

Rajapaksha.Upendra, et al (eds), 2016, "Building the Future – sustainable and resilient environments": *Proceedings of the 9th International Conference of Faculty of Architecture Research Unit (FARU), University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka, September 09-10, Colombo* pp. 221–235. ©

INTEGRADED COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT (ICZM) IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: LOCAL PRACTICES AND IMPEDIMENTS TO IMPEMENTATION

KONSTANTINOS LALENIS

University of Thessaly, Volos, Greece

klalenis@prd.uth.gr

Abstract:

This article refers to the analysis of "gaps" between institutional frameworks and implementation of actions for the integrated management of the Mediterranean coastal zones and focuses on the local level, dealing particularly with case studies in Mediterranean municipalities, as part of the Mare Nostrum Project. The primary objective of the project - funded by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument of Cross Border Cooperation in the Mediterranean Programme - is to contribute in the improvement of policy implementation procedures referred to ICZM along the Mediterranean coast, at local, national and cross border level, and in the integration of coastal zone policies to the wider socio-economic and spatial policies. Identifying and analyzing existing legal and institutional tools for spatial planning and ICZM in the case studies carry out this objective. In general, the case studies indicate that local authorities recognize the high importance of coastal zone in urban development and environmental protection. Nevertheless, in all cases, local authorities focus on planning procedures, which are designed to streamline development, while often impairing the public's right to be aware of, and participate in the planning process. If a "bottom up" approach is considered to be essential, public participation procedures should be upgraded and reinforced.

Keywords: *Coastal zone management, urban planning, cross-border cooperation, coastal areas, implementation gap.*

1. Introduction

Article 4.3(e) of the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean, requests the Contracting Parties to promote the integrated management of the coastal zones, taking into account the protection of areas of ecological and landscape interest and the rational use of natural resources. In 2008 a Protocol was developed to provide a common framework for the implementation of the above. Despite the signing of the Protocol, the widespread degradation of the Mediterranean coast

continues, due to pollution, and uncontrolled residential, tourist, and recreational development. In parallel, the ICZM Protocol is poorly implemented by member states, while numerous stakeholders with overlapping responsibilities and low level of understanding and cooperation are involved in its implementation on local, regional, national, and cross border level.

This article is based on research conducted for the Mare Nostrum Project (2015). The primary objective of the project is to contribute in improving policy implementation procedures referred to ICZM along the Mediterranean coast at local, national and cross border level in order to complete the integration of coastal zone policies to the wider socio-economic and spatial policies while increasing its resilience to natural and man-made hazards. Identifying and analyzing existing legal and institutional means that are available for the implementation of spatial planning and ICZM to participants from Israel, Greece, Malta and Spain carry out this objective. Coastal planning and management tools are treated as instruments that are embedded in the broader legal, institutional, administrative and economic framework. The phased program and method might facilitate the realistic implementation of ICZM within and across national borders in the Mediterranean.

2. Methodology

The first stage of the methodological framework was the identification of the case study areas for every participating country. The actual factors for the selection were the need to cover different case areas as type of coastal environment (urban, rural, port, etc.), and the necessity to include cases with potential of cross-border cooperation (MARE NOSTRUM Project, 2015). According to these factors, the case studies selected were:

- The issue of illegal constructions in the coasts and the Delta area of Evros River, in the Municipality of Alexandroupolis in Greece.
- The definition of a setback zone of a coastal neighbourhood in the Municipality of Kavala in Greece.
- The improvement of accessibility and potential for public uses of the coastal area of the Municipality of Haifa in Israel.
- The urban regeneration of the area of the Port of Valetta in Malta.
- The restoration and upgrading of the natural environment in the Albufera coastal area, south of Valencia, in Spain.
- The land use management of the bay area in the city of Alicante, in Spain.

The second stage focused on gathering the necessary and available information of each case study (MARE NOSTRUM Project, 2015). The collection had two goals:

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- A. Create an inventory of relevant conditions for the local study areas, including environmental, socio-demographic, economic, administrative, legal and institutional data, as well as information about situations of geopolitical conflict, if there were any. A set of templates was selected as a tool for this purpose.
- B. Complete an opinion survey among local stakeholders, decision makers and relevant actors concerning ICZM issues in their areas. An open questionnaire was selected as a tool for this purpose.

The opinion survey was proved to be very significant, given that it investigated the degree of understanding of the respondents regarding ICZM issues at the local level. This was used as a starting point of reference in the case studies, in relation to which, improvements or stagnation was assessed in ICZM practices in the duration of Mare Nostrum project. In addition to this, the identification of existing gaps between legislation, regulations, and policies at the local level from the one side, and the supranational initiatives (EU directives, protocols etc.) from the other side, was also facilitated in the survey (MARE NOSTRUM Project, 2015).

The outcomes of the survey greatly helped in shaping up the complete “pictures” of the case studies described below, and were, in turn, significant inputs for the formulation of the conclusions.

3. The Case Studies

3.1. ILLEGAL CONSTRUCTION IN EVROS DELTA PROTECTED ZONE (ALEXANDROUPOLIS, GREECE)



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The Evros Delta is a protected natural park in northeastern Greece, at the borders with Turkey. Administratively it is part of the Municipality of Alexandroupolis, and belongs to the Region of East Macedonia and Thrace. The municipality has a population of 60.000 inhabitants. The Delta area is 378 sq. km, and the coastline length is 65 km. Most of its area is agricultural land (86,2%) with 12,5% forest land and 1,3% urban land (rural communities). The coastal zone setback is at 100 m. in this protected area, although generally, in Greek seashores, it is legally specified to be 50 m. Finally, the ICZM policy implementing institutions at a local scale are the Decentralized Administration of Macedonia & Thrace, which is the regional branch of the central government, the Regional Authority of East Macedonia & Thrace, the Alexandroupolis Municipality, the Alexandroupolis Port Authority S.A., and the Evros Delta National Park Management Agency.

Concerning the Alexandroupolis case study, the dispute between environmental preservation and illegal constructions used for recreation, fishing and hunting, has been a hot issue for the last 15 years. Legislation particularly focusing on Evros Delta is a Joint Ministerial Decree on the National Park (Greek Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Public Works et al., 2007). It allows no constructions or private establishments and activities of any kind, and it provides for the immediate demolition of the constructions. The same provisions for constructions of this type, are also provided in legislation concerning urban and regional planning at the national level (laws 2508/97 and 2742/99), and in their implementations at the local level (the Regional Spatial Framework of the Region of East Macedonia and Thrace, currently under revision, and the Master Plan of the Municipality of Alexandroupolis, currently under preparation), both being legally binding.

Informal meetings and demonstrations of the owners of the illegal huts were of strong influence to the local authorities. Consequently, no hut was demolished, the fines issued for illegal constructions were never paid, and initiatives for the environmental-friendly transformation of the area, included in the Regional Operation Programme, were never implemented.

3.2. DISPUTE CONCERNING SEASHORE BOUNDARIES AND SETBACK LINE IN COASTAL NEIGHBOURHOOD (KAVALA, GREECE)
The city of Kavala is a port in North Eastern Greece. It is part of the Region of East Macedonia and Thrace, and it is the seat of the Municipality of Kavala. The population of the city is 65.000 inhabitants, its area is 40 sq. km, and the coastline length is 35 km. In terms of land uses, 45% of the municipal area is urban, 15 % agricultural, 2 % forest, 2 % mining, 1 % archeological, 0,2 % military, 2 % industrial, 2 % transportation, and 2 % tourism. The coastal zone setback, as mentioned in the previous case, is legally specified at 50 m., but the

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delineation of the setback is made with a non scientific and outdated method, which raises disputes. The main local policy implementing institutions, related to ICZM, are the Decentralized Administration of Macedonia & Thrace, the Regional Authority of East Macedonia & Thrace, the Kavala Municipality, and the Kavala Port Authority S.A.

In Kavala, there are several legal disputes between property owners and the state, on the exact definition of the shoreline and the coastal zone setback line (shoreline and beach). Legally, the issue is being dealt in the law on coasts and beaches (L. 2971/2001) (Greek Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Public Works, 2001) and also in two plans prescribed by national legislation concerning urban and regional planning (Spatial Framework of the Region of East Macedonia and Thrace, currently under revision, and the Master Plan of the Municipality of Kavala, recently approved. The above two plans are prescribed by laws 2508/97 and 2942/99). According to them, the houses of the residents of the particular neighbourhood are located inside the coastal zone, and thus, they do not have legal status, with all the accruing consequences (fines, demolition). In this case, the lack of a scientifically documented method for the determination of the boundaries of the zones of seashore and beach in the existing legislation created the implementation gap.



As far as public participation is concerned, public consultation took place during the preparation processes of the Master Plans, the City Plans, and the Action Plans of the municipalities for both Greek cases. In practice, though - with the exception of administrative departments of related interests- there was no substantial, active participation of the local population, unless the specific plan or project or activity, directly affected private properties. The public's role in general, was consultative and never decisive.

3.3. THE SOUTHERN SEASHORE AND COASTAL NEIGHBOURHOOD (HAIFA, ISRAEL)



The city of Haifa is a significant port in the Mediterranean side of Israel. In administrative terms, it comprises the Municipality of Haifa. The area of the coastal neighbourhoods of the southern seashore –which constitutes the Haifa case study- is 2,88 sq. km, its population reaches 13.790 inhabitants, and the coastline length is 9 km. All the study area is urban, of which 10% is protected area, and 10% hosts military installations and compounds. The coastal zone setback is legally specified at 300 m., and -according to national legislation-coastal areas are public, or property of the State. The main policy implementing institution at a local scale, related to ICZM, is the Municipality of Haifa.

In Haifa, the pressure for development of the Haifa coastline is balanced against the identified need to preserve the coastal ecological systems and facilitate public access to the coast for recreation. Related legislation is the Coastal Environment Protection Law (Ministry of the Environment of Israel, 2004), the National Outline Plan 13 (Israel's National Planning and Building Council, and Amendment 3 to it, approved at 2007). Local Authorities Law (Israeli Parliament, 2008) grants enforcement powers to inspectors of local authorities on issues covered by the law and on issues not covered by local by-laws (Haifa Municipality does not yet have authorized inspectors). The District and Haifa Outline Plans are the main urban planning tools that incorporate the guidelines of the National Outline Plan 13, and its amendment, marking the coastal zone, providing protection to the coastal environment and aiming to preserve public access and open spaces at the seafront. For decades, the limited access of the coastal neighbourhoods to the seashore, together with a non-integrated development approach, for long prescribed by previous sectorial Development Plans for the coastal zone, resulted in gradually increased separation of the coastal zone from the rest of the city. Since the mid-1990's,

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the adopted legal instruments have been increasingly oriented toward natural and historical preservation, opening up of the coastline, removing illegal constructions and increasing public access to the sea. In the 2000's, plans were made to redefine the functional area of the Haifa port and move parts of it northward, aiming at opening up large swathes of the coastline as an open public promenade.

In terms of public involvement, the approval process for the National Outline Plan (NOP) requires public notification, and this enables minor public participation through submitting objections in writing, with the planning board reviewing them.

Finally, the factor of cross-border cooperation is being taken into consideration mainly regarding cultural activities, and it is not extended to other issues, mainly due to the political situation,

3.4. GRAND HARBOUR & MARSAMXETT HARBOUR CASES (VALETTA, MALTA)

The city of Valetta is the capital and the main –and unique– port system in Malta. Administratively, it is a unique phenomenon, since Valetta covers most of the national territory and the administrative levels are national (national government, national laws and policies), regional (no administrative unit, but Local Plans that cover regions), and municipal (local councils). The case study focuses on Malta's Grand Harbour and Marsamxett Harbour, with an area of 15,1 sq. km, and population of 68.264 inhabitants. The coastline length is 32 km. Half of the study area is urban, 10% agricultural, 5% protected heritage, 5% archeological sites, 20% industrial, 10% transportation, and 15% tourism (urban land uses overlap with protected heritage ones and archaeological sites). The coastal zone setback is not specified. The main policy implementing institutions at the local scale, are the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change, the Ministry for Tourism, the Ministry for Infrastructure and Transport, Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA), Malta Tourism Authority (MTA), Transport Malta, and Local councils (Valletta, Floriana, Marsa, Paola, Isla, Bormla, Birgu, Kalkara, Pietà, Msida, Gżira, Ta' Xbiex and Sliema).

In the Grand Harbour area, tourism and industrial development pressures negatively affect its historical significance. The competing, and often conflicting land use pressures are dealt by the Development Planning Act (Maltese State, 1992), which introduced the Structure Plan (Ministry of the Environment and Infrastructure of Malta, 1990) as the main legally binding instrument for spatial planning and development control, and the Environment and Development Planning Act (Maltese State, 2010).



The latter, in turn, introduces the Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development (SPED), which is the successor of the Structure Plan. The enforcement units of the Maltese Authorities of the Environment and Planning, and of Tourism, act in order to maintain all legal procedures. In fact, though, most of these actions fail to be effective. Also, Local Plans together with detailed specializations through Subject Plans, Action Plans, Environment and Development Briefs, and Supplementary Planning Guidance documents cover the case study area in terms of planning (Malta Environment and Planning Authority, 2002).

The Structure Plan highlights the importance of an active role of media, NGOs, local councils, official bodies, experts and the general public in planning, as well as their uninhibited access to information. All meetings of the Environment and Planning Commissions and the Environment and Planning Review Tribunal are open to the public and all decisions are accessible to the public. Nevertheless, the ambiguity of certain legal provisions has led to conflicts over the level of public involvement in public consultations and the assessment of development applications.

3.5. SEAFRONT OF «LA ALBUFERA» (VALENCIA, SPAIN)

The seafont of La Albufera is a protected natural park in the area of Valencia in Spain. The population of the area is 4.472 inhabitants, its area is 9,25 sq. km, and the coastline length is 13,5 km. In terms of land uses, 8% of the study area is urban, 13% agricultural, 49% is forest land, 8% is occupied by tourist activities and installations, and 22% comprises of other uses. 92% of the area is protected natural heritage. The coastal zone setback is in general 100 meters wide with occasional exceptions (Pinedo) where the protection area is 20 meters wide. The main, policy implementing, local institutions, related to ICZM, are the Governing Board of L'Albufera Natural Park (consultative body), the L'Albufera Natural Park Executive Board (management body), and

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the Cooperation Agreement for the implementation of infrastructure activities in L'Albufera area, signed in May 1994, by the Valencia Regional Government and the Ministry of Public Works, Transportation and Environment (MOPTMA).



Concerning L'Albufera case study, the up to recently intense recreational use of the seafront is in conflict with the environmental importance of the area. The conflicting land use pressures are aimed to be dealt by the National Law 2/2013 on the protection and sustainable use of the coastline (Spanish Government, 2013), and locally by the National Park declaration decree issued by the Region (Regional Authority of Valencia, 1986), the Regional Law 4/2004 on Territorial Planning and Landscape Protection (Regional Authority of Valencia, 2004), and a Municipal bylaw on the use of Valencia's beaches and adjacent areas (Valencia City Council, 2010). The Valencia Regional Authority protected the natural resources of the case study area through decrees (Decree 89/1986, Decree 71/1993, Decree 96/1995, Decree 259/2004) and set up three local plans (the Special Plan for the Protection of the Local Environment, the Natural Resources Management Plan, and the Use and Management Master Plan) and two boards (L'Albufera Natural Park Executive and Governing Boards) with wide representation, in order to better manage the area. As part of the urban planning procedures, the Valencia Region Territorial Strategy, which is non-binding, is mainly focusing on the coast.

3.6. BAY OF ALICANTE CASE (ALICANTE, SPAIN)

Alicante is a port city in southeastern Spain, south of Valencia. The case study focuses on Alicante Bay, a coastal area of the city. The population of Alicante Bay is 27.486 inhabitants, in an area of 4,5 sq. km. The coastline length is 9 km. In terms of land uses, 76,5% of the study area is urban with no special protection, 20% is urban protected heritage, 2,5% archeological sites, and 1% is covered by transportation infrastructure. The coastal zone setback is in general 20 m., with occasional exceptions for greater protection where it is set

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to 100 m. The main policy implementing institutions at a local scale, are the Valencian Regional Government, the Department of Infrastructures, Territory, and Environment (General Subdirectorate of Ports, Airports and Coast) and the Municipality of Alicante, through the Cooperation Agreement on integrated actions in the Bay of Alicante, signed on 5 November 2010.



Regarding the Alicante Bay case study, a complex situation characterizes the area and makes it difficult to deal with, with conflicting land uses and stakeholders' competing interests. Infrastructures and real estate developments barely left any open space in the bay, while the Regional Authority is currently making an attempt to control the situation, as part of the urban planning procedures (through the Regional Law 4/2004 on Territorial Planning and Landscape Protection [Region of Valencia, 2004], and the Valencia Region Territorial Strategy). The planning arsenal is completed by the Alicante General Municipal Urban Development Plan -a non-binding and not yet approved planning tool-, and the Municipal Ordinance for Beaches and Coves. Furthermore, all administrative levels of the area signed the General Protocol on Integrated Actions in the North Bay of the Municipality of Alicante, in a cooperative effort to address the issue, through the function of three committees, on technical, coordination and public information issues.

The Territorial and Landscape Participation Board acts as a direct channel for public intervention, with the obligation to organize public participation processes for plans and projects with significant impact on the landscape. Public participation has taken place mostly within the processes of environmental assessment and urban planning. However, there is no ICZM oriented mechanisms or channels for public participation in the study area due to the general lack of tradition in public participation processes in the region.

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7. Conclusions

In the analysis of ICZM in the Mediterranean, the initial aim of the selection of case studies was to cover a wide range of issues, different types of coastal environment, and the possibility of cross-border cooperation. The particular case studies succeeded to achieve these goals, while in the issue of cross-border cooperation investigated the restrictions and the limitations of it in the border case studies.

The first step prescribed by the methodology, for identifying a baseline that derives from the instruments and tools used at the local level is already stemming out from the above analysis and Table 1 below. There are practices in coastal management that are common for all the project's partners. In all cases, urban, land use and environmental plans, as well as regulations and strategies are the key instruments for protecting the coastal zone and nature conservation in general, and controlling pollution and degradation of the coastal environment.

All these instruments and tools are established mostly by the State, through laws and institutional frameworks, covering the national level and guiding local authorities to implement and assess. The top down approach is clear. The regional authorities in Spain -with their legal powers after decentralization- are the only exception to the rule. Also, there seem to be some tools with positive impacts on ICZM throughout the planning history of every case, even if some of them were not fully or partially implemented for political reasons. All municipal authorities are dealing with ICZM issues, through equivalent responsible departments and by using urban plans and bylaws as tools for control and enforcement. These issues mostly concern conflicts of land uses or property rights, there is usually a gap between the related legislation and regulations, and their implementation, and the effectiveness of the authorities' involvement is often weak. Finally, the cross – border cooperation parameter seems to be suffering in ICZM, since there are no legal or institutional instruments at the local level, in order to build upon.

The second step concerning the identification of a baseline for the case studies, is through recognizing the impediments to implementation of the previous legal or institutional tools on the local level, and the positive characteristics of ICZM in each case study. A summarization of the above is exhibited in the two tables drawn above.

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Table 1: Positive and negative characteristics of case studies by nation, concerning implementation of ICZM (MARE NOSTRUM, 2015; 2nd Report).

| Impediments to implementation | Greece | Israel | Malta | Spain | On the positive side | Greece | Israel | Malta | Spain |
|--|--------|--------|-------|-------|---|-----------|-----------|-------|-------|
| Limited local government powers | V | V | V | | Binding local urban planning tools | V (legal) | V (legal) | V | V |
| Lack of funds and human resources | V | V | V | | Active/educated NGOs | V | V | V | V |
| Inadequate knowledge on ICZM | V | | V | V | Active public participation procedures | V | V | V | V |
| Problematic coordination between stakeholders | V | V | V | V | Fixed setback zone | | V | | V |
| Reduced effectiveness of participatory processes | V | | V | V | Coastal land = national land | V | V | | V |
| Setback technical determination (+cadastre) | V | | V | | National ICZM strategy | ? | | ? | ? |
| Problematic law implementation | V | V | V | V | Provisions for law enforcement service/officers | | V | V | V |
| Weak political will | V | V | V | V | Laws at local level | | | | V |
| Issues of national sovereignty | V | | | | | | | | |
| Delay in implementation of planning tools | V | V | | V | | | | | |

In the Greek case studies, a positive factor is that there are legally binding planning documents and tools at the municipal and regional level, acting at the local level, and there are ICZM provisions in spatial planning instruments at the regional level. On the other hand, there is little information about the property rights of coastal land, since the land cadastre in Greece is under preparation, and only a very small part of the land registered is coastal area. Also the registration of land in the land cadastre, and the demarcation of the

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seashore line are two different and many times conflicting procedures, and there is still no scientific method of defining coastal boundaries. The slow procedures regarding preparation and approval of spatial plans create problems of outdated data and proposals. There are no effective procedures of monitoring the coastal zones, and law enforcement is usually jeopardized by the clientelism of Greek politics. Finally, implementation progress is also jeopardized because of issues of national sovereignty on coasts, seas, and seabed, and related disputes between Greece and neighbouring Turkey.

A major positive factor in the Israeli case study, is the definition of seacoasts as public land. ICZM is included in spatial planning at the municipal level and the most important factor, which facilitates implementation in ICZM issues, is the clearly and unconditionally defined setback zone of the coast. The enforcement of laws and planning regulations by local inspectors is limited, and the bylaws of the municipal councils are usually outdated. The cooperation and coordination of civic departments and organizations on the local level and between levels is frequently difficult, and political clientelism, and weak political will to implement the legislation, are phenomena, which frequently affect ICZM in a negative way. On the other hand, no retroactive force of planning laws offers immunity to past mistakes and illegalities, something that may discourage opportunistic favoritism.

In the case of Malta, the existence of a national ICZM strategy constitutes a positive factor. There is legal provision for the appointment of Enforcement Officers. Nevertheless, Malta's planning system is characterized as discretionary and of a more political than technical nature. There is limited cooperation and coordination of departments and organizations on the local level, as well as between administrative levels. Local plans are binding but not legally, and in this way they can easily be amended. In addition, clientelism is existent and also encouraged by weak political will for implementation of laws, and loopholes and vagueness in the legal instruments. Finally, the lack of a fully functional land cadastre, providing information on land ownership in the coastal zones, creates great obstacles for the implementation of policy measures.

The Spanish case studies have on the positive side, a national ICZM strategy, as this is the only partner-country that has actually succeeded in the ratification of the ICZM Protocol and its legal substance in 2011. Also, the regional authorities are granted the power of issuing laws and legal documents. The legal and institutional frameworks also provide for the appointment of enforcement officers with a high level of relevant education. Due to these officers the demarcation of the coast is almost complete. Nevertheless, there are still active conflicts between the demarcation and the registration of

privately owned coastal land, mainly due to amendments and exceptions being passed in the legislation. The excessive degree of housing development from the '60s and '70s, which occurred without any monitoring and control measures, still makes the implementations of current legislation, difficult. The Cooperation Protocol signed at 2010 by all levels of administration, was only partially implemented, mainly because of lack of economic resources for ICZM of local authorities.

In general, the case studies indicate that local authorities recognize the high importance of coastal zone in urban development and environmental protection. But even if the coastal areas are legally recognized as public good accessible to all citizens, existing territorial planning and management institutions related to ICZM are improving, and the civil society organizations promoting environmental affairs seems to be strong, there is still no ICZM instrument at the local level. Overlapping jurisdictions and responsibilities on a complex environment, such as the coastal zone, block most coordination channels. The loopholes, the vague definitions, the “grey areas” of local laws and plans, combined with the unwillingness of the local authorities to implement the “unpopular” or “inconvenient” parts of the legislation, their limited knowledge on ICZM, and their poor economic resources for monitoring and enforcement measures for coastal protection, are obstacles preventing the formulation and implementation of sound ICZM policies, as they always leave space for excessive and injurious exploitation of the coasts. In all cases, local authorities focus on planning procedures, which are designed to streamline development, while often impairing the public’s right to be aware of, and participate in the planning process. If a “bottom up” approach is considered to be essential, public participation procedures should be upgraded and reinforced. Finally, cross-border cooperation in the case studies is missing, especially on ICZM issues.

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