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Nationality: Italian

Date doctoral degree: 10/01/2018

Orientation: Integrated Management of the Sea

Specialization Area: Coastal Planning

Research Area: 3.12 Governance of marine and coastal environment, integration of public land and marine policies and social responsibility

**PhD project: Analysis of the implementation of the European Marine Strategy Framework Directive in the North-East Atlantic region**

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Foto doctoranda

**Summary:** The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea was the first step to protect marine ecosystems and to enhance a sustainable management of economic activities. At the European level, recently the European Commission encompasses an integrated management with the adoption of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). The main goal of this directive is to ensure that Member States achieve or maintain Good Environmental Status of their marine waters by the year 2020 at the latest. The present multidisciplinary thesis focuses on the implementation of this directive in the ten countries of the North-East Atlantic region, taking into consideration ecological, socio-economic and governance aspects. It investigates the level of coordination among countries and the level of coherence in the integration of related European and international environmental legislation. The methodology used to carry out this research is a comparative analysis of national reports, associated to an extensive literature review and a dedicated survey. The results of the comparative analysis present the main differences among the initial assessment, definitions of Good Environmental Status and targets established by the ten countries of the region, especially for biodiversity related descriptors. Low levels of coherence are observed at sub-regional level in the programmes of management measures developed by the three countries of the Bay of Biscay and the Iberian Coast. The survey has allowed to identify the reasons behind these differences among national strategies across the region and sub-regions. These indicate that regional coordination structures are, in general, well-developed but there is an apparent lack of political will to coordinate actions at the regional level. To move toward a more coherent implementation of the MSFD in the region in the next cycle, it is suggested to make a better use of the many coordination and social platforms that are aimed at supporting all the interested parties to fill gaps in knowledge, identify best practices, exchange views and concerns, build trust between and among governments and stakeholders.

Foto relacionada con el tema de tesis