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Improving governance of the marine space: an opportunity for Blue Growth in the Mediterranean sea

A new study presented by the European Commission finds that the establishment of maritime zones, including Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), in the Mediterranean would benefit the EU's Blue Growth and wider sustainability agendas. The study looks at the costs and benefits of establishing maritime zones in the Mediterranean and provides an analysis of the impacts of establishing EEZs on different sea-based activities. EEZs could allow for a more effective spatial planning policy, which in turn could help attract investments and further economic activities.

Maria Damanaki, European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries stated: *"There are huge untapped opportunities in the Mediterranean Sea, which could come to fruition by establishing Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). The proclamation and establishment of maritime zones remains the sovereign right of each coastal State. It is our joint EU responsibility to ensure that the right conditions are in place for the blue economy to flourish. Mediterranean coastal states could agree on their maritime zones on the basis of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)."*

The study focuses on the opportunities which EEZs and other similar zones would bring in terms economic costs and benefits, sustainability and governance of marine space and should be viewed in the context of the European Commission's Blue Growth agenda.

The EU Blue Growth Strategy aims at creating sustainable economic growth and employment in the marine and maritime economy to help Europe's economic recovery. These economic sectors provide jobs for 5.4 million people and contribute a total gross value added of around 500 billion euros. By 2020, these should increase to 7 million and nearly 600 billion euros respectively. It highlights the five areas with the greatest potential for growth: blue energy, aquaculture, maritime, coastal and cruise tourism, marine mineral resources and blue biotechnology.

Background

In the Mediterranean as in other sea-basins, coastal states have a responsibility to regulate human activities and to further develop their blue economy in a sustainable manner.

A large part of the Mediterranean sea surface is currently beyond the jurisdiction or sovereignty of coastal States. It remains therefore largely unprotected as far as living aquatic resources and the marine environment are concerned. At the same time, proper economic development is difficult in an uncertain regulatory framework.

In 2002, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, the global community committed to maintain the productivity and biodiversity of important and vulnerable marine and coastal areas, both within and beyond national jurisdiction. However, there is no specific legal regime for implementing the relevant provisions of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), particularly in relation to the protection of the marine environment in the areas beyond national jurisdiction. This issue has been discussed at the UN since 2006.

The coverage of a greater portion of the Mediterranean Sea under the jurisdiction of the EU Member States would ensure that in such areas, EU regulations concerning fisheries, environment and transport would apply and a higher level of protection would follow.

More information

The final report and executive summary of the study may be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/documentation/studies/study-maritime-zones-in-mediterranean-sea_en.htm

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