities, in order to ease the application of technological innovations and to be able to invert the trend of reduction in the number of communitarian people employed in the sector. In order to be innovative, the maritime clusters, like other sectors, need qualified personnel able to adapt to the variations of the context.

To summarise, the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce Forum asks that for the Green Paper takes into account the following elements, as far as maritime politics are concerned:

- Formalisation of a tourism quality system along the coastal areas, support to the initiatives for the spreading of practises and the standards used by some cutting-edge territories;
- Spotting support tools for the joined tourists promotional activities within Euro-regions or other partnerships born from initiatives of the territory, in particular for the border zones of the EU;
- Integration of the Italian side of the Adriatic in Lane VIII, trough a railway link, to help the development of inner industrial areas;
- Examining of the potentialities of the axis of transport west-east connecting Spain, Italy and Greece, crossing Italy from the port of Civitavecchia to the one of Ancona within the planning Marco Polo II in favour of intermodality;
- Networks creation of sea districts, spotting some areas as leaders (among which could also be Ancona) accordingly to their consolidated experience;
- Support to training, research and innovation in the sea districts through suitable financial measures.