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National Report **on Current Policy, Procedures, Legal Basis and Practice of Marine Spatial Planning in *Albania***



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1. Executive Summary

Albania's coast is about 420 km long; its exclusive economic zone covers about 12,000 km². The coast can be divided into two parts: the northern, Adriatic coast, a low-lying alluvial plain 4 to 50 km wide; and the southern, Ionian coast, a hilly coast characterised by steep mountains, except for the Butrinti Lake in the south.

Current legislation sets out the roles and responsibilities regarding controlled development. In this respect, it views urban planning as an assertion and determination of general rules for the establishment and architectural shape of buildings in the entire territory, setting out policies on current and future economic and social development at the national and local level, national defence, environmental protection, preservation and implementation of urban planning, architectural and archaeological values, and protection of legitimate interests related to private property. It must be pointed out that given the said considerations and findings, the necessary legal and regulatory frame to allow for maritime spatial planning has not been established yet and moreover that the relevant institutions have not yet been entitled with maritime spatial planning procedures.

Territorial planning authority in Albania resides at the national and local levels. The national territorial planning authority is vested in the central government, while the local government bodies administer the territory under their jurisdiction. In the meantime, regulation of public access to official information and their disclosure has been addressed by other legal acts in Albania (such as the Law on public information).

Legislation concerning planning sets out an intricate hierarchy of development controls adopted by the central and local planning authorities. There is no national law on integrated coastal management. The most relevant legal framework related to regulation of development in the coastal zone encompasses: the Law on City Planning (1993, amended in 1998); the Law on Environmental Protection (2002); the Law on the Development of Tourism Priority Zones (1993); the Law on Fishing and Fish Farming (1995); the Law on Water Resources (1996); the Law on Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Regulation (1996), as well as by-laws and regulations relevant to coastal development (such as the Law on Protected Areas, the law on establishment and operation of land protection and administration structures, and the law on establishment of forest guard). Finally, the regulatory frame on preparation of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) is of particular importance.

The institutional structure for coastal zone management relies, in practice, on the capacities of the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Water Administration and the Ministry of Public Affairs, Transportation and Telecommunications, while the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports contributes to tourism development aspect for that area. Especially important is the inter-ministerial Council for Territorial Development.

The World Bank has financed coastal zone management plans for the northern and southern coastal regions, which are methodologically complementary with the UNEP/MAP Coastal Area Management Programme (CAMP) for Albania.

The 2000 National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan is the key document establishing aims, objectives and measures for biodiversity management in Albania for the period 2000-2015. In respect to the coastal area, the Strategy proposes a network of 25 marine and coastal protected areas. Consequently, a wide range of activities which give rise to impacts on biodiversity are

foreseen along with the respective measures needed, including: ICZM – in landscape and, River Basin Management Planning – in water resources management.

In fact, the World Bank is implementing the “Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Clean-Up Programme” project whose main goal is to protect the Albanian coastal ecosystems, resources and cultural assets and to promote their sustainable development and management. The project will be implemented over a span of seven years.

Government Programme for 2005-2009 sets out objectives in respect of:

- Environment and land protection, increasing access and level of sustainable use of natural resources by the communities and individuals in these areas, will be another priority in support of the integrated development of the rural and mountainous areas of the country.
- Urban development will be based on the approach of integrated and sustainable development, complemented with the effective use of the urban territory, development of urban technology and strengthening of the urban civic living culture.

In this regard, a new legal basis is required that will give equal weight to all land uses and development interests.

Integrated Coastal Zone Management

Unlike the degradation, which was caused in the past by land reclamation, mining and industrial pollution, the present threats come from urbanisation, intensive resource exploitation and tourism. The coastal urban development is driven by internal migration, which drove many people from the north of the country to the coastal regions, especially to the narrow coastal strip.

Coastal erosion is a significant problem in the northern and central coastal regions, particularly north of the city of Durrës. Sediment discharges from rivers are relatively large, which explains the very dynamic nature of the deltaic development of the coast, resulting in the rapid development of new coastal features, such as spits and lagoons. The main causes of coastal erosion are: sediment input (mainly brought by rivers); reduced sand amount in the coastal zone due to anthropogenic activities (sand extraction from beaches and the sea bottom – although this is prohibited by law); the changing location of river mouths in deltaic systems, as a result of natural causes or anthropogenic effects; and the alteration of the usual pattern of coastal currents and the associated sediment transport along and across the shoreline, due to man-made structures built along the coast.

The lack of physical plans is considered to be one of the major obstacles to sustainable coastal development. Physical plans for major investments and developments are being prepared by the National Institute for Physical Planning, but the local governments have also been entrusted with preparation of some regional physical plans. The local plans are prepared and approved at the local level. The Ministry of Public Affairs, Transport and Telecommunications co-ordinates the local government and the National Institute to ensure compatibility among plans. There are two major problems:

- the preparation of spatial plans is lagging behind the rate of construction; and
- the preparation and implementation of infrastructure master plans is slower than the preparation of (partial) physical plans for the same areas.

This situation has led to illegal construction and the inadequate provision of infrastructure, particularly where tourism development is planned.

Linkages to International Policy

The Conventions, with relevance and impact on ICZM, rectified and signed by the Albanian state authorities include the following:

- In 1990, Albania acceded to Barcelona Convention for the Protection of Mediterranean Sea against Pollution;
- On November 29, 1995, Albania acceded to the Ramsar Convention and ratified it on March 29, 1996. This is very important in terms of management and administration of the wetland ecosystems, which are very prominent in the Albanian coast; and
- While Albania has benefited from both conventions, a number of programmes developed under the Barcelona Convention have also benefited from their impact (Coastal Area Management Programme – CAMP, Mediterranean Pollution Monitoring and Research Programme, and Strategic Action Programme).

2. General Description of the Spatial Planning System in the Country

This section sets out the statutory framework of institutions and legislation related to spatial planning system in Albania. Unfortunately, the framework does not include provision or any institutional set-up for the marine spatial planning.

The roles and responsibilities regarding development control are set out in the Law on Urban Planning 1998¹. The law views urban planning as an assertion and determination of general rules for the establishment and architectural shape of buildings in the entire territory. It sets out relevant policies on current and future economic and social development at the national and local level, national defence, environmental protection, preservation and implementation of urban planning, architectural and archaeological values, as well as protection of legitimate interests related to private property.

Regional and environmental urban studies, master plans, general adjustment plans, partial urban studies, limiting construction lines and suburban lines are all technical documents that determine the technical and legal relationships in the field of urban planning. The Urban Planning Regulations, approved by the Council of Ministers, determine the content and method of drafting of these documents.

Territorial planning authority in Albania resides at the national and local level. The national territorial planning authority resides in the central government, which (under the current legislation) is with the **Territorial Planning Council of the Republic of Albania** that adopts and approves or rejects different urban and spatial planning studies. The relevant ministry handling territory planning activities through the **Territory Planning Directorate** co-ordinates work among Territorial Planning Council, state bodies and local government bodies in the field of spatial planning. The **Institute of Urban Studies** is the state body at the national level that prepares urban studies and projects determined by the Urban Planning Regulation. This institute is under the Ministry of Public Works and Transport.

The law provides that local government authorities (respectively: counties and big municipalities – 12) administer the territory under their jurisdiction. In the county councils and other municipalities of the first category (including Tirana) the local planning authority is vested in accordingly in the territory adjustment councils; respectively: urban planning section in county councils and in the municipalities performs planning and design tasks, while urban planning offices in other municipalities and communes are doing the same.

Regulation of public access to official information and their disclosure has been addressed by other legal acts in Albania (such as in the Law on public information).

The Law on urban planning sets out an intricate hierarchy of development controls adopted by the central and local planning authorities.

¹ In fact, this law is changing and a draft is under approval regarding the institutional aspect and responsibilities of the main municipalities.

Planning framework is set out below:

Type	Content
General regulatory plan	Complex urban planning study for a limited territory; it includes the territory of a city along with sub-urban (periphery) part of the future expansion, territory of a village, territory of a living centre, territory of a resort area, territory of an industrial area, etc.
Partial urban study	Detailed urban planning study, which relies on the consideration of the general regulating plan; it includes areas or parts of its territory, where regulating interventions are intended.
Site-development blueprint	Graphic material that comes out of partial urban planning study and, which is attached to the decision made on adoption of the site development and its urban conditions.
Bordering lines of development	Geographical border of the location of new buildings; yellow line.
Sub-urban border or sub-urban line	Geographical border of the location of the city periphery over the multiyear period.
Regional urban planning study	Complex urban planning study that includes the territory of one or more LGU-s and districts.
Master plan	Urban planning study with a specific theme and includes the entire national territory or its specific parts.

It is important to point out that the spatial planning and all related policy and institutional matter have been a challenging task for the Albanian Government, frequently facing a lot of enforcement and law compliance problems. However, during the actual mandate, the Albanian Government has given outstanding attention to such issues and within the current **Government Programme for 2005–2009** the main related objectives are established by addressing:

- Environmental and land protection, whereby increasing access and level of sustainable use of natural resources by the communities and individuals in these areas will be another priority in supporting the integrated development of rural and mountainous areas of the country.
- Urban development, which will be based on the integrated and sustainable development approach, complemented with the effective use of urban territory, development of urban technology and strengthening of the urban civic living culture.

The current system of land-use planning provides a good legal basis for local authorities to undertake sustainable land-use management considering among others ICZM and River Basin Management Plans. Development is not officially permitted in areas, which do not have land-use plans. In rural areas, there are insufficient legal controls of development and very few (partial) plans have been prepared. In view of this, a two-phase system of local planning is considered as a realistic approach. In the first phase, the local authorities will be requested to ensure by 2010 that a basic strategic land-use plan is prepared for their complete areas. This basic plan will include the delineation of land for specific purposes (zoning), but will not simply be a zoning plan created by allocating areas to types of development without taking into account other existing policies. The basic land-use plans should at a minimum provide information on how the following issues have been addressed in the basic plan and on how the measures will be taken in respect of:

- Habitat conservation, including the Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan;
- Sustainable tourism development, including the National Tourism Strategy Policies;
- Access and communications – the National Transport Plan and policies;
- Water – the Strategies of Urban / Rural Water Supply and Sanitation;

- Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plans where relevant; and
- NEAP and Regional Environmental Action Plans where available (actually, the National Environmental Strategy as a crosscutting one is taking the lead in this respect).

Some elements of land-use management and of service provision cannot be fully addressed at this scale, such as waste disposal (as just one example from many other similar examples). Therefore, a second level of land-use and development planning is needed to address issues, which arise across municipal and commune boundaries or at a Regional scale. A number of recent developments have occurred in this respect including:

- Integrated Coastal Zone Management (e.g. Southern and Northern coastal areas);
- River Basin Management Plans (e.g. for the Lakes of Ohrid and Shkoder); and
- Regional Environmental Action Plans (e.g. for Lezhe and Shokdra).

A new legal basis is, therefore, required that will give equal weight to all land uses and development interests including agriculture water management, environmental management, nature protection and tourism, etc. Moreover, to allow for the improvement of Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), the said regulatory frame has to include also provisions for the MSP instruments, legislation, institutional set-up, technical framework and procedures.

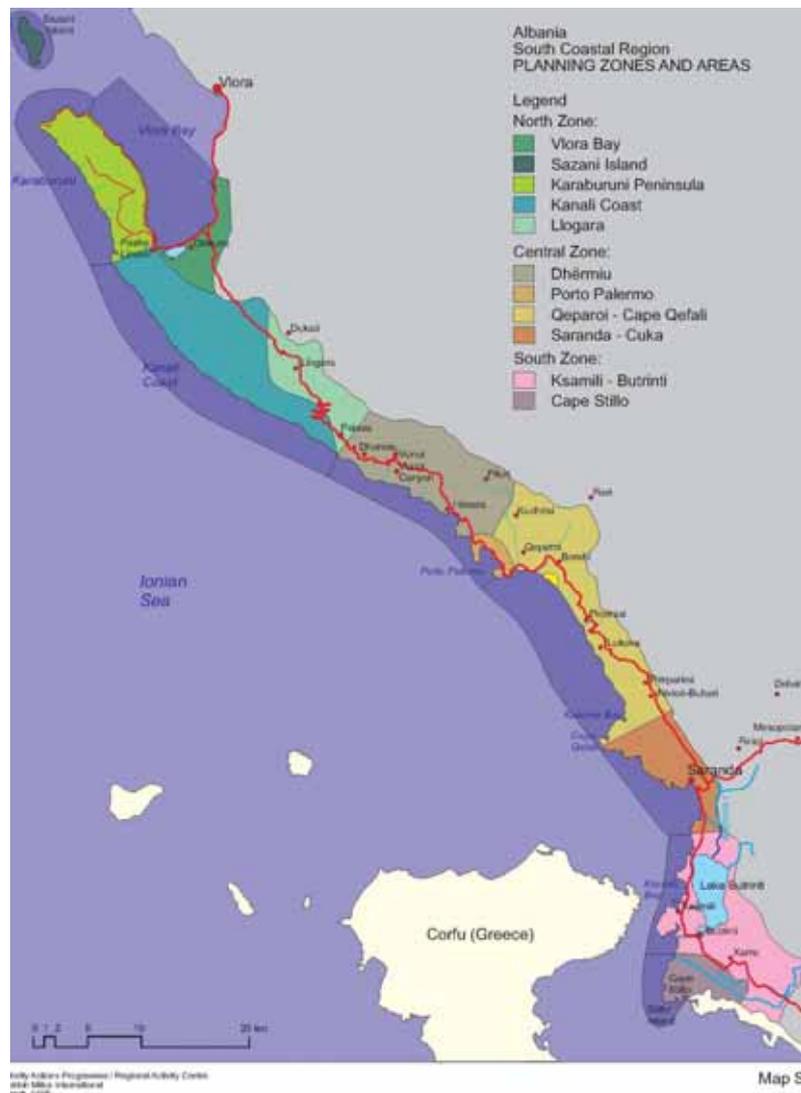


Figure 1: South Coastal Region – Planned Zones and Areas
Source: Coastal Zone Management plan (approved in 2002)

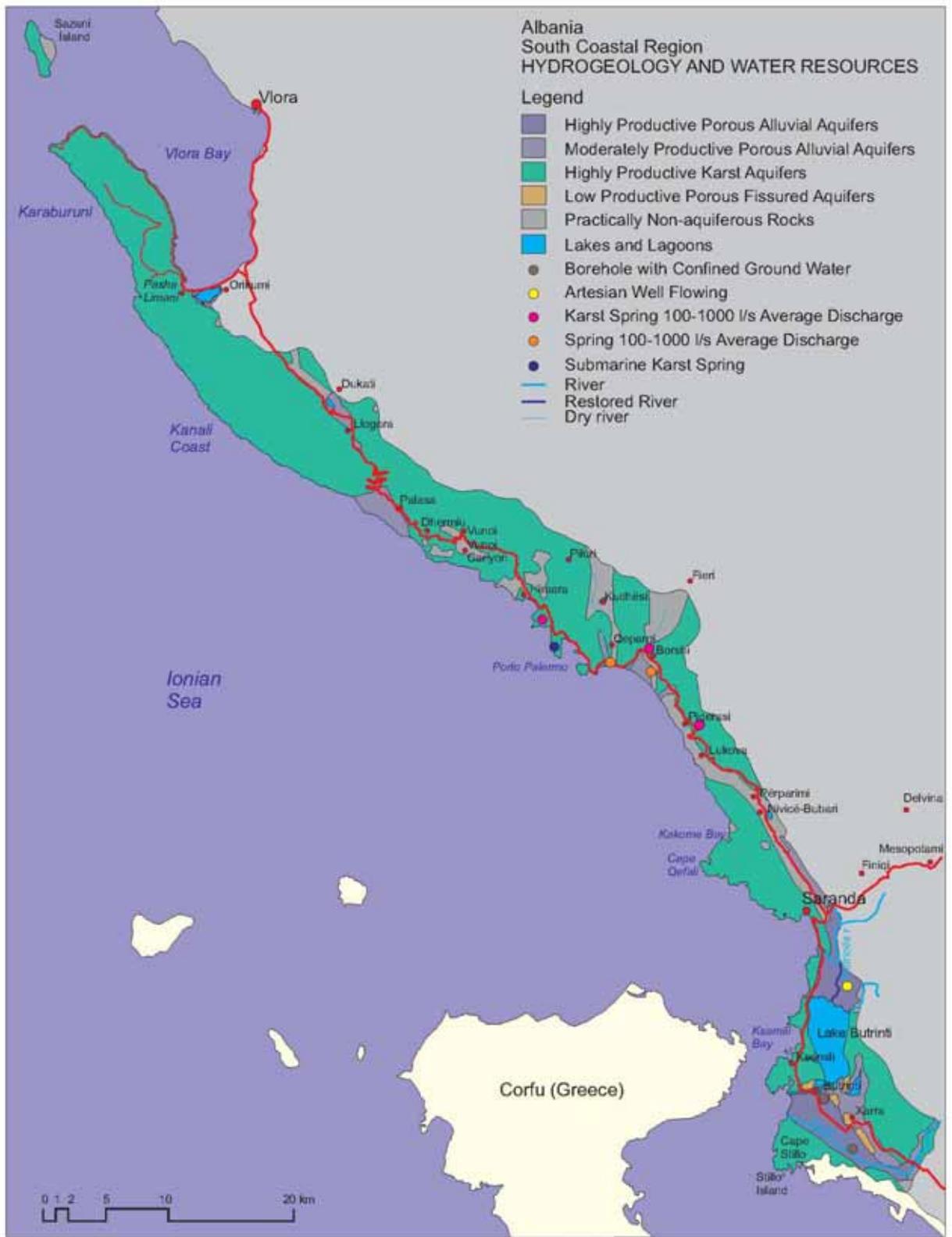


Figure 2: South Coastal Region – Hydrogeology and Water Resources

Source: Albania Wetland Inventory Map (2001-2003)



Figure 3: Wetlands of Albania

Source: Albania Wetland Inventory Map (2001-2003)

3. Specificities of Spatial Planning in Coastal Zones

The spatial planning (SP) accomplishment and performance in the coastal zone of Albania does not differ from spatial planning elsewhere. As explained in the next chapter, this is due to the lack of physical (master) plans as one of the major obstacles to sustainable coastal development.

According to the existing Law on urban planning, the local authorities are in charge of developing the regional (municipal) master plans and then to approve them in the council of spatial planning (county and /or municipal level). This has never happened apart from the master plan of Tirana, which is still facing implementation disputes on different levels. Otherwise, there are only some partially developed physical plans in some cities but not having the expected perspective vision of development (they are mainly considering building and construction aspects of new settlements).

In this respect, the construction industry is moving ahead compared to preparation and development of spatial plans and furthermore, the development and implementation of infrastructure master plans is falling behind the process of physical planning for the same areas. These phenomena are affecting the process of SP in coastal zones by encouraging abusive and illegal construction, inadequate provision of infrastructure, delays in the ownership restitution and compensation process.

4. Integrated Coastal Zone Management

There are some very significant and common problems the Albanian coast is facing, namely:

- pollution of rivers, lagoons and inshore waters as a result of the rapid urbanisation process and industrial discharges;
- upstream pollution;
- uncontrolled solid waste disposal;
- untreated sewage discharge into the rivers and the sea or directly into the sea;
- water supply shortages, lack of supply network;
- interventions in the rivers, dams, flooded land that have altered water flow rate and volume, nutrient loads and sediments that ultimately reach the coast and the sea; and
- deforestation caused by fires and grazing having impact on the land cover.

In addition to the above mentioned, other activities to be mentioned are: loss of biodiversity as a result of wetlands draining; illegal hunting and fishing in the lagoons; overuse of water resources; aggregate extraction; demolition and illegal construction activities; degradation of areas of cultural and archaeological heritage; and lack of appropriate and updated legislation and institutional arrangements, as well as enforcement.



Photo 1: Albanian Coast – Problems

Unlike the degradation, which was caused in the past by land reclamation, mining and industrial pollution, the present threats stem from urbanisation, intensive resource exploitation and tourism. The coastal urban development is driven by internal migration of many people from the north of the country to the coastal regions, especially to the narrow coastal strip. Today, 41% of the total population lives in towns. In 1994, it was estimated that around 39% of the total

population lives in the coastal area. It is to be expected that this figure is now at least equal or very close to the national average. Urbanisation is speeded up by land privatisation, as rural dwellers move from primarily mountainous and hilly areas to the coastal areas with better job opportunities and living conditions. For instance, the coastal cities offer jobs in manufacturing, commerce and tourism. The currently fast urbanisation process is certainly having adverse effects on the natural resources and environment around the main cities, because in most cases it is not accompanied by planned housing development or the construction of appropriate infrastructure and services. As a consequence of the yet undefined landownership, there is the growing phenomenon of illegal land possession and construction of houses, particularly in and around the big cities. Tourism in Albania has a relatively high potential, but until now the Albanian coast has not been an important destination for international tourists. Future trends will definitely change the structure of tourism. Today, 80% of tourists are Albanians. However, some of the most attractive shores have already been spoiled by the development of human activities and settlements (Golemi beach) or are heavily polluted (Durrës beach).



Photo 2: Albanian Coast – Detail

The provision of environmental infrastructure and services has been completely neglected, except for harbours, railways and electric power plants. Industrial and urban waste is discharged without any treatment, and there are critical shortages in the water supply. In urban areas, about 80% of the population has access to piped water. In the coastal area, this figure is slightly higher than in the rest of the country (about 88-90%). During the day, running water is available in urban areas on an average only for two to three hours. Water use efficiency is low (about 50% of Tirana's water is lost in the city's supply network). Conflicts over the use of water are likely, especially in the Durrës-Vlorë region. Water supply is already inadequate while the irrigation system is damaged and neglected; agricultural development requires more water; also tourism is a great water consumer, requiring good-quality water.



Photo 3: Narta Village, 2006

The main shortage in accomplishing ICZM derives from the lack of a national law on integrated coastal management. The most relevant legal framework related to regulation of development in the coastal zone encompasses:

- Law on City Planning (1993, amended in 1998);
- Law on Environmental Protection (2002);
- Law on the Development of Tourism Priority Zones (1993);
- Law on Fishing and Fish Farming (1995);
- Law on Water Resources (1996);
- Law on Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Regulation (1996); etc.

as well as by-laws and regulations relevant to coastal development (such as the Law on Protected Areas, the Law on establishment and operation of land protection and administration structures; the Law on establishment of the forest guard, etc. Important to note is the actually developed regulatory frame on the preparation of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), as well as the draft law on Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment (SEA).

In practice, the institutional structure for coastal zone management relays on the capacities of only two ministries: the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Water Administration, and the Ministry of Public Affairs, Transportation and Telecommunications, while the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports contributes to the tourism development aspect of the area. Especially important is the inter-ministerial Council for Territorial Development.

In 1994-1995, the World Bank financed through the METAP the preparation of the CZM plans for the northern (from the border with Montenegro to Durrës) and southern (from the Karaburuni Peninsula to the Greek border) coastal regions. These plans were methodologically

complementary with the UNEP/MAP Coastal Area Management Programme (CAMP) for Albania, which focused on the central coastal region between Durrës and Vlorë (1993-1996).

Later on, in 2000, the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP) was adopted, fulfilling the requirements of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which was signed by the Albanian authorities in 1994 as well as provisions of the Pan-European Strategy on Biological and Landscape Diversity. From the natural protection and biodiversity conservation point of view, the BSAP is the key document establishing aims, objectives and measures for biodiversity management in Albania for the period 2000-2015. As for the coastal area, the Strategy proposes a network of 25 marine and coastal protected areas. Consequently, a very wide range of activities, giving rise to impacts on biodiversity, are foreseen along with the respective measures needed, including: Integrated Coastal Zone Management – from the landscape perspective, and River Basin Management Planning – from the water resources management perspective.

By the end of 2002, the National Strategy for Tourism was developed and approved by the Albanian government, making a clear reference to the Albanian coast as a great potential for the development of ecotouristic zone, complying with sustainable development principles. The strategy, prepared with assistance of GTZ (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit – GTZ GmbH*) sets as one of its objectives the achievement of environmentally sustainable tourism, while improving and advising the local authorities and developers on this issue. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has also been identified as a required measure. Later on, the UNDP funded and developed in co-operation with the Ministry of Tourism the “Cultural tourism and ecotourism strategy” as a component of the former strategy.



Photo 4: Vlorë Coastline – “Triporti”

The main objective of the presently running WB's project "The Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Clean-Up Programme" to be implemented over 7 year is to protect the Albanian coastal ecosystems, resources and cultural assets and to promote their sustainable development and management. The main outputs are:

- (1) establishing an Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) institutional and policy framework;
- (2) strengthening the broader regulatory and enforcement capacity at the central, regional and local levels for the protection of coastal and marine natural resources;
- (3) increasing access to basic services associated with the improvement of the quality of life and attractiveness of the coastal areas; and
- (4) implementing sub-projects aiming at promoting sustainable tourism sector development.

The first phase of the project aims at setting up and initiating the ICZM approach to reduce the coastal degradation through: the improvement of regulatory policy, governance and development/land-use planning; improvement and provision of public services and preservation of cultural heritage in the southern coastal villages; supporting priority regional infrastructure investments in the southern coast; addressing the needs to reduce health risk in Porto Romano; and protection of the Butrint National Park. The second phase of the project aims at: supporting a regulated and sustainable tourism development to serve as an engine for the economic growth by supporting further regional/municipal environmental infrastructure investments; promoting protected areas management in critical coastline and marine ecosystems; promoting nautical tourism development and public-private partnerships; addressing critical needs to reduce health risk in additional coastal hot-spots; and improving further capacity building in urban planning and integrated coastal zone management.

UNDP has supported activities and projects that address ICZM aspects and focus on coastal ecosystems and their nature conservation, particularly through: MedWetCoast Project; Sustainable Land Management project; project on biodiversity enhancement and increased landscape productivity through habitat management in the Butrint wetland complex; Conservation and Sustainable Management of Karavasta Lagoon – addressing protection of habitats in the Divjaka National Park and the sustainable management of the Karavasta area; and Skadar Lake Integrated Ecosystem Management project that applies integrated management approaches to the trans-boundary lake of Skader (Albania-Montenegro).

The lack of physical plans is considered to be one of the major obstacles to sustainable coastal development. Physical plans for major investments and developments are being prepared by the National Institute for Physical Planning, but the local governments are also making some plans (according to the new Law on the Organisation and Functioning of the Local Government, the local authorities are assigned to prepare and approve local/regional plans). The new Ministry of Territorial Planning and Tourism co-ordinates the activities of the local government and the National Institute to ensure compatibility of plans. There are two major problems affecting the ICZM process in Albania, namely: the preparation of spatial plans (on which the ICZM significantly depends) is lagging behind the construction; and secondly: the preparation and implementation of the infrastructure master plans is slower than the preparation of the physical plans for the same areas.

This situation has led to illegal construction and inadequate provision of infrastructure, particularly where tourism development is planned. The additional problems are caused by the ownership restitution and compensation process, which is launched by the government and is

facing serious delays. In most cases, alternative land in the attractive coastal area is offered; others were given plots of up to 600 m, with the right to build up to three floors on up to 40% of the plot. This right has been abused enormously, because it encouraged illegal housing particularly where there were no plans.

Given the aforesaid situation and considerations, it is important to highlight that there is still a significant gap in the ICZM legal framework, development and implementation tools, as well as a lack of co-ordination and synergies among different responsible authorities. This is more evident in terms of sea and land-use integrated approaches (including sectoral policies).

5. Maritime Spatial Planning

Albania's coast is about 420 km long. Its exclusive economic zone covers about 12,000 km². The coast can be divided into two parts: the northern, Adriatic coast, and the southern, Ionian coast. The Ionian coast, which runs southeast for 170 km from Karabauruni Cape to Stillo Island on the Greek border, is hilly, with mostly steep mountains plunging into the sea, except for the Butrinti wetland in the south.

This coastal zone has spectacular cliffs, grottoes, caves, hillsides, harbours, bays and some of the country's most intact natural areas. The Adriatic coast, with a total length of about 250 km, is a low-lying alluvial plain 4 to 50 km wide. It comprises a series of small deltas and lagoons, which are formed by nine rivers: Buna, Drini, Mati, Ishmi, Erzeni, Darçi, Shkumbini, Semani and Vjose. Some of the deltas are still active and their shoreline shows dynamic changes in the vicinity of the river mouths. The alluvial plains and wetland areas of the northern coast have been considerably altered to support human settlement and activities, while the rugged character of the southern coast has so far prevented intensive urbanisation.

Road access to most of the southern coast has long been undeveloped, with narrow, winding and intermittently unpaved roads at right angles to the shore. The national road that runs parallel to the coastline has recently been upgraded and new segments are being constructed.

There are only some small harbours along the coastline: Sarandë, near the Greek island of Corfu, and Porto Palermo, a small military port half way up the southern coast, now expanded for tourism. The northern coast benefits from the main traffic axis of Albania, consisting of a coastal road and railroad, which connects the northern and central regions. There are two harbours: Shengjin and Durrës, the latter being the most important.

According to the preliminary results of the 2001 census, some 30% of the total population lives in the coastal area, i.e. in the area administratively belonging to the districts that have the coastline as one of their boundaries. However, another survey has shown that about 97% of the total population lives within 100 km from the coastline.

Coastal development is also characterised by the construction of secondary homes. Foreign investors, too, are becoming more active. In addition, the Government, through the National Council for Territorial Development, has approved four new tourist villages in Lalëzit Bay, also to be developed 150 m from the coastline. Fisheries, particularly commercial ones, are underdeveloped. Officially, the sector has about 3,000 fishermen and other workers. The fleet is not modern; ships are usually second-hand and poorly maintained. Many fishermen work without a licence, but this is tolerated by the local authorities, who see this as a way to relieve poverty and social problems among the coastal communities. According to FAO, the annual catch has significantly dropped in the past decade. However, according to unofficial data, the real catch is double the one reported; about 40% of fish is exported, mainly to Greece and Italy. Domestic demand is increasing, especially for cheaper fish, whereas high-quality fish is exported. As far as aquaculture is concerned, the number of enterprises has dropped from 35 in 1990 to only 14 today. There are a few sites where sea bass and sea bream (in Sarandë and in Kavajë) are raised. The Ministry of EFWA is trying to implement environmental measures in aquaculture, so as to reduce potential pollution from fish production. Among the main problems in coastal fisheries and aquaculture are: inadequate application of the legislation abolishing dynamite fishing; illegal fishing leading to overfishing (especially of sea bass and sea bream); poor inspection (small boats cannot be controlled); the lack of appropriate fishing gear and fleet

and poor harbour infrastructure; the lack of stock assessments to allow for sustainable resource management; insufficient boat services; pollution problems lagoon fisheries is facing, such as pesticides; over-exploitation and lack of channels maintenance; and the excessive and unsustainable fishing in coastal waters.



Photo 5: Over-fishing in Coastal Lagoons

The central and northern coastal regions remain the country's most important agricultural areas. Today, about 58% of the population lives on the coast. Before 1990, coastal agriculture was a big environmental issue, with large wetlands being drained to provide land for agriculture. This policy had several negative consequences. Firstly, valuable wetlands disappeared, reducing the biodiversity potential of the coastal area. Secondly, the reclaimed agricultural land was not as productive as expected because of the high salinisation of the soil. Since this form of agriculture was not very productive, it soon ran into difficulties, creating a number of social, economic and environmental problems in the coastal region.

Waste-water treatment is not available. Four major coastal cities are connected to a sewerage network, but the waste-water is discharged untreated directly into the sea. A variety of projects are considered for the construction of a sewerage network and waste-water treatment plants. Thus, recently, there are some projects intended to establish waste-water treatment in Durres, Lezha and Saranda.



Photo 6: Oil Drilling – Narta Coastline

Coastal erosion is a big problem in the northern and central coastal regions, particularly north of the city of Durrës. Sediment discharge from rivers is relatively large, which explains a very dynamic nature of the deltaic development of the coast, resulting in the rapid development of new coastal features, such as spits and lagoons. There are four main causes of coastal erosion: (a) sediment input, mainly brought by rivers into the coastal zone; (b) the reduction of sand amount in the coastal zone due to anthropogenic activities (sand extraction from beaches and the sea-bed although this action is prohibited by law); (c) the changing location of river mouths in deltaic systems, as a result of natural causes or anthropogenic effects; and (d) the alteration of the usual pattern of coastal currents and the associated sediment transport along and across the shoreline, due to man-made structures built along the coast.

Taking into account the main concerns related to maritime uses, it has to be pointed out that there is no Maritime Spatial Planning in Albania. Apart from some sartorial and left alone (not integrated) activities (like fishery, coastal guard, aquaculture, and oil exploration), the maritime planning has not been elaborated, developed nor implemented as such.

In summary, the main sea-use conflicts would include:

- sustained ecoturistic demand against actual level of supply (incl. environment-related infrastructure, e.g. sewage water treatment, solid waste management systems, etc.);
- coastal urban (uncontrolled) development against the coastal and littoral natural resources development and conservation;
- unsustainable fishing practices against wise use of fishing and aquatic resources; and
- resource extraction against coastal nature conservation (logging of coastal forests, industrial activities taking place through or into the sea, etc.).

6. Linkages to International Policy

The Conventions, with relevance and impact on ICZM, rectified and signed by the Albanian state authorities include the following:

- On November 29, 1995, Albania acceded to the Ramsar Convention and ratified it on March 29, 1996.
- In 1990, Albania acceded to the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of Mediterranean Sea against Pollution.
- Programmes and joint activities implemented in the framework of the Convention by MAP Regional Activity Centres (such as the Blue Plan, MED-Pol and REMPEC) assist the country to improve its position. The studies prepared by the Blue Plan Regional Activity Centre (BP/RAC) present the future environment in the Mediterranean basin on the basis of the various parameters (human pollution, urbanisation, etc.).
- Under the sub-agreement with UNESCO, Albania is making efforts to install pollution monitoring in the coastal areas.
- Albania develops co-operation with the Mediterranean Technical Assistance Programme (METAP), and is involved in the programme “Assessment of Environmental Status” financed by the European Union and World Bank.
- Albania has benefited from both conventions, while a number of programmes developed under the Barcelona Convention have also benefited from them (Coastal Areas Management Programme – CAMP, Mediterranean Pollution Monitoring and Research Programme, Strategic Action Programme – SAP).

In conclusion, as regards ICZM issues, Albania has not yet taken any significant steps towards harmonisation of the national legal framework with the EU Directives (frameworks).

7. Annexes

- Law No. 8405, dated 17.09.1998, on Urban Planning
- Law No. 8405 for an addition to Law No. 8405, dated 17.09.1998, on Urban Planning
- Law No. 8870 dated 21. 03. 2002 on Some Additions and Changes to Law No. 7908, dated 5. 04.1995, on Fishing and Aquaculture
- Albania – the Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Clean-up Programme, WB
- Law No. 8906, dated 6.06.2002 on Protected Areas
- Law No. 8756 dated 26.3.2001 on Civil Emergencies
- Law No. 8875 Dated 4.4.2002 “On the Albanian Coast Guard”
- Law No. 8752 dated 26.3.2001 on Creation and Functioning of Structures for Land Administration and Protection
- Law No. 8763 dated 2.4.2001 for an Addition to the Law No. 7908 dated 5.4.1995 on Fisheries and Aquaculture
- Decision No. 364 dated 18.07.2002 on Approval of the Coastal Area Management Plan
- Decision No. 441 dated 26.9.2002 on the Immediate Cessation of Sand and Gravel Extraction from the River Beds

8. Recommendations

In spite of the intensive, though random, development during the past decade, there are still pristine coastal sites that offer great potential, particularly for the development of tourism (Velipoja-Viluni Lagoon, Lalëzit Bay, Karaburuni Peninsula, Butrinti Lake). Significantly, all these sites are relatively far from major urban centres, although close enough to be affected by them in the future. The starting point for the future of the Albanian coast must be a consensus on the strategy for sustainable coastal development, and for the integrated coastal management as a major tool to achieve this objective. It should be said that quite a large amount of work has been done in recent years, and that it would not require too much effort to create that strategy. The major obstacle will be reaching the political consensus such a strategy needs and, moreover, to force the major stakeholders to commit themselves to implementing such a strategy.

1. The Ministry of Environment, together with the Ministry of Public Works, should stimulate the adoption and implementation of an Integrated Coastal Zone Management plan for the entire coastal region. The plan should propose special measures to eradicate illegal building along the coast. **The law on coastal zone management should be prepared and adopted.** The law will have to define exclusive economic zones, territorial waters, coastal waters, coastal strip, coastal zone, coastal area and coastal hinterland. It will have to provide management guidelines for each of the above-mentioned areas, since these guidelines tend to differ significantly. The greatest emphasis should be on defining the narrow coastal strip, where the pressures are highest and where most of the problems in the coastal waters are created.
2. The public maritime domain will have to be defined and strict regulation will have to be proposed for it. This must be a part of the Marine Spatial Planning process. In addition, accompanying regulation will have to define development procedures for each of the segments of the coastal area, and in particular for the specific Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in coastal areas. The Ministry of Environment will have to prepare the draft law, organise a discussion among the major interested parties, and prepare a proposal to be adopted by the Parliament. Since this issue is a very complex one, and Albania does not have much experience, the international support will have to be sought. Other responsible institutions to help implementation of this recommendation are: the Ministry of Justice; the ministry responsible for maritime affairs, the Ministry of Economy and Industry, the Ministry of Public Works; and the Ministry of Tourism.
3. The Ministry of Environment should develop the appropriate legislation for the integrated coastal zone management, **including the relevant regulatory measures for its application.** An important partner in this endeavour should be the National Institute for Physical Planning, which is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public Works. The Ministry of Environment does not have a special department for coastal areas, and the idea exists to establish one. In that case, this department together with the Urban Department of the Ministry of Public Works and the National Institute for Physical Planning could be the core members of the inter-ministerial committee. Although the Council for Territorial Development today also acts as an inter-ministerial committee dealing, inter alia, with coastal zone management, its scope of activities is too large and it is questionable how efficiently it could deal with specific coastal zone management issues in the future. This issue not only involves approving construction in coastal areas, but also providing a strategic guidance for coastal development, and the Council today is certainly not fulfilling this role. **The inter-ministerial coastal zone management committee would be a decision-making body, while the three ministerial departments mentioned above could serve as its secretariat and deal also with “day to-day” matters.** The Ministry of

Environment and the Ministry of Public Works should establish a special inter-ministerial coastal zone management committee, made up of members of the relevant ministries. Economic instruments for coastal management are implemented only marginally, and are of the simplest kind. The level of applicability in the Albanian context of more sophisticated economic instruments, such as effluent charges, product charges, a deposit-refund system, user charges for natural resources, payment for the change of use of natural areas, tariffs for obtaining an environmental licence, and non-compliance and administrative fines, should be assessed in more detail.

4. The Ministry of Environment should develop and implement appropriate instruments to achieve the sustainable management of coastal resources. Special importance should be given to the **improvement of the monitoring systems, particularly regular monitoring of the beach water quality**. The waste management plan will provide the strategy for waste management. It would consist of: an assessment of current pollution levels; a definition of “hot spots”; the identification and prioritisation of investments; and an action plan. The major problems with solid waste disposal and the lack of sanitary landfills will require urgent international support for building these sites. It also requires an active participation of the local and regional authorities. They will be responsible for the implementation of the plan.
5. The National Water Council, the Ministry of Public Works and the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Water administration should work **to improve waste-water treatment and solid waste management in the large coastal cities, and prevent hazardous materials pollution, in order to reduce pollution in “hot spots” and along the coast**. The first step in this endeavour could be the adoption of a waste management plan covering, in particular, the entire coastal region. In spite of diminishing resources, tourism is still considered to be one of the most important development potentials. The plan should: identify the tourism development strategy, the major stakeholders and potential investors; define the nature of the Albanian tourist product; and assess the carrying capacity for tourism in the most important locations along the coast, taking into consideration the existing and future development already approved. The Ministry of Public Works (Department for Tourism) should take the lead in implementation of this recommendation in co-operation with the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Culture, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests (General Directorate of Forests and Pastures).
6. The Ministry of Public Works (Department for Tourism), assisted by the Ministry of Environment, should implement the sustainable tourism development plan, including the preparation of the Carrying Capacity Assessments (CCA) for the most attractive tourist locations.