

# Sustainable environmental management and accessibility of urban coastal areas, Agria - GR

## 1. Policy Objective & Theme

- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Sound use of resources and promotion of less resource intensive processes/products
- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Improving competitiveness

## 2. Key Approaches

- Integration
- Socio-economic

## 3. Experiences that can be exchanged

This case shows how the planning procedures and instruments can be specifically applied to sustainability and accessibility in urban coastal areas, particularly making an extra effort for people with special needs. It encourages the adoption and application of the EU EMAS (Eco Management and Auditing Scheme) guidelines to upgrade urban coastal areas with sustainable management and environmental protection, to strengthen the sustainability and competitiveness of urban coastal areas and to encourage and facilitate the co-operation and networking of urban coastal areas in the Mediterranean and the European Union.

## 4. Overview of the case

In Agria, an initiative was taken to initiate the regeneration of a declining urban coastal areas and establishment an integrated and prototype EMAS application adapted for urban coastal areas.

## 5. Context and Objectives

### a) Context

Agria town is built by the sea with 4200 metres coastline and a very lively urban coastal zone, where many restaurants, cafes and shops are located. The area has a variety of tourist attractions, including beaches, cultural places and beautiful natural environment. The Coastal Area of Agria has grown rapidly during recent years, drawing the attention of investors and attracting investments in the field of tourism and entertainment, most of which are located in its waterfront. The growth of the coastal area is poorly planned with badly regulated activities. Through the action and EMAS application of the project, the coastal zone developed ICZM methods to safeguard the natural resources, to improve the accessibility and upgrade the aesthetics of the coastal zone of Agria.

The Eco-management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) has been available since 1995, and was strengthened in 2001, upon the integration of the EN/ISO 14001 standard as its binding Environmental Management System. The use of Environmental Management Systems for stakeholders of coastal zones can be understood as one effective method of integrative management. By taking a systematic approach to address potential conflicts that may arise from coastal activities of stakeholders, this tool makes their direct and indirect environmental impacts more easily assessable. The scheme is open to all economic sectors, including public and private services. Participation takes place on a voluntary basis but an increasing number of enterprises are implementing EMAS in order to make use of its multiple benefits. Coastal zones are among the most complex social-ecological systems, with humans constantly pressuring present resources, compromising many of the

ecosystem services crucial to the well-being of coastal economies and people. Supporting services like shore-line stabilization, de-toxification of polluted waters, as well as amenity services such as tourism and recreation are in conflict with on-going industrial activities, fishing and logistics. Particularly, tourism service providers, as well as ports and marine protected areas, use the scheme to add credibility and confidence with public authorities, other businesses and customers.

## **b) Objectives**

The specific objective was the implementation of policies for the sustainable management of the urban coastal area, with emphasis on accessibility, sustainable development and environmental management. Furthermore the protection of natural and cultural resources, the promotion of the comparative advantages, the awareness of the citizens and the rejuvenation of the urban coastal areas. The work was completed in 15 months.

## **6. Implementation of the ICZM Approach (i.e. management, tools, resources)**

### **a) Project Management**

The project manager was Eurotrans Consulting Ltd, Greece and Agria Municipality was the implementing local authority. The initiative was implemented by participants in local and regional level, in particular Municipalities, Universities and Institutes from Greece, Cyprus, Italy and Malta.

### **b) ICZM tools**

The methodology is based on two axes

- The Pilot Application of the Eco Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) adopted for urban coastal areas
- Implementation of Local Pilot Actions

EMAS was investigated in a pilot application to urban coastal areas for the first time. In doing so, environmental, aesthetic and heritage issues and needs of the urban coastal areas have been analysed. These coastal municipalities will be able, in a second phase, to apply for an EMAS certification, after the requirements of the EMAS Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council are fulfilled.

Regarding the pilot action, Agria has carried out paving and landscaping of a part of the coastal zone. Two ramps for people with special needs have also been provided and information boards have been erected at the entry points of the Agria Urban Area to promote the facilities of the coastal zone for visitors. Agria has also carried out a study for the replacement of the temporary shades with traditional type pavilions in order to upgrade the aesthetics of the coastal zone.

## **7. Cost and resources**

The budget for the implementation of the actions in Agria including pilot action, management and administrative costs was Euros 259,000.

## **8. Effectiveness (i.e. were the foreseen goals/objectives of the work reached?)**

All the planned actions of the project, were implemented successfully and in the planned timescale. The methodology for the implementation of the EMAS pilot application included the identification of the problems in the coastal area, the assessment of the problems and the adaptation to the EMAS Guide in order to be the legacy for other municipalities that wish to apply EMAS in their coastal area. Concerning the pilot action, the action for the upgrade of the aesthetics and the accessibility of the coastal area was successful and according to the time schedule. The specified objectives were fully achieved.

## **9. Success and Fail factors**

- appropriate policy framework for urban coastal areas, determined by the coastal area's geographical size and physical and socio-economic conditions
- Enhancement of inter-disciplinary research on common coastal management problems
- Development of standardised environmental quality and socio-economic monitoring objectives
- Regeneration of declining urban coastal areas
- Establishment of EMAS application adapted for urban coastal areas
- The pilot actions implemented had wide acceptance amongst businesses, residents and visitors and influenced local stakeholders and the owners of the shops, raised their awareness for the environmental and aesthetic upgrade and there after the residents and visitors have adopted a more responsible behaviour for the coastal area.

## **10. Unforeseen outcomes**

Agria also carried out a study for the replacement of the temporary tents with traditional type pavilions in order to upgrade the aesthetics of the coastal zone, however due to problems with the jurisdiction between 1st and 2nd tier of local governance, this action was not implemented and was replaced by paving, ramps, establishment of rubbish-bins and benches, as well as information signs.

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## **13. Sources**

- MedCOAST.Net Project Final Report (2009)