

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Interregional Project Meeting

*11- 13 April 2018*

### **FOLLOW-UP PAPER**

*Venue: Hotel Colón*

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## Abstract

This document summarizes the first of the two planned visits throughout the Land-Sea project in Catalonia. During the three days of the visit an internal meeting of the partners, a technical seminar in the city of Barcelona and a field trip to the Delta del Ebro Nature Park were held. Over the three days up to 45 people participated in any of the activities.

The internal meeting served to assess the status of the project after the first of the three years that will last, evaluate the work that must be done at the end of the second semester and start preparing the work of the third semester.

In the technical seminar, experts from the 4 participating countries made a total of 10 papers related to the following 3 topics that were highlighted in the meeting: 1) management of natural risks on the coast; 2) ecotourism as an economic driver and 3) public-private partnerships to reinforce this emergent sector.

During the Ebro Delta fieldtrip, the attendees discovered different relevant projects related to the former topics: a private ecotourism initiative (Món Natura Delta) driven by a nature and social-based foundation; an ecotourism entrepreneurship association as a member of the European Charter of Sustainable Tourism (ECST); several soft-engineering interventions to face and solve coastal dynamics problems in a natural park; the operation of a green filter for water treatment and finally the visit by ship to the rivermouth of the Ebro River, one of the largest rivers in Europe.



## Introduction

The European coastal areas represent fragile and vulnerable systems in physical, territorial, anthropic, social and economic terms. The real challenge of the next future is to turn "defensive" measures into "proactive" occasions for promoting interventions of regional growth in the field of the ecotourism sector and its connected fields.

The project LAND-SEA -Sustainability of the Land-Sea System for Ecotourism strategies - contributes to tackle these issues, by especially addressing the management policies for the coastal areas in the perspective of the land-sea ecosystem preservation and its sustainable fruition. In particular, the project is devoted to favour a more inclusive, effective and efficient processes of regional governance able to preserve natural habitats and contextually to support the development of regional ecotourism.

After the visits to Italy in April 2017 and to Bulgaria in November 2017, from 11 to 13 April 2018, the **3rd Interregional Project Meeting** was held in Catalonia (Barcelona and the Ebro Delta). The 12th was dedicated entirely to the Study Visit in the Ebro Delta to see practical cases, and the morning of 13th took place the Thematic Seminar. A total of 45 people from different partners attended to these activities. This 3rd Interregional Project Meeting was focussed on the next three main topics:

### 1. Management of land-sea coastal natural risks: fighting or adapting?

Local governments, which bear the largest responsibility for coastal planning, long have struggled with balancing strong demand for increasing development with protection of fragile environmental and cultural resources. State governments, too, have sometimes created special planning and regulatory bodies to address coastal issues at a larger scale. Now these same governments, in a time of diminished revenues, must consider the threats that substantial sea-level rise pose to current planning, existing development, and beleaguered ecological systems. These threats include inundation, flooding, enhanced storm surges, loss of infrastructure, destruction of wetlands and beaches, and increased risks for public health, safety and also lost of assets for (conventional) tourism and ecotourism. Although taking regulatory initiatives to adapt to predict future threats can be difficult politically, it also can conserve resources, mitigate crises, and protect ecosystems.

Building dams, barriers, seawalls, embankments and revetments were widely perceived as ultimate solution to increase safety and combat flood risks in coastal areas. However, these defences are seriously challenged and often suboptimal/negative with respect to other functions. Furthermore, conventional engineering often exacerbates land subsidence and hinders natural accumulation of sediments. In this context, nature-based solutions appear as relatively cheap to implement and maintain with some relevant advantages:

- Ecosystem-based adaptation provides LONG-TERM SUSTAINABLE flood defence.
- Ecosystem-based adaptation is often COST-EFFECTIVE because MULTIPLE ECOSYSTEM SERVICES.



- Ecosystem-based adaptation is MORE FLEXIBLE (to tackle changes, included climate change).
- Ecosystem-based adaptation offer OTHER OPPORTUNITIES in terms of ECOTOURISM, ECOSYSTEM SERVICES, and NEW PRODUCTIVE SYSTEMS (rice crops, aquaculture, etc.).

#### **TOPICS TO HIGHLIGHT**

From conventional to ecosystem-based coastal defence: We need a different way of thinking, with soft infrastructural measures, more adaptable, resilient, robust and sustainable.

Building with Nature: use the natural dynamics of the ecosystem to create flexible and sustainable infrastructure while enhancing nature values and other productive and ecosystem services (more benefits).

## **2. Ecotourism: nature-based tourism as economic driver for rural and coastal areas**

Ecotourism, usually a form of nature-based tourism, is often claimed to be one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism market globally. In the last couple of decades, many individuals and bodies e.g. IUCN, have begun to view ecotourism as a kind of economic key for supporting nature conservation and a driver for rural development. Although this form of tourism is generally nature-based, to qualify as ecotourism it should be careful of the environment. Being careful of the environment, it should help to conserve nature and thereby contribute to the sustainability of tourism reliant on wildlife. Many proponents of ecotourism also argue that an important ingredient of it is the provision of environmental education or knowledge (interpretation) for tourists who participate in it. Such knowledge can make tourists more aware of nature and more supportive of its conservation via changes in their personal behaviour, greater political support and larger financial contributions for such conservation.

It is also believed that ecotourism can provide direct financial support for nature conservation as well as for local communities where it occurs. Indeed, the International Ecotourism Society's definition of ecotourism makes local benefits a requirement for tourism to be classified as ecotourism. It defines ecotourism as "*responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment and improve the well-being of local people*". Ideally, ecotourism creates a local incentive for conserving natural areas by generating income through operations that are sustainable, low-impact (environmental and social), low-investment, and locally-owned.

### *Possible Economic Benefits and Economic Costs to Local Communities of Development of Ecotourism*

#### **ECONOMIC BENEFITS POSSIBLE**

1. Increased local employment and income
2. More regular employment and income throughout year
3. Greater diversification of economic activities, thereby reducing economic risks



#### 4. Opportunities for locally controlled ecotourism-related businesses

##### ECONOMIC COSTS POSSIBLE

1. Exclusion of locals from ecotourism areas with reduction in income, employment and resource availability to locals
2. Loss of control of ecotourism businesses and resources to outsiders
3. Consequent disruption of the social fabric of the local community

##### **TOPICS TO HIGHLIGHT**

Ecotourism as a meant for nature conservation: The development of ecotourism can increase public support and the total amount of funding available for nature conservation, so it can be a positive contributor to the conservation of nature.

Socioeconomic benefits of ecotourism beyond GDP: The reinforcement of ecotourism on a site does not have to have an economic surplus in itself to be economically justified. Its contribution to the net economic satisfaction (economic welfare) of the community, and the increase on the level of income and local employment in a particular region are positive consequences of ecotourism consolidation.

### **3. Public-private partnerships (PPP) and governance to reinforce ecotourism strategies**

Public-private-partnerships (PPPs) are increasingly important in a world where resources are constrained and competition is high. The best way to think of a PPP is as an opportunity of bringing together all the resources required to develop a memorable and sustainable tourism experience in an effective manner. Resources can include land, capital, knowledge and skills, amongst others.

What are the initiatives or interventions that may be the basis for a PPP? Generally speaking, PPPs have helped to enhance the competitiveness of tourism destinations by facilitating intervention in new niche markets (e.g., ecotourism) that can support appropriate economic development of a destination. The interventions include to improve the tourism product offered (e.g., clustering businesses together and developing touring routes, developing packages), marketing strategies (collaborative destination promotion), funding (e.g., obtaining donor funding), human resources (e.g., offer training), and infrastructure (e.g., new buildings). Public-private partnerships are essential to sustainable tourism and ecotourism development, as they allow stakeholders to participate in the development of tourism strategy, communicate and achieve their goals and interests, and successfully implement tourism programs, all while collaborating to achieve a common goal.



### **TOPICS TO HIGHLIGHT**

*Public-private partnerships (PPP) as a meant to optimize resources:* Involving public and private stakeholders, not only of tourism sector, but also from nature conservation, rural development, coastal management, etc., will improve results about conservation of natural resources; tourism product offered; marketing strategies, funding, human resources and infrastructure.

*Good governance is a key factor to implement ecotourism strategies in a complex context:* Good governance schemes (e.g., ECTS Certification) allow stakeholders to participate in the development of tourism strategy, communicate and achieve their goals and interests, and successfully implement tourism programs.

## Study Visit to the Ebro Delta

During the first of the two planned visits to Catalonia as part of the Land-Sea Interreg Europe project, we visited one of the most important wetlands in Europe, the **Ebro Delta**. The aim of this visit has been to show how the delta's natural assets are managed and the relationship between this environmental management and the socioeconomic activities that take place in the area. Particular emphasis has been placed on ecotourism activities promoted by private stakeholders (a private foundation and a SME association on Ecotourism), without forgetting the backdrop of the effects of climate change, which are already evident. The study visit took place on April 12 with a participation of 41 people (partners, experts and stakeholders) from the 4 countries members of Land-Sea.





## A Foundation that promote conservation and ecotourism

The trip to the delta began with the visit to the private facilities of *Món Natura Delta de l'Ebre*, managed by the Catalunya-La Pedrera Foundation, a private entity dedicated to the conservation of nature. The Foundation's strategy is to buy spaces of high natural value and make them available to society through ecotourism activities compatible with the conservation of these values. These lands have been rehabilitated from the former salt marshes of La Tancada and cover an area of 41.2 hectares. During the visit, attendees learnt different aspects of the Ebro Delta: the environmental value of the area (through their habitats, their flora and fauna), their traditional activities, and the main natural and socioeconomic problems to be solved (subsidence, salinization of crops, loss of soil contributions from Ebro River due to upstream dams, overfertilization, carrying capacity of fragile land-sea ecosystems, rise of sea level, loss of jobs opportunities, etc.). We saw different spaces that can be visited and a range of recreational and educational activities that give people better insight into the importance of this area of lagoons: salt production, traditional fishing and birdwatching. From an elevated observatory, the marshes, the beach and several birds were sighted with binoculars that the Foundation offered to visitors.



Mon Natura Delta facilities in the Ebro Delta

## The Barra del Trabucador: a very singular isthmus to be protected

The second visit was the *Barra del Trabucador*, a small dune cord that separates the sea from the Bay of the *Alfacs*. The director of the Natural Park of the Ebro Delta, Francesc Vidal, explained the changes that the *Barra* has had at the mercy of the coastal dynamics and the problems that the Park has had to face regarding the overfrequentation of the space.

Among the recent interventions in this singular and dynamic isthmus we highlight the re-naturalization of the beaches and the landscape, relocating the electric line on the seabed

instead of having electric towers/poles along the beach to supply the salt industry located at the end of the strip (Punta de la Banya). Also some campaigns to limit overfrequentation of vehicles (particularly overnight of campers vans), and to collect waste on beaches has been successful on recovering quality and attractive to this natural ecosystem.



Isthmus of la Barra del Trabucador, a very singular landscape

### Association of SME on ecotourism in the Ebro Delta: specialization together

Between the second and third visit, Josep Bertomeu, president of the **Association of Companies and Tourism Activities in the Ebro Delta**, presented this organization, its operation and its objectives. This organisation was created jointly with the implementation of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST), a practical management tool promoted by Europark Federation that enables Protected Areas to develop tourism sustainably. Mr. Bertomeu emphasized that a collective brand for the association “*Ebro Delta Ecotourism*” was recently created and presented, to reinforce the sector and the proposals to visitors on sustainable nature-based activities (birdwatching, guided cycling tours, trekking, sailing, boat trips and kayaking activities), and responsible local production (rice crops, seafood, local gastronomy, etc.). Several assistants asked for details about this collaborative initiative between different companies from the ecotourism sector.

### Green filters: cost-efficient green infrastructures for water management

The third visit took place in one of the two **green filters** that the company AcuaMed Technical manages in the Ebro Delta. It is a biological purification system consisting of using aquatic vegetation to eliminate nutrients from the water entering it, from rice fields. After spending a few days in these artificial lagoons the water that comes out is thrown into the bays cleaner than when it entered. The technician responsible for the installations gave details of the operation, the amount of purified water and, above all, the environmental benefits, as well as besides purifying the water; the lagoons are a habitat of great value for the aquatic fauna.





Visit to the green filters, a biological purification system of wastewater

### Buda Island and Ebro River mouth: a public-private natural reserve

In the afternoon took place a boat trip, following the last five kilometres of the Ebro River until its mouth, next to the Buda Island, a natural reserve, half with a private ownership, and the other part managed by the environmental public administration (Natural Park). During the journey, curiosities of the river were explained (like the process of fishing eels) and the coastal regression phenomena affecting the Ebro Delta were observed which are causing a loss of surface area and a salinization of lands.



Boat trip to the mouth of the Ebro River, close to the Buda Island

### Lessons learnt and remarks from partners

#### A private ecotourism initiative Mon Natura Delta

#### **Brief description**



The presentation of the good practice is an analysis of the possibilities for ecotourism with the use of the natural resources of the natural park. Particular attention is paid to the interaction of public and private partnership between government institutions, the business and non-governmental organizations.

### **Main highlights**

This topic is closely related good practice in building sustainable ecosystems through the successful public partnership. The main accents were put on the following:

- The tools for development of the tourism in the region have been applied in a consistent way by using the natural assets while saving the environment for a large number of organisms and different habitats and at the same time tackling major problems such as pollutions of the bays and loss of land mass due to the climate change.
- Ecological measures (biological fertilizers, pesticides, reusable sources of energy) are used to cultivate rice lands and to increase the value of the agricultural production and its use by the local population, while the preservation of nature highly depends on inputs in this production and human work that assimilated to ecological factors.
- A model of biodiversity conservation.

The Ebro River Delta is a very successful model for ecosystem management and preservation. The facilities to protect the environment, the preservation of habitats and plant species and successful actions used for agricultural development are in ecological balance. The local population has a positive perception of protected areas, seeing them as an opportunity for social welfare and source of benefits and not as a hindrance to their economic development. It was needed to establish an economic development plan different from the more traditional ones and that was sustainable for preservation of the ecosystem.

### **Conclusions**

The study visits with the construction and management of the Ebro Delta Natural Park, have showed us a successful project implementation which can be applied on local level. It is a good example for preservation natural and cultural heritage through implementation of protection constructions while emphasis also on the importance of local business development. The site is a good example of the importance of cooperation between all stakeholders in realizing ecotourism goals and economic initiatives in the region, prioritizing actions through a path of and mutual partnership and understanding. By ensuring that people are more closely involved in conservation could help facilitate more effective and efficient conservation and economic policies. In addition, the investments made in the protected area were oriented to benefit the tourists and the local population, with the application of conservation policies with consideration towards them.

### **An ecotourism entrepreneurship association**

#### **Brief description**

The case of ecotourism entrepreneurship association which the Catalan partner presented is a good example about involvement of all stakeholders in reaching a shared goal and having a



positive impact on the ecosystem. Many stakeholders have been involved through many aspects to preserve nature - from measuring the impact on biodiversity and flora, to preserve natural resources and work together for saving ecosystems and to reduce the negative interaction in the Ebro Delta evaluating tourism opportunities in the market.

### **Main highlights**

This topic is a good practice for public-private partnership built to make a significant and lasting difference in preservation of the area. The solutions implemented must be recognized, supported and adopted by policy makers applicable in the Bulgarian context and other regions. People play a vital role in protecting nature yet we can make better informed policy decisions that support problem solving and nature prevention only by engaging all stakeholders.

The main highlights were put on the following:

- Seeking harmonious cooperation between public authorities and non-government institutions;
- Public –private partnerships as a cornerstone for the local development of tourism sector
- Using European initiatives such as European Charter for Sustainable Tourism and forums as a tools in terms of jointly tackle the challenges of this fragile area;

### **Conclusions**

The public – private partnerships are essential in order to achieve sustainability and to develop environmentally-friendly ecotourism model for preservation of natural and cultural values towards fast growing segment of the economy which is the tourism. By creating initiative for engaging all stakeholders generates not only economic but also social impact on local communities. All actors involved have oriented themselves towards a sustainable economic growth with the environment, and an improvement of the life quality of the local inhabitants and local communities. In the identification of these actions, the consultation and involvement of the most relevant territorial agents in these areas was paramount. The approach in the management by involving the local population, local actors, non-governmental and governmental institutions through different initiatives can be transferred. A public-private partnership is possible for the purpose of developing an economic activity that is sustainable in natural areas. This model can be easily adopted by other the regions as a means to develop the local economy and therefore to improve the sustainability and conservation of the territory and its natural values. It's a partnership between different stakeholders to offer a common ground for cooperation towards a sustainable ecotourism model.



## The operation of a green filter for water treatment

### **Brief description**

The coastal area represents a fragile and vulnerable system. Chemicals used for water treatment have a negative impact on nature, and we are beginning ecofriendly solutions to our environmental problems. In order to reduce the domestic wastewater inflow to Lake Fúquene, a green filter has been established in the Ebro Delta - as a sustainable wastewater treatment system. As an alternative system for traditional wastewater treatment plants, green filters have the advantage of consuming no energy. In addition to having low negative impacts on the environment, they contribute significantly to enhance the landscape's aesthetics and they attract species associated with natural wetlands.

### **Main highlights**

Although the highlighted good practice is rather unique for our landscapes, the key points of learning are related to a careful planning of actions, a stakeholder involvement from the very beginning, and a critical approach towards a suitable human approach on the heritage landscape.

### **Conclusions**

The lands are extremely vulnerable and must be preserved because they allocate a range of vegetable and animal biodiversity. This project was developed within European initiative and it is an example how environmental assets can be used to improve conservation by using natural traditional practices. Old traditional ways of cleaning water, such as green filters, are environmental assets which can be used to improve conservation and understood the importance of the preservation by traditional activities in order to protect the biodiversity and healths of the lands. The project can be transferred to Varna regions with environmental similarities- especially for water treatment of the mouth of Kamchia River. The methodology requires minimum funding since it focuses on natural assets and human capital enabling them to check and monitor basic parameters of system. In conclusion, the project implemented and supported by European funds, lead to an environmentally friendly and efficient wastewater treatment.



## Thematic Seminar in Barcelona

The thematic seminar took place in the Marina Room at the Hotel Colon and attended by 35 people. The dynamics of the seminar was based on presentations of 20 minutes followed by 5 minutes for questions from attendees.



### Presentations

Below we enclosed a summary of the 10 papers that were presented, highlighting their interest in the Land-Sea project in general and for the subjects of the technical seminar in particular.

- Pasquale Contestabile presented *"Eco-tourism proposals for the integrated management of the coastal areas"*. The Southern Apennines River Basin District (AdB hereinafter) is always engaged in the elaboration of "state of art" territorial planning practices for the management of coastal areas. In collaboration with the Molise Region, the AdB intends focus on the molisian coastal area (and its connection on the inland). This coastline is only 36 km long, representing only a small part of the whole of the Southern Apennines River Basin District (about 2200 km) and of European coastal system (136'106 km). However, thanks to its peculiarities, it can be considered a small-scale "laboratory" able to provide good land-sea management practices in order to promote eco-sustainable development. The core of such development could be represented by the ecotourism, which is what the LAND-SEA project seeks to analyse and promote. A first analysis has been carried out in order to identify the main Molisian critical issues related to ecotourism, and recently presented during the 3rd Project Steering Committee meeting:
  - coastal erosion and related sediment management;
  - quality of coastal water due to seasonal overcrowding in coastal area;
  - absence of planning and definition of competitive tourism products;
  - several hydrogeological problems.

A series of initiatives are going to be prepared, as part of the "Action Plan". The 10 initiatives can be divided into three categories: Guidelines, Activities and Reports. This



approach is oriented to concretely introduce in Italy the ecotourism programmes and the lesson learned from the project partners, and to encourage the creation of institutional competences and skills for the development of a sustainable coastal system.

- Michele Macchiagodena, from the municipality of Termoli (Italy), presented an urban project to improve the touristic offer in the Dolphin Coast. This project is basically focused in infrastructures: enlargement of a harbour to allow the operation of big cruise ships and the construction of new commercial areas.
- Professor Michele Greco, from Basilicata University (Italy), presented a best practice for the assessment of coastal risk (floods and coastal erosion) using high resolution terrain data processing. The results of this work are coastal hazard maps pointing the strategic places where to construct underwater solid structures to prevent coastal erosion and flooding.
- Federica Roscioni, from the University of the Studies of Molise presented the results of the LIFE project MAESTRALE related with the eco-tourism best practices: dunes protection and restoration, construction of boardwalks and footbridges to avoid walking on endangered vegetation, information panels and limit vehicle passage, etc.
- Doctor Gabrielle Gönnert presented the adaption to flood and storm surge risks in Hamburg and its multifunctional use. For Hamburg the protection on storm floods and rising water levels is essential. To achieve an adequate level of protection for the city, different obstacles have to be solved. From limited availability of space within the city, financing and economic and environmentally sustainable solutions that provide on the one hand a very high safety standard and on the other, accommodate the different interests.

The city of Hamburg is located at the Elbe estuary, about 110 km away from the North Sea, from which this region of northern Germany is seriously threatened by storm surges. In addition to the storm surges, high river runoff from inland rivers into the Elbe should not be neglected. The river marshes can be threatened by both risks simultaneously. About 45% of the city is located in low lying areas, which without dikes, would be flooded by storm surges. The total surface of the low area protected by dikes is 342 km<sup>2</sup>, with around 326,000 inhabitants living there.

Coastal flood protection in Hamburg is divided into three parts: public flood protection, consisting of flood protection walls and sea dikes, private flood protection, mainly applied as individual object protection in the HafenCity, and flood protection in the harbour area.

The 103 km long public flood protection in Hamburg consists of 78 km of dikes, 25 km of sea walls and 86 other constructions inside the primary flood defences, such as pumping stations, locks and barriers.

Since the water level in the Elbe estuary is influenced by the North Sea tides, the dikes along the River Elbe in Hamburg are classified as coastal protection.



The height of the flood protection facilities mainly consists of two components: the design water level and the freeboard. The design water level is defined as the highest expected water level in a particular region for a certain period of time. It includes astronomical tides, wind surge, external surges and high river runoff.

The freeboard is added on top of the design water level in order to reduce the overtopping of wind waves. In Hamburg the EurOtop approach was chosen to determine the freeboard of the public coast protection constructions. The allowance for wave overtopping on the dikes in Hamburg is 0.5 l/m/s.

### **Conclusions**

As elucidated, flood protection is a crucial task for Hamburg and the safety of the inhabitants and the city. Different tasks have to be taken in to consideration to keep up the high safety standard on its current level or to increase it when needed.

Overall the City of Hamburg has found some useful and satisfying solutions to achieve this goal.

- Barbara Makowka presented “Regional Hubs for Sustainability Strategies (RENN) – Federal Project of the Council for Sustainable Development in Berlin”. The RENN network links players from a wide variety of societal areas to help ensure sustainable development at regional level becomes everyday practice.

People all around the world share a joint responsibility for sustainable development. Fundamental changes to the way in which we do business and the way we live are needed in order to enable future generations to live their lives with respect and prosperity in an intact environment.

The four RENN hubs (RENN.nord/RENN.west/RENN.mitte/RENN.süd) create links between various players and initiatives to promote sustainable development, foster dialogue on experiences gained and provide impulses for societal change. The RENN thus make the complex concept of sustainability something which can be experienced across regions and national borders.

The RENN are being supported by the federal government for a period of five years. 2016-2021. The German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) has been tasked with selection of the hubs and has established a coordination centre in Berlin that will support and guide the four RENN hubs in unfolding nationwide impact.

### **Conclusions**

After one and a half year the four RENN hubs learned from each other, recognized barriers, supported and strengthened local networks. These experiences can also be applied internationally.

- Yuliya Tumbarkova, director of Golden Sand Nature Park, presented "Golden Sands Nature Park". The Golden Sands Nature Park is the first coastal park in Bulgaria, declared as protected area 75 years ago. The Park's history, biodiversity and its cultural and its historical heritage, the opportunities for tourism and recreation



and the developed and realized educational programs were presented to the participants. The park is a territory

- For the protection of European significance priority forest habitats and important species of flora and fauna, part of the European ecological network Natura 2000;
- Subjected to high pressure, due to the proximity of the park to large resort complex range of holiday areas, dispersed settlements and land for agricultural use and recreation, with consequences including construction interests anthropogenic pressure and violations of pollution with waste;
- With developed cognitive and tourist routes;
- To carry out educational activities and research.

### **Conclusions**

As a result of the review, there is a need for:

- Development of management decisions for the preservation of the Golden Sands Nature Park as a territory for conservation of European significant priority forest habitats and of the conservation important species of flora and fauna, part of the European ecological network Natura 2000;
  - Achieving a balanced development of ecotourism activities as part of a unified system of nature conservation and ecotourism in the District of Varna, Dobrich Province and the North-East Planning Region;
  - Creating new opportunities for educational activities and research;
  - Involvement of more partners from the country and abroad in the field of scientific research and environmental and visitor monitoring of the nature park, as a condition for management of balanced recreational use;
  - Development of a system of main activities and measures for the development of the Golden Sands NP as a place to increase the attractiveness of tourist destination Varna and Northeastern Planning Region.
- Lyudmila Nenkov, member of the Management Board of Bulgarian hotel and restaurant association, presented “Ecotourism-sustainable tourism in Golden Sands Nature Park - synergy between the tourist industry in Varna and the nature park”. The presentation is an analysis of the possibilities for ecotourism development in the resort Golden Sands based on the use of the natural resources of the natural park. Problems and possibilities for their solution are pointed out. Particular attention is paid to the interaction between business, non-governmental organizations, and



regional authorities. The benefits of ecotourism development in the Golden Sands Nature Park have also been explored.

This topic is closely related to the subjects from the other project participants who presented their problems and good practices in building sustainable land-sea systems through the successful implementation of ecotourism strategies.

- Fernando Cabello, Director of environment of *Consell Comarcal of Maresme*, explained the protection policies that the local administration is implementing in the endangered coast of *Maresme* region.
  - Imma Juan, from Ebro Delta Natural Park, explained how the European Chart for Sustainable Tourism was implanted in the park and how now this label is used for planning the territory for a more sustainable tourism.
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## General remarks from partners

“The Ebro River Delta was a very successful model for successful ecosystem development. The built system and facilities for the restoration of the environment, the preservation of habitats and plant species, successful actions to prevent environmental pollution, agricultural development, fishing and aquaculture, the extraction of salt - all organized in a lean system aiming at preserving ecological balance in harmony with the development of appropriate economic activities. Ecotourism fraud, in which many authorities, organizations and companies are cooperating successfully.”

*Bulgarian expert – Region of Varna*

“The presentations, as well as the study visit with the construction and management of the Ebro Delta National Park, have enabled us to explore the mechanisms, policies and implementation of a number of successful projects, especially the Ebro Delta project, which can be applied in the future implementation of a targeted policy for the construction of the ecosystem of the mouth of the Kamchia River and the Golden Sands Nature Park.”

*Bulgarian expert – Region of Varna*

“Thanks to the project LAND-SEA, the Southern Apennines River Basin District is moving towards a more inclusive, effective and ecological-oriented processes of regional governance in the perspective of a sustainable use of the land-sea system”

*Italian expert - Southern Apennines River Basin District*

## General conclusions

To conclude, we would like to point out that in the Barcelona seminar it was highlighted that coastal management and the concept of ecotourism is a polyhedric and multifactorial sector that sometimes it is differently understood or even contradictory among conceptual visions and operative developments. Here are some examples:

- In Bulgaria a natural protected area lost the legal protection of its coastal part to carry out urban developments and tourism projects. On the contrary, public sector and private businesses are trying to base their tourist offer on natural values that no longer exist because they were destroyed or declined.
- In Italy, they are well acquainted with the consequences of the construction of ports and other hard infrastructures in coastal dynamics, among which the loss of sand on the beaches stands out. At the same time, in the same region, it is proposed to expand a port for tourist promotion and build more submerged structures to avoid it.
- IN most cases natural coastal habitats do not need protection against floods or storms because their existence is precisely the consequence of the effects of these natural phenomena. In this sense, protecting them with harsh infrastructure is an incongruity.



These real situations pose the challenge of enhancing that natural heritage that becomes attractive for ecotourism and minimize (and even reverse) those dynamics and equipment that can put them at risk.

Finally, we would like to stand out that management of land-sea coastal natural risks, ecotourism as economic driver for rural and coastal areas; and public-private partnerships (PPP) and governance are three dimensions strongly interlinked, to be managed altogether in a common territory.

