



HarmoNIA

Harmonization and Networking for contaminant  
assessment in the Ionian and Adriatic Seas

## Methodological proposal for transnational harmonization of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of offshore platform installation procedures. Deliverable T1.2.1

# Work Package T1 - Sharing best practices for transnational harmonization for EQSD implementation and link with UNEP/MAP MEDPOL Program and Offshore Protocol of Barcelona Convention

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- **Introduction**

The deliverable T1.2.1 requires to share a methodological proposal for transnational harmonization of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedures in case of offshore platform installation.

Briefly, an analysis of EIA legislation and its procedure was done for offshore platform installation at ADRION level, describing commonalities and differences among six countries (Albania, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro and Slovenia).

Gaps and needs regarding the installation EIA procedure at ADRION level are also discussed.

- **Questionnaires**

- **Structure of the Questionnaire**

A questionnaire was sent in March 7th to national institutes involved in the project with the following remarks for compilation:

- Provide general EIA legislation at national, regional or local level.
- Provide specific EIA legislation in case of offshore platform installation for the exploitation of liquid and/or gaseous hydrocarbons.
- Report the authority in charge for platform installation EIA.
- Describe EIA procedure in case of offshore platform installation.
- Report possible restrictions in case of the authorization of prospecting, research and cultivation of liquid and gaseous hydrocarbons with respect to the distance from the coastline and Marine Protected Areas (MPA).
- Use the last column "Comments" for any additional information.

## **Analysis of results**

The institutions that replied to the questionnaire were:

- Agriculture University of Tirana (AUT), Albania
- Rudjer Boskovic Institute (RBI) and Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries (IOF), Croatia
- Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR) and Region of Western Greece (RWG), Greece
- Italian National Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA) and National Institute of Oceanography and Applied Geophysics (OGS), Italy

- University of Montenegro - Institute of Marine Biology (UoM-IMB) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Montenegro
- Slovenian Environment Agency (ARSO) and National Institute of Biology (NIB), Slovenia

The Questionnaires received from all the six countries involved in the project HarmonIA have been compared (See Attachment). The comparative analysis of the questionnaires highlighted the results described below.

All the EU member countries own a general national EIA legislation, transposing specific European Directives, in particular the last Directive 2014/52/UE. Although not part of the European Union, Montenegro has an EIA law in line with the Directive 2014/52/UE and Albania has EIA system that transposes some previous UE directives.

Italy, Greece and Montenegro declared an EIA legislation which specifically addresses the case of offshore platform installation but not Croatia and Albania. In Slovenia, according to Mining Act, offshore oil and gas exploration and exploitation is prohibited.

The EIA procedure for offshore platform installation is similar at ADRION level according to the following general steps:

- Presentation of the EIA report by the offshore developer.
- Initiation of the EIA procedure, public consultation and advice acquisition.
- Examination by the Competent Authority of the information presented in the EIA report and any supplementary information provided, where necessary, by the developer.
- Reasoned conclusion and decision by the Competent Authority on the significant impacts of the project for the environment, including a description of measures envisaged to avoid, prevent or reduce and, if possible, offset significant adverse effects on the environment as well as, where appropriate, monitoring measures.

The authority in charge (Ministry/Agency of the Environment), the mandatory contents of the EIA report and the final act of the EIA procedure (EIA decision to approve or not approve the project) are also common between the six countries. In all ADRION area, EIA process provides a monitoring project of environmental components subjected to potential negative impacts.

National guidelines exist for drawing up EIA report in Greece, Montenegro, Albania and Slovenia but they are missing in Italy and Croatia.

In any case, minimum information to be included in EIA report is specified in the Directive 2014/52/UE itself, transposed and implemented by the countries belonging to the European Union. Montenegro and Albania have also similar contents for the EIA report.

Table 1 recollects the main concepts related to the EIA report that are common between Harmonia Project participants.

•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a description of the project including information on the site, design, size and other relevant features of the project;</li> </ul>
•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a description of the likely significant effects of the project on the environment;</li> </ul>
•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a description of the measures envisaged in order to avoid, prevent or reduce significant adverse effects on the environment;</li> <li>• a description of the alternatives considered.</li> </ul>

In addition to that, Italy, Montenegro and Slovenia require the environmental monitoring plan to be included in the EIA report.

With regards to the restrictions for prospecting, research and cultivation of liquid and gaseous hydrocarbons with respect to the distance from the coastline and Marine Protected Areas (AMP), Greece and Albania have no limitations. Italy has recently established restrictions within 12 miles from the coastline and from marine and coastal areas subjected to environmental protection measures of any kind. Croatian restrictions are: 10 km from the outer line of the coast (15 km in highly protected marine areas), 6 km from the outer line of the islands and specific limitations are established for waterways, archaeological sites, tourist zones and mine suspected areas. The Government of Montenegro has set a minimum separation distance from the shore of 3 km. In Slovenia, according to Mining Act, offshore oil and gas exploration and exploitation is prohibited.

All countries have national legislation establishing the EIA authorization procedure in the case of projects that have significant adverse environmental impacts across boundaries.

Regarding International Convention or regional agreement regulating environmental impact of the offshore oil and gas platforms, although the Barcelona Convention and UNCLOS have been ratified by all countries, only Croatia and Albania have ratified the Offshore Protocol of the Barcelona Convention.

## Conclusion

On the basis of the outcomes of the questionnaires, a similar approach emerges for EIA procedure of offshore platform installation. This result was expected for partners belonging to EU member states on the basis of European Union directives, but it could be not taken for granted at ADRION level.

The following **gaps** have been found:

- Absence of Offshore Protocol ratification in most of the countries (except for Croatia and Albania)
- Absence of restrictions for prospecting, research and cultivation of hydrocarbons, with respect to the distance from coastline and MPA (except for Italy, Croatia and Montenegro). The exception is Slovenia, where offshore oil and gas exploration and exploitation is prohibited.
- Absence of national guidelines to draw up EIA report in some countries (Italy and Croatia)

In addition, some answers were incomplete, mainly due to scarce feedback of some competent authorities.

Consequently, the following **needs** emerge at ADRION level:

- To have major feedback by competent authorities
- To ratify the Offshore Protocol of the Barcelona Convention in all ADRION countries
- To establish restrictions for prospecting, research and cultivation of hydrocarbons, with respect to the distance from coastline and MPA, in the entire ADRION area
- To propose a task force of experts belonging to each ADRION nation to share best practices and normative evolutions on the EIA topic in case of offshore platform installation.

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