

# **Working Group 2**

## **Environment and Sustainable Development**

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### **REPORT**

Draft (26.12.2000)

#### **1. INTRODUCTION: PROGRAMMATIC AND THEMATIC GUIDELINES**

The Working Group 2 (WG2) on “Environment and Sustainable Development” gathered 25 participants representing all the countries involved in the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, e.g. Slovenia, Croatia, FR Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Greece and Italy (see attached list).

The session was opened at 3:15 p.m. and chaired by Andrea Segrè, who briefly introduced both programmatic and thematic guidelines of WG2:

- The main programmatic lines to be implemented by UNIADRION in the (very large) field of environment and sustainable development should aim to identify agreed proposals indicating priorities, financial and human resources and implementation modalities.
- The main issues related to environment and sustainable development encompass a wide range of different aspects in the fields of politics, economics and society, science and technology, agriculture and industry. Sustainability goes beyond a mere integration of environmental goals into social and economic evaluation, as it incorporates a time dimension associated to limits to the availability of certain natural resources and threshold levels in environmental quality, which cannot be surpassed. Sustainable development also encompasses a simple notion of attempting to express and secure equity between people, but involves a complicated balance of economic imperatives and environmental capabilities.

#### **2. LESSONS FROM A CASE HISTORY AND TRAINING PROPOSALS**

Before presenting and discussing the specific issues on environment and sustainable development, it was considered interesting as reference the illustration of a “case history” very much related to WG2 and still going: the Adriatic cooperation in the fishery sector [Piccinetti and Jukic]. This project was started back in 1973 when the political and economic situation in the area was quite different with respect to this period. Currently the program, named ADRIAMED, is supported by the FAO.

This pioneering initiative, that involves both coasts of the Adriatic sea, gave a number of insights for WG2 and lead also to some operative proposals in the sector of marine biological resources and aquaculture that may be of interest for WG2 in particular and for UNIADRION in general.

In effect, a network of national focal points, one in each country, was already established in the framework of ADRIAMED. This network of focal points could be already available acting as starting “nodes” for the virtual training system of UNIADRION (with special reference to the above mentioned sector). In addition, the development of the existent informatics’ network could be used, if the case, to promote training courses at different levels [Piccinetti and Jukic].

Related to training it should be noted, moreover, that the facilities established by the “Faculty” of Biotechnology (7 large didactic laboratories, multivalent, 52 working positions each, based on the single bench principle), are yet available for UNIADRION [Masotti]

### **3. COMMON FRAMEWORK AND LIST OF PRIORTIES/PROPOSALS**

Than two thematic background papers were introduced.

- a) Silvo Devetak explored the possibilities for using the concept of European Space Development Perspective (ESDP) as a tool for joint cross-boarder, trans-national and inter-regional joint programs for spatial development in the space of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative.
- b) Christos Fotoupulos dealt on the aspects of sustainable development in agriculture, certainly one of a key sector in all countries involved in the Adriatic-Ionian area, although from a different perspective.

The discussion that followed, actually very open and wide, lead to I) a common background framework illustrated by some general statements agreed by participants as well as to II) a number priorities/proposals related to the field of investigation. Than a concrete proposal to be developed as a possible common project, that should be considered as the final output of WG2, emerged at the end of the session.

#### **I) Common background framework**

1. First it was agreed that WG2 has the task to select a project proposal with a relevant scientific content that should be carried out and implemented through the cooperation of Universities, Centers for Development and Researches and Enterprises (including high-tech agencies) of the coastal Countries.

2. The fields of actions and the goals should be discussed and achieved taking into consideration the great opportunities offered by modern information technologies, which include the territorial information systems and the techniques of data collection and elaboration, the process simulations and the supporting systems in decision making, the techniques of optimization and the needs of vocational training. This (innovative) approach may guarantee adequate tools for the implementation of the project proposal [Pizzio].

3. An additional benefit would be the setting up of a sub-network (of UNIADRION network), which can be rapidly and effectively constituted (as result of this session) with all participants of WG2. This would substantially contributes the creation of a network of experts as a crucial pre-condition for dealing with the difficult problems of an echo-compatible and sustainable

development effectively, both in economic and technical terms, and for exchanging data and information [Devetak].

4. The WG2 recognized also the real worry related to the environmental pollution of the Eastern coast of the Basin (not only result of the wars that affected the area) and to the negative impact of the adoption of not sustainable economic development models.

5. When dealing with policy evaluation that the complexity of sustainability formulations reaches its peak. Indeed, the concept of sustainability is subject to multifold interpretations and, consequently, levels of assessment. In the developed world, it tends to concentrate on environmental-related goals, under the implicit assumptions that other needs are covered. That is not, unfortunately, always the case. Even if we take as a basic definition of the term sustainability, the proposal from the Brundtland Commission (“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”) two obvious ambiguities are immediately evident.

6. On the one hand limitations on resource management are directly linked to the state of technology and social organisation. On the other, the concept of “needs” is different as much as the social groups in the world are different. Environmental issues are mostly the concern of affluent societies, whereas other issues such as social and economic matters prevail where development levels are lesser. Basic needs, there included for instance food, clothing, shelter, etc. are covered in most regions of the EU. The unemployment situation, on the other hand, is a fearsome possibility or a daunting reality for others, with decision-takers lending a far greater consideration to job provision than to environmental protection [Poropat].

## II. Priorities and (Concrete) Proposals

A number of proposals to be included in the above common background frame were than presented and discussed. The following items (here just summarized) were included amongst the priorities and reflects the strong interrelations that are linking environment and sustainability:

- a) Conducting a preparatory study on the spatial development in the space of Adriatic and Ionian areas applying the European Space Development Perspective (as known a greater part of this space has been so far excluded from the benefits of European integration and the process of EU enlargement and the incorporation of the European spatial development policy would be perfectly in line with the establishment of an Adriatic-Ionian Euro-Region) [Devetak].
- b) Investigating the production cost of major organic and traditional products in relation to the conventional and transgenic agriculture, exploring their market possibilities, improving the competitiveness of their production methods, analyzing consumers’ acceptance and investigating consumption trends in the interior of the Adriatic-Ionian basin in relation to the external trends observed (aim is the protection and the encouraged of local and typical products as well as the development of the relevant penetration strategies of the basin’s products into foreign markets) [Fotoupulos].
- c) Investigating and defining new PDO/PGI products, especially in the non-EU participating countries, preparation of their documentation for approval according to the EU regulations and development of the relevant label-indication for the non-EU countries [Fotoupulos, Molla] and preparing non-EU countries in the process of their legislative approximation to

EU legislation and regulations with special reference to food security and environmental protection (including enforcement bodies) [Molla, Masotti].

- d) Establishing a Network for Organic Agriculture including all the Adriatic-Ionian basin countries [Molla, Fotopoulos, Radman, Kolega], founding an Adriatic-Ionian Educational Center in matters of Organic agriculture production and marketing expertise (this Center could be located in the traditional and of excellent natural beauty area of Prousos, Western Greece, near the Department of Farm Management in Agrinio) [Fotopoulos], and promoting rural development and agritourism [Pizzio].
- e) Evaluating from a technical and economic perspective alternative agricultural production systems including biological, integrated, conventional, and transgenic crops [Venturi, Giovanardi, Della Riccia, Masotti] as well as the land use impact on coastal ecosystem conservation [Giovanardi, Venturi].
- f) Establishing an integrated monitoring system related to the quality of surface and deep water as well as marine waters [Giovanardi, Purini, Abbiati] and providing the rehabilitation of the eastern coastal observing system on environment, meteorological and marine condition [Finizio].
- g) Activating renewable energy sources (in particular photovoltaic and aeolian generators) to provide electricity in the isolated areas of the coastal regions and the islands [Nobili] and promoting the investigation of the impact of transportation (road traffic is the single largest contributors of air pollution) on land and mobility disturbance, health effects of air pollution [Paravantis].

#### **4. PROGRAM AND FINANCIAL SOURCES: FUTURE WORK**

The items listed above, although influenced by the thematic papers as well as by the personal expertise of WG2 participants, lead to the recognition of the very difficult trade-offs that may have to be made between economic, social and environmental objectives, and the need to interlink environmental evaluation with social and economic considerations.

However, the items listed above allowed the proposal of a common project framework that could be synthesized with a provisional “title”:

#### ***SUSTAINABILITY IN THE RURAL AND COASTAL AREAS OF THE ADRIATIC-IONIAN BASIN***

A possible financial framework to grant the project could be found, among the other sources, in the community program **INTERREG IIIIB “CADSES”**. The priorities listed above, in effect, fit very well in the plan of action and measures agreed by donors (including Italy and Greece).

The WG2 agreed to prepare a project proposal to be submitted to INTERREG in a time period of 6 months.

The session was closed at 7:00 p.m.

Reported by Andrea Segrè

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