

The Blue Land: Participatory model for the sustainable management of marine and coastal resources and for cross border habitats, biodiversity and ecosystem services safeguard' was a project co-financed by the European Union under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) INTERREG IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro 2014/2020. The main aim of it was to define, develop and implement a participatory and ecosystem-based model for the protection and safeguard of marine and coastal resources, habitats, biodiversity and ESs that could represent a form of management comparable to that of a Marine Protected Area (MPA), with the added benefit of broad ownership of the goals within the local community and lighter procedure in the recognition and implementation of management policies. The main outputs realized during project implementation were: Establishment of the cross border BL Implementation Group and preparation of a common, replicable model for participatory and ecosystem-based management of biodiversity and ESs in the BLs; Characterization and mapping of 3 ESs , and 3 environmental and socioeconomic tabular and spatial databases; IT tools for supporting data collection, monitoring and sharing; 3 functioning BLs for the protection of biodiversity, safeguard and sustainable use of the related ESs.

The projects results achieved so far during its implementation were:

New cross border governance model adopted for the management and safeguarding of coastal and marine resources through:

- Establishment of transnational BLUE LAND Implementation Group.
- Strategic document on the BLUE LAND model
- Regulatory framework analysis
- Legislative proposals Improvement of knowledge and data management capacity of biodiversity and ES, through
- Report and dataset on identification and characterization of ecosystem services of BLUE LAND areas
- Lists of common and specific indicators for each BL
- Monitoring protocols
- Web-GIS Platform storing and making available data for BL areas.
- App to promote the BL, raise awareness and engage citizens in monitoring activities.

Improvement of the coastal and marine biodiversity and ES safeguard and sustainable exploitation of the natural resources through:

- Protocols among relevant stakeholders
- Management plans
- Small pilot projects aiming at the safeguard of the identified Ecosystem Services and
- Different promotion materials produced during the project lifespan

The project represented a new approach to the management and governance of marine and coastal resources, through the involvement of local communities in biodiversity protection. The added value of cross border cooperation was related to the teamwork and the contribution of each partner sharing definition of plans and the application of methodologies.