The sustainable development of the yachting industry is an intrinsic part of Blue Growth, a strategy which aims at fostering economic growth and development of marine and maritime activities while conserving ecosystems and the services they provide.

Yachting can be defined as the recreational use of boats (including motor yachts and sailboats) for fishing, sailing, racing and tourism. As the Mediterranean offers a long and diverse coastline, the yachting industry in the region supports a significant number of enterprises, jobs and turnover. Moreover the maritime culture and heritage of the region makes it attractive for visitors globally: it is estimated that 50% of global fleet spends at least eight months per year in the Mediterranean. Yachting activities have a positive impact on the entire coastal population, both in terms of revenue and recreation opportunities.

Yachting therefore represents a strong economic driver in the Mediterranean region in relation to boat production, brokerage, maintenance, repair, dry storage facilities and crew. After the collapse of what used to be a booming industry in 2008 due to the economic crash, the yacht building market is gradually readjusting and consolidating. The Mediterranean region is considered a hub for the repair and refit of super-yachts, or vessels over 24 meters length, as the market is expanding. It counts a record number of 217 marinas, especially concentrated in Italy, Spain and Croatia.

However, needs on a yacht include water, food, electricity provision, waste management and disposal, which ends up with yachting activities coming with a significant environmental footprint. The major impacts of yachting are hydrocarbon releases, wastewater and oily/bilge water discharge, mooring/anchoring, overfishing, noise disturbance, antifouling paint, and litter/solid waste production.

These pressures lead to the degradation of the ecosystem, which actually supports the industry. Besides, an estimated 10 million tones of waste is dumped at sea per year and 70% of wastewater dumped into the Mediterranean is untreated.

Initiatives and regulations to prevent environmental degradation include the MAP – Mediterranean Action Plan to protect the marine and coastal environment, the Blue Growth strategy from the European Union to support sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors as a whole on the long term, the International Maritime Organization prohibiting plastic disposal at sea, and MARPOL Annex IV and V restricting the disposal of wastewater and solid waste at sea.

Finding a balance between the use and conservation of resources needed for the development of the yachting industry is a challenge, which is that the iBLUE (Interreg Med) project is motivated to tackle.

1 The Marine Industry Association (Plan Bleu 2011)
2 Superyacht Intelligence 2018 New builds
3 Superyacht Intelligence 2011 Quarterly Marina Capacity & Berth Analysis report
4 European Commission
The iBlue project is a €2.2M initiative (2017-2020) involving partners from 9 countries: Albania, Cyprus, Croatia, France, Spain, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Slovenia. The main objective of the project is to re-launch the yachting sector sustainably, specifically by developing a business model methodology for SMEs and professional organizations involved in the entire chain of yachting activities (manufacturing, service and infrastructure).

**Vision**

“Protecting nature, beauty and culture of Mediterranean territories”.

**Aim**

“Providing knowledge on economic impact and employment by focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of the Yachting sector”.

The innovative approach of iBlue is given by two aspects: the integration of the three sustainability pillars (social, economic and environmental aspects) in business model innovation for a more holistic management of maritime and coastal zones, and the development of a Mediterranean network of partners who share common challenges.

The deliverables of the project include:

- A database of yachting sector in the Med
  - Economic impact
  - Employment influence
  - Strengths and weaknesses
  - Sustainability

- A catalogue of best practices in the yachting sectors:
  - Manufacture (ship building)
  - Nautical services
  - Infrastructure (marinas, storages)

- A triple-layered business model including economic, environmental and social indicators.

The project assesses the costs and impacts of key activities (production, repair, research & development) and resources used (equipment, machineries, infrastructures, human resources).
Sustainable practices in the yachting sector

iBLUE has undertaken a survey with questionnaires and semi-structured interviews on sustainable yachting practices to manufacturers, services and infrastructures, among the partner countries of the project. As a result, iBLUE has put together a catalogue of 57 case studies in the yachting sector, with outstanding sustainability results in terms of economic, social and environmental aspects. Examples included marinas, shipbuilding companies, shipyards and nautical clubs. (READABLE HERE)

The project thereby highlighted Mediterranean initiatives to reduce environmental degradation, push the limits of self-reliance and sustainability at sea, marinas and shipbuilding infrastructures, combining yachting with eco-friendly commitment. 27 best practices as examples of innovations include local energy production (with sun/wave-generated electricity), waste collection systems, and wastewater treatment and storage systems. (READABLE HERE & HERE)

3-Pillar Business Model Innovation

iBlue has developed a methodology for implementing SMEs business models according to a perspective of sustainability. The methodology revised the model proposed by Joyce and Paquin (2016) in order to approach SMEs effectively and to promote a business model innovation. The project hence elaborated a system of sustainability indicators that could be used by SMEs in order to estimate their sustainability according to the three pillars ( economical, environmental, social).

RECOMMENDATIONS

✓ New public policies enhancing yachting sustainability are needed, with support from policy makers and an EU homogeneous regulatory framework

✓ A delicate balance must be found between economic development, ecological sustainability and social needs. Awareness should be translated into technological development

✓ Public support to data collection and availability in all Med area

✓ Promotion of Business Model Innovation (through new business modelling approach and tools) inbound and outbound yachting sector
The Blue Growth Community, launched in April 2017 in Rome, is one of the core axes developed by the Interreg Mediterranean programme to trigger long-term, innovative and sustainable Blue Growth in the basin. Building on a solid network of stakeholders brought together by six thematic projects and one umbrella project, key stakeholders and strategists over the basin, the Community addresses different issues of the Mediterranean blue economy: blue energies, maritime surveillance, yachting, clusters, governance. The Community acts as a solidifier of all projects’ ties with one another and stimulates the creation of new synergies through supporting the internationalization of clusters.

Through the 7 events specifically dedicated to capitalization and community building, participating stakeholders benefitted from the community as a platform to create durable and coherent transversal interactions amongst themselves as representatives of various sectors of expertise and different levels of decision-making. Meanwhile, this transversal scope has allowed the Blue Growth Community to give impulse to sectoral initiatives of its thematic projects by providing a solid network of transferability of knowledge and practices as bases for a sustainable and more socially cohesive maritime economy in the Mediterranean.

With wide-ranging long-term objectives such as better training schemes adapted to sectoral needs of the maritime economy, knowledge-based recommendations and awareness-raising towards policy-makers and strategists, the Blue Growth Community is proud of offering a solid, concrete and enlightened basis for sound policy-building in the interest of the whole Mediterranean.

The Blue Growth Community during the Summer School Final conference, Kotor, Montenegro, July 2019

Blue Growth Community leading consortium

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