



**Knowledge and efforts for sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors of Slovenia in the Northern Adriatic**

**BlueMed meeting of stakeholders on a micro-regional level**

**Marine Biology Station Piran of the National Institute of Biology,**

**Piran, Slovenia, 21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017**

**Brief Summary Report**

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## Aims of the meeting

The Bluemed concept of development in marine and coastal area needs to be introduced and work on this concept needs to start. Therefore, the National Institute of Biology (NIB) in conjunction with the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport (MIZŠ) came up with the idea that the first meeting of Bluemed in Slovenia could be organized on a 'micro-regional' level (northern Italy, Croatia and Slovenia). From the beginning also an idea emerged that this event could be organized together with the presentation of the environmental report (2016) from the EASAC (European Academies Science Advisory Council) and JRC (Joint Research Centre), together with the presentations of some other activities of JRC's in Europe that are relevant for the Bluemed. For this reason a 'two-days' event was organized by *both* institutions.

The first day was devoted to the Bluemed (Mediterranean) and EUSAIR (EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region) concepts. The EUSAIR concept is already established and covers the Adriatic-Ionian region. This is relevant also for the introduction of the Bluemed concept in countries of this region. Differences and synergies between these two concepts were addressed adequately, according to present findings. We deliberately introduced in this session the 'Smart Specialization' (*national/regional innovation strategies for smart specialisation (RIS3)*), which was covered by the JRC.

The morning session of day two consisted mostly of reports from the JRC, while the afternoon session was devoted to the first national Bluemed meeting, at which national stakeholders met. This part was conducted in Slovenian and was extremely important for the Bluemed. This was the first discussion by Slovenian BlueMed about what should be the relevant topics. Most importantly, the national pivots, that will represent the country in working platforms on a Mediterranean level, were presented and consensually approved by the auditorium.

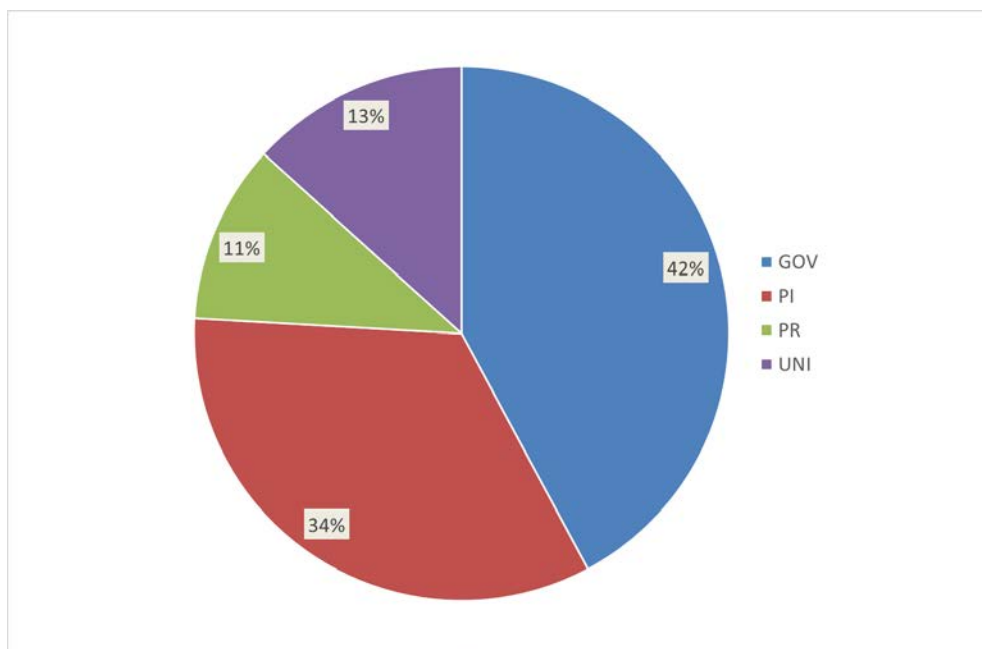
Preparatory works for the meeting started at the end of November 2016. The two-day long meeting is a result of more than three months of intense, continuous and collaborative work of MIZŠ and NIB. On February 16<sup>th</sup>, more than a month before this meeting took place, MIZŠ organized an 'introductory' Bluemed meeting in Ljubljana at

the ‘governmental level’. It appeared to be fruitful as it resulted in the dominant presence of the ‘public sector’ at the ‘first’ Bluemed meeting.

One of the meetings key aims was to encourage the auditorium to be active in discussions throughout all parts of the meeting. This also implies that we have to organize the meeting in such a way that enables active participation of the attendees. We simply applied the ‘Google Forms’ tool so that each participant could access very simple surveys by mobile phone or with a portable computer via a web page. During the discussion parts of the meeting we could readily present and comment on the statistics/results of surveys, and also collaboratively reply to ‘key’ suggestions/comments that were given by participants.

### The participants’ structure

The announcement for the two-day long event was passed by the MIZŠ to 380 email addresses. There were exactly 100 pre-registrations on the web page. Out of those, 86 (86 %) of them signed the registration sheet upon arrival. Nine participants were from Italy, four from the ‘EU’ (members of JRCs and EASAC) and unfortunately, only one was from Croatia (the invitation was sent to 30 email addresses in Croatia). We composed a simple grouping of participants into society sectors. Among them we grouped together under the item ‘governmental’ (= ‘GOV’) all members of environmental and other state/regional agencies, ministries, administration boards and directions. Research, and other institutes of public origin are considered as ‘public institutes’ (= ‘PI’). Participants that came from universities (= ‘UNI’) and from public and private institutions (=‘NGO’) were also considered. Among participants from the private sector (‘PRI’) we considered also the representative from the ‘Corila’ organization in Italy, because this organization acts according to the legislation for companies, albeit non-profitable ones. The pie chart of the percentagewise distribution of participants among sectors looks like the following:



The Public sector (42 %) dominated the attendance. From the point of view of forming a streamlined strategic national policy of the development of the coastal and marine domain, in accordance with the Bluemed initiative, this seems to be a good starting point. The second most dominant part (34 %) was composed of public (research) institutes. We have also to keep in mind that the meeting venue was at the Marine Biology Station of NIB, from where 13 participants joined the meeting (46 % out of 34 %). The private sector and ‘academia’ shared a similar percentage (11-13 %).

The results of the first survey show the views regarding participant structure. Participants choose in which of the four Bluemed platforms (‘knowledge’, ‘economy’, ‘technology’ and ‘policy’) they believe they fit. This survey was opened only after the audience got a good feeling of what each platform meant. This was pointed out through previous presentations and strengthened by the organizers when participants were invited to contribute to the survey. The distribution of participants to these four platforms is illustrated below:

60 responses + ⋮

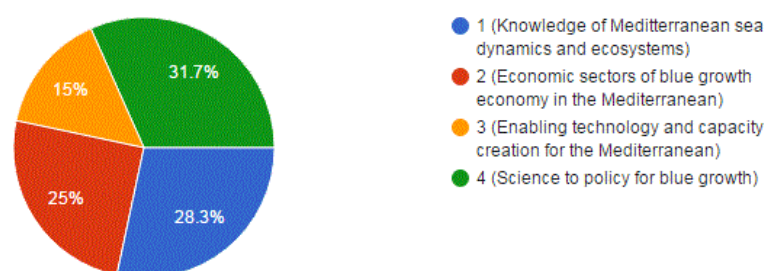
**SUMMARY** INDIVIDUAL

Not accepting responses

Message for respondents

This form is no longer accepting responses

### Choose the Bluemed platforms (1, 2, 3 or 4) (60 responses)



### Last and first name (54 responses)

There were 60 responses from all attendees, including Italy and Croatia, which filled this survey, which was opened also during the second day of the meeting. A majority of participants considered themselves belonging to the fourth, 'policy' platform, this is reasonable, because a majority of the audience was from the 'GOV' sector. The second most 'abundant platform' was the first, 'knowledge' platform, what also mirrors the second largest 'sector' (public institutes) of the attendees. Out of 60 responses, the second platform ('economy') composed one quarter, while the third, 'technology' platform was chosen by only 15 % of 60 participants. It is also comforting to see that 54 participants identified themselves by their name, which helps in starting communication within and amongst platforms on a national and micro-regional level.

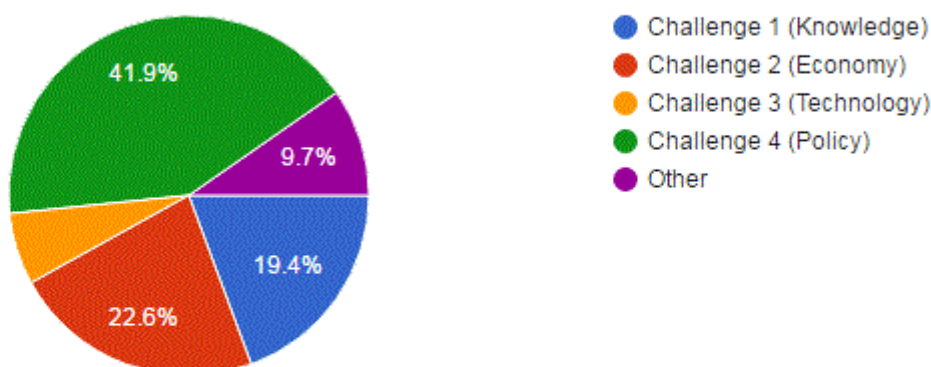
## Survey results

Below we have attempted to organise and summarise the remaining survey responses, despite difficulties regarding this issue. Starting with the first survey in which participants from a 'micro-region' could write down their opinion, we see that as a reply to the statement:

»Specify one key issue/question to be discussed related to Bluemed challenges«

We received 34 answers, 31 of which were submitted before the discussion took place. One idea was extracted from the discussion and added by the organizers, while the remaining two answers arrived just after. Participants had a choice to select the Bluemed 'challenge' in which their topic should fit. Four replies stated that their topics/ideas fit into several challenges. The statistics from the 31 replies is clear:

To which challenge (1-4) would the issue/question fit? (31 responses)



Last and first name (27 responses)

The majority of topics fits to the Challenge 4 ('Policy'), over one fifth to Challenge 2 ('Economy'), which is tightly followed by Challenge 1 ('Knowledge'). The lowest percentage (10 %) of ideas to be 'raised' is devoted to Challenge 3 ('Technology'). 90 % of participants identified themselves by their name.

In a qualitative sense, most topics/ideas were devoted to the need of:

- Multilevel, cross-sector and interdisciplinary collaboration
- Pursuing synergies between the EUSAIR and the Bluemed concept
- Sustainable development and risk assessment of the Adriatic Sea
- Implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (*MSFD*) over the Adriatic-Ionian region within the Bluemed concept and EUSAIR opportunities (or Adrion programme) together with marine and maritime *planning*
- Research and monitoring over the northern Adriatic area: How to repeat the 'Alpe-Adria' research and monitoring programme that took place between 1989-1990.

Where in the first item the most frequent topic is written, while in the last the least frequent topic stands, which received a solid 'echo' in the audience.

We will continue with the next survey that also addressed the audience from the 'micro-regional' domain with the suggestion:

»Please write down one key message of the meeting "to take away"«

Which should state what participants think are the most relevant impression from the meeting. There were *eight* replies, which we combined in the following dominant ideas:

- Coordination of and synergies among activities related to the sea and coastline
- Less fragmentation and more prioritization of activities related to the sea and coastline
- Human health in 'every policy'

Although the latter was, again, the least frequent it raised attention in the audience during the discussion. About the issue of 'health' a sentence will be written in Conclusions.

The last group, composed of two questions in the survey addressed only the stakeholders at the national level. The translated versions of them reads as:

»Which is the key question we should address on a national level?«

»Which key question should we address on a wider level (cross-border, regional, or Mediterranean)?«

There were eight replies to both questions. While they are extremely different in content, the majority of ideas on a national level relate to:

- Improvement of the collaboration and cross-sectorial coordination of activities and defining strategic priorities
- The issue of the 'coastal' area – its questionable extension to the inland.

Otherwise, thoughts were very specific, they range from the issue of sea mud deposition from dredging activities of the water-way channels, to the possibility of supplying electricity and gas to ships (in ports) and the 'sensitivity' analysis' against risk of pollution along the whole Slovenian coastline. Among the issues that need attention on a 'regional level' we combined responses as follows:

- Ecosystem approach in maritime planning – despite some reasonable efforts within projects (e.g. projects like Adriplan) this planning is done mostly (only) at the national level, which is in a conflict with regional agreements and with the national planning in neighbouring countries.
- Sensitivity analysis of the whole Adriatic-Ionian coastline against the risks of accidents and pollution that originate from maritime traffic.

Individual suggestions from the audience raised a question of responsibility from the management authorities of the 'joint' marine space and also the issue of concrete implementation of political agreements. The role of potential of tourism, as well as its



influences on the environment and society should also be explored and planned on a regional level.

## National pivots

The first national meeting of stakeholders took place in the afternoon of the second day. The meeting was also devoted to the functioning and organization of working platforms (at the Mediterranean level) and the role of national pivots within them. There was a clear acceptance by attendees of the propositions.

For the platform 2 ('Economy') the organizers proposed:

Dr. Emil Juvan, associate Professor at the Faculty 'Turistika' of the University of Primorska (Univeršitá del Litorale).

Dr. Juvan is experienced lecturer and researcher who is knowledgeable regarding tourism at a 'global' and Mediterranean level and is also acquainted with the local tourist activities. He is willing to drive the whole 'economy' platform, where support from the 'policy' platform at the national level will be provided.

For the platform 3 ('Technology') the organizers proposed:

Prof. Dr. Elen Twrdy, the Dean of the Faculty of Maritime Studies and Transport, the University of Ljubljana. Prof. Twrdy (she) also acts as a member of the supervisory committee of the Port of Koper, meaning that she is well acquainted with the activities linked to the Slovenian (single) port, as well as to the maritime traffic. She will take over the 'technology' platform also with the support of 'policy' platform at the national level.

For the platform 4 ('Policy') the MIZŠ (the 'Ministry') took over the responsibility (Mrs. Marta Šabec and Tina Ušaj) at the national level.

For platform 1 ('Knowledge') it was presented that the Marine Biology Station of NIB holds most of the research knowledge about the sea in Slovenia and therefore the pivot

should clearly be chosen from this institution. A compromise was reached in a sense that the author of this report (Vlado Malačič) will presently substitute the pivot of this platform. In the 'platform guidelines' it is written that a member of consortium (partner on the Bluemed project) is 'exceptionally' allowed to act as a national pivot. Considering the Slovenian circumstances, which so far did not have a strategic approach to the development of the marine and coastal area, and considering the population size in a country, this makes sense.

## Conclusions

A clear message can be outlined from the two-day long meeting that there is a strong need for identifying synergies, cross-sector collaboration and coordination. Many challenges were expressed that are already well covered in the Bluemed initiative. Nonetheless, it seems relevant to emphasize what issues/challenges gained attention from the audience and what perhaps did not find a suitable 'place' in the existing Bluemed concept (according to SRIA) and which of these may be undertaken by Bluemed in the future. These topics could be listed as:

- Human health

It was expressed that people will become more responsible in their behaviour towards the marine environment if we point out from the start that our misbehaviour in the marine and coastal environment will sooner or later impact our health. The continuous awareness of health issues may result in activities that lead to better treatment of the marine and coastal environment.

- Smart Specialization

The Bluemed concept has many issues that are also the focus of a variety of smart specialization 'chains' which are already 'on-going'. This new view of economy growth is heavily (financially) supported in the EU. Unfortunately, the Mediterranean area is poorly 'covered' with smart specialization 'chains', while in the Adriatic-Ionian region there is a complete 'blank'. Therefore, there is a vast range of opportunities in this direction that should be considered. However, the Bluemed concept should prioritize the connection with EU institutions (JRC's) that are experienced in this direction and would offer a solid guidance. This would be a way to booster blue growth.

- Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and marine/maritime planning

The implementation of MSFD is most certainly a matter of national responsibility. However, without collaboration among countries in the Mediterranean area there could hardly be a consensus reached about what is a 'good environmental status' (GES). Presently research studies of the marine environment are fragmented, uncoordinated. From existing studies not enough knowledge is collected in a consistent way, despite efforts specialized to specific 'descriptors'. Perhaps the directive is in some places (for some descriptors) vaguely defined and it is hard to implement and might be 'relaxed', while for other descriptors (i.e. for the 'hydrological' descriptors) the support by relevant experts, who were not included from the start, is lacking. Without the cooperation among countries the MSFD cannot be complete. Moreover, the national planning of marine/maritime development in Mediterranean countries is currently reflecting a non-coordinated and fragmented approach. Perhaps the Bluemed CSA could act as a proper mediator on a Mediterranean level.