

Albanian Southern Coastal Development Plan: Process, Novelties and Challenges

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1 ABSTRACT

Albanian Ionian coastal zone is one of the country's most valuable assets thanks to its rich cultural heritage, natural beauty and national parks that host high biodiversity. The rocky coastline extends to more than 100 miles and maintains a population of about 80,000. Although relatively underdeveloped, the coastline faces serious challenges with unregulated urbanization, lack of adequate infrastructure, uncollected and untreated wastewater and solid waste, pressures on protected areas and wetlands, and unsustainable use of natural resources. These issues are exacerbated by illegal constructions coupled with lack of urban planning and territorial management. Those challenges, if unaddressed, could jeopardize efforts to ensure long-term development and preservation of cultural heritage and environmental beauties in the area.

Efforts to promote sustainable development were highly difficult due to the absence of a whole range of institutional, economic and enforcement capabilities. Obstacles included (i) lack of a long-term sustainable development vision for the area, (ii) traditional absence of land use planning practice in the region, (iii) pressure for illegal constructions along the coastline, (iv) lack of adequate infrastructure, and (v) inadequate institutional framework for integrated coastal zone management.

Drafting a land use plan which would provide the guidelines for long term sustainable development in the area was very important albeit highly difficult task.

The Albanian Southern Coastal Development Plan was developed pursuant the EU Code of Conduct in Coastal Areas. The planning approach was quite novel: the process was highly participatory and the public was almost a co-writer of the plan. The plan defines land use purposes by providing clear regulations. The Albanian Southern Coastal Development Plan also helps with institutional arrangements in halting illegal constructions, preserving crucial environmental and cultural heritage areas, suggesting the revival of traditional architecture in the coastal villages, promoting development in suitable areas and prioritizing public infrastructure development needs.