

FRAMESPORT strategy presentation Minutes of the 3rd meeting

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Round table

**A new strategy and a new digital
portal for a sustainable
development of Adriatic small
ports: matching stakeholders'
perspectives**

31.05.2023

17:00 – 18:30

Venice Boat Show 2023



**SALONE
NAUTICO
VENEZIA**

Minutes of the meeting

The Venice Boat Show opened the 31st of May in the framework of the Venice Arsenal, at the presence of numerous tourists, operators and users of the nautical sector and of many other relevant stakeholders.

In this international framework, the strategic project for cross border cooperation FRAMESPORT held its final event, which included a round table entitled *“A new strategy and a new digital portal for a sustainable development of Adriatic small ports: matching stakeholders’ perspectives”* dedicated to the presentation of the two main outputs of the project, namely the ICT portal and the FRAMESPORT strategy.

Mrs. Coccon (CORILA) intervened to present both the FRAMESPORT ICT portal (available at framesport.eu) as well as the final strategy of the project that is under finalization. Mr. Ballarin (CORILA) as moderator of the round table took the floor to introduce the participants and launch the discussion:

- **Paolo De Martino**, IUAV University of Venice
- **Alessandro Bove**, University of Padova
- **Dražen Žgaljić**, LOGOTEAM
- **Matteo Arena**, Consultant of Svilupp Europa Marche Srl - SVEM

The first question concerned the importance of small ports in the “maritime” world and the need to address their development through a transnational strategy.

- **Paolo De Martino**

So far, the attention has been mostly devoted to big ports. In these climates of great uncertainties and fragmentation, small ports can really act as an engine for sustainable development as well as connectors between land and sea, therefore providing a solid basis to build a network of like-minded actors striving to promote them. Indeed, small ports has shown a higher level of resilience than big ports, and in some ways are better equipped to implement the changes and transitions that are needed to face today’s challenges.

- **Alessandro Bove**

There is a relevant level of fragmentation between the two coasts of the Adriatic, starting from small ports and their main characteristics. The data mining and pilot actions provided a great deal of information that represented a baseline for the strategy that applies to a large part of the Adriatic. The importance of the development of a long-term approach represented by the

strategy is also coming from the pressing need of harmonization between the two coasts, in order to turn small ports into an authentic door between the land and sea for all territories involved.

- **Dražen Žgaljić**

The previous Interreg Italy-Croatia Programme identified the importance of small ports. However, the call for proposal of the new programming period that has been recently closed did not recognize such system of small ports, which differ from big ports for a number of factors. Despite this, small ports still carry out the transport of passengers, in some cases with very relevant numbers as in the case of Split and Zadar. In some cases, these ports are not so small, and on the contrary are gates for tourists trying to reach Adriatic regions and for these reasons are very important and should not be overlooked.

- **Matteo Arena**

Small ports are relevant because of their economic weight, as they generate a relevant share of turnover (3-5 billion euro) and employ a significant number of people (40.000-70.000 people). Specifically the Adriatic and Mediterranean area is one of the most important for this market segment, including boat charters. Small ports also have an indirect effect on local and regional economies, for instance through the shipbuilding industry, sailing schools, charter companies and so on. Moreover, a lot of marinas also provide touristic services to both nautical users as well as to the inland areas, producing a spill-over effect on all the territory. Another element to be considered is the economic weight of activities that are carried out not only within the small ports but also in close proximities. Furthermore, that of small ports is a specific segment that is highly respondent to relevant macro-trends, such as demographic flows and GDP per capita, but also to geopolitical events that affect tourist flows. However, it is difficult for small ports to sustain huge investments, therefore the need to merge international dynamics with a market mainly composed by small and medium enterprises explains the necessity of a strategic approach at the macro-regional and European levels.

In the second round, a specific targeted question was directed at each participant.

Ports as driver of economic development of the coastal areas of the Adriatic. How can this be valorized through a strategy?

- **Paolo De Martino**

Small ports can be defined as “landscapes in transition”, as they include and harmonize an array of different elements, such as tourism, energy, sustainability, landscape and heritage, facilities’ management and so on. However, all these elements are facing a high pressure with regards to

small ports, so they need to be addressed, also in the framework of the pressing need to implement the green and digital transition required at the national and European levels. However, while big ports are very hard to be changed, because of global economies, energy dependencies and so on, small ports are much more flexible presenting completely different scales and conditions. Hence, they can serve as laboratories to test innovative solutions and practices that, through a strategic approach, can really have a positive effect on themselves as well as on general economy and sustainability.

The partnership have worked hard on data (collection and elaboration) which also highlighted the importance of sustainability. How can we pursue sustainability of small port and marinas?

- **Alessandro Bove**

Sustainability is an aspect that emerged from both project activities and the data collection that has been performed. In particular, FRAMESPORT underlined an economical dimension of sustainability, as this represents a sort of a badge of quality for small ports and marinas. While many environmental certifications are already available for larger ports, the same does not applies to small ports, whose sustainability is not so well defined and codified.

The element that has a great impact on the sustainability of small ports is tourism: the role of people using the small ports is the key to understand how sustainability is important and how it should be turned into something that is useful for the port itself. For this reason, in cooperation with CORILA, UNIPD decided to work on an ecolabel proposal for small ports' sustainability to be submitted to the Joint Research Centre of the EU. The ecolabel uses a multi-criteria scheme devised to support sustainable practices within small ports. This is useful for small ports' managers to evaluate their environmental impact and evaluate long-term investments, promoting a change towards a greater sustainability and climate neutrality. Therefore, the issue of sustainability is multi-faceted and should be addressed from multiple points of view. The approach connected to the ecolabel pushes towards a mayor level of services in all ports. In this sense, the ecolabel also pushes towards a kind of standardization of positive practices and services.

During project activities, the concepts of "standardization" and "stakeholder engagement" have been strongly stressed. How can they both be valorized as part of a strategy?

- **Dražen Žgaljić**

In Croatia there are different kinds of small ports, from the 22 public port authorities that manage 450 small ports to the private marinas. Therefore, there is a high level of variety that depends on the different management of such small ports, with consistent variations also

within the same category. This is also an element of confusion for tourists and users, as they can find different terms and services from port to port across a short distance. Taking into consideration the economic value of small ports and the vast presence of tourists, a standardization of services is greatly needed, implementing a minimum level of facilities and services that should be guaranteed by all small ports of the Adriatic. This would be very valuable for both users and tourists. Standardization should be seen as an opportunity for economic operators and stakeholders.

What is the state of the art in terms of digital infrastructure and services in the context of the Marche marinas? How can this be considered to drive the future development of the wider Adriatic area?

- **Matteo Arena**

The Marche region has 9 touristic ports, but it was rather difficult to collect all the relevant data related to them. Digitalization and ICT services are one of the fields in which small ports and marinas provide relevant services. Looking at the example of the Marche region, there is a lack of harmonization of ICT tools and platforms providing information to users. For instance 8 ports has a Wi-Fi network, 5 ports are provided with an online booking system for berths.

This situation should be taken care of through a minimum level of standards to be guaranteed at the macro-regional level (at least). In this purpose, the management and booking tools implemented by big ports could serve as an example and inspiration to replicate them on a smaller scale also in the framework of small ports and marinas.

One final round comprised the answer to the request of indicating the priorities to be tackled in order to pursue a smart and sustainable development of small ports' future.

- **Paolo De Martino**

As suggested by one pillar of the FRAMESPORT strategy called maritime identity, when dealing with small ports it is important to involve local citizens and bring them onboard, also through specific training, in order to enhance this identity. The second priority is more about changing the perspective and implement rather a sea-based approach. The last aspect is related to time and to the fact that external rules are changing all the time. Therefore, the lack of a larger and long-term vision could result in the need to start from scratch everytime these external rules change. This is why it is necessary to adopt a larger vision made of small steps.

- **Alessandro Bove**

The FRAMESPORT project has built a bridge between Italy and Croatia through a larger aim for a small sea as the Adriatic is, as partners and stakeholders started to discuss about harmonization of services and a "common vocabulary". What emerges is a high level of

differences, which are both a problem to build a common strategy and an opportunity to valorize different experiences and best practices.

- **Dražen Žgaljić**

The main priorities are first of all the implementation of a minimum standard level of services and facilities, but also the improvement of digitalization through a higher number of ICT and digital systems to manage ports' facilities and bookings. FRAMESPORT was a starting point for territorial cooperation, but this should continue through additional project that will allow to concretely start working on these clear aims.

- **Matteo Arena**

The main priorities should focus on the improvement of the accessibility to finance through dedicated channels and specific funds aimed at fostering digitalization and decarbonization, as well as energy efficiency. Moreover, standardization and definition of specific requirements for the different level of services and infrastructures should also be implemented. Another useful tool would be the realization of a common platform among small ports and marinas of the Adriatic to build nautical itineraries at cross border level to sell to international charter, in order to enlarge the catchment area of Adriatic small ports. Last but not least, the human factor is also essential, as competent people are needed to implement these ideas, ranging from economical operators in the private sector to relevant personnel within the public administrations.

Mr. Ballarin took the floor to thank once again all participants for their attention as well as the speakers for their availability and cooperation.

Photos



Signature list

The meeting registered a total number of 57 participants (total number of people) from 27 entities (total number of bodies/institutions/companies), of which:

- n. 1 Local public authorities,
- n. 8 Regional public authorities,
- n. 3 National public authorities,
- n. 7 Enterprises,
- n. 3 Infrastructure operators/providers,
- n. 1 Educational organizations,
- n. 4 Universities and research Institutions.