

H2020 PROJECT COASTAL – COLLABORATIVE LAND-SEA INTEGRATION PLATFORM

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Coordinator & participants: Vlaamse Instelling voor Technologisch Onderzoek N.V. (VITO), Belgium; 14 research institutes and universities, 3 NGOs, 2 SMEs, 2 farmers' associations, 4 governmental organizations, 2 development agencies, and 2 industries, from 9 EU countries.

Budget: The overall budget of COSTAL is 5M€ and HCMR's budget is 400k€.

Project description: COASTAL is a unique collaboration of coastal and rural business entrepreneurs, administrations, stakeholders, and natural and social science experts. Local and scientific knowledge are combined to identify problems and develop practical and robust business road maps and strategic policy guidelines, aimed at improving land-sea synergy. A multi-actor approach is followed to analyze the social-environmental and economic land-sea interactions in a collaborative System Dynamics (SD) framework, taking into consideration the short-, mid- and long-term impacts of decision making and feedback mechanisms on coastal and rural development. The project is organized around interacting Multi-Actor Labs (MALs), combining tools and expertise for six case studies representing the major coastal regions in the EU territory. In each MAL local actors and experts participate in collaborative exercises to analyze problems, analyze the causes, propose and discuss solutions, and validate and interpret the impacts of simulated business and policy decisions. The MALs are connected into a durable platform for collaborative knowledge exchange – COASTAL – which is underpinned by a generic set of tools and performance indicators. The ultimate ambitions of COASTAL are to inspire strategic land-sea planning and contribute to the formulation of integrated coastal-rural regulations at the regional, national and EU level.

Case studies: A representative EU-wide selection of six complementary case studies provides the basis for project tasks covering different spatial scales, time spaces, data conditions, locations, expectations, and targeted sectors: 1) Belgian Coastal Zone/Baltic; 2) SW-Messinia/Mediterranean; 3) Norrström/Baltic; 4) Charente River Basin/Atlantic; 5) Danube Mouth/Black Sea; 6) Mar Menor Lagoon/Mediterranean.

Greek case study: A collaboration between HCMR and SU/NEO (Navarino Environmental Observatory) will co-coordinate the activities at the Greek case study, which is located in SW Messinia and also includes the Gialova lagoon. Agriculture and coastal tourism are the two major economic activities in the area. Tourism is expanding and goes hand in hand with infrastructure development and can provide opportunities for diversified livelihoods, but also increases pressures on the environment and cultural sites. Coastal areas are also affected by agrochemicals, soil erosion, solid waste landfills, and waste waters. In particular waste products from olive production form a threat to surface and coastal water quality. Climate change is expected to increase coastal erosion and decrease the availability of freshwater, with increased risk for saltwater intrusion into coastal wetlands and aquifers. There are also plans for offshore oil and gas exploration that will have implications for the area's rich coastal biodiversity.