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**ADRINET**

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550-ITALME - ADRINET PLUS – CAPITALIZATION OUTPUTS

Bari, 25/01/2024

## The ADRINET Project for the joint management of coastal areas (2018-2021)

Coastal zones are the most productive areas in the Mediterranean and in Programme's regions, offering a wide variety of valuable ecosystems that have always attracted folks and human activities. One of the most relevant among them is fishing, which unfortunately comes along with several issues nowadays, such as overexploitation of stocks, unsustainable means of catching, neglected species, water and sea floor pollution, and littering (e.g., “ghost fishing”).

Effective measures to tackle these issues are severely hampered by (at least) two key-factors: the opposite interests of the involved stakeholders and the lack of reliable scientific data. The first factor contributes to preventing comprehensive joint coastal management plans aimed at securing a sustainable use of environmental resources. The second one, in measuring and monitoring the state of these resources.

The ADRINET project worked on both these aspects, proposing a **multi-stakeholder approach** based on these key-points:

- Engaging the **local communities** (including fishermen) as the starting point to identify a balance settlement in (allegedly) conflicting interests.
- **Training** of the fishing operators about the best sustainable fishing practices.
- Creating a shared and homogenous set of qualitative and quantitative **parameters** to assess the conditions of the seawater, the seafloor and the fish used for human consumption.
- Editing of a common, transborder **plan on environmental risk**.
- Implementation of **pilot actions** aimed at cleaning the seafloor from the “ghost” nets and endowment of the vessels with RFID tools to prevent the loss of equipment and their prompt rescue in case of loss.

More in detail, the project specifically worked on the sensitive and relevant issue of ALDFG (marine litters connected to fishing) and ghost-fishing. Scientific studies conducted by the **3 involved Universities** provided quantitative and qualitative data on the specific project areas. Besides, the **3 local partner administrations** carried out pilot actions to remove ghost-nets from the seafloor and to create a traceability system using RFID technology. This combined scientific and empirical efforts led to relevant results in **tackling ghost-fishing and preventing it in the future**, and to the creation of common tools to improve the coastal management. The most important of these tools was a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) conceived as a voluntary policy viable for public and private entities involved in the use of the marine resources. The high number of the MoU's signees (21) and the involvement of the great majority of the fishermen active in the three areas (134), indicate the **overall success** of the ADRINET concept and execution.

## Capitalising ADRINET: ADRINET PLUS (2022-2023)

ADRINET achieved several results and produced a significant number of deliverables. Some of them consisted in tools and methodologies suitable of being transferred and used by other takers, as it is assumed that these results might be helpful in addressing or mitigating the same or similar issues occurring in other areas and in different circumstances. In terms of **relevance** and **maturity** of project results, at least 3 of them are worth to be mentioned:

1) **METHODOLOGY** – ADRINET defined a multi-stakeholder pattern to address a specific issue (i.e. “ghost fishing”) by involving local authorities, research centres, fishermen, and local communities in the process of its identification, tackling, and mitigation. This result is linked to the joint coastal management.

2) **TOOLKIT** – ADRINET delivered a scientific methodology to assess, monitoring, and control sea water conditions and human-related risks regarding fish stocks depletion in identified areas, producing a comprehensive set of tools (ERMP, HB, MoU, etc.) aimed at enhancing environmental risk management by sharing knowledge and policies. This result is linked to the environmental protection, as well as to the fostering of a sustainable Blue Economy.

3) **KEY-EXPERTS** – ADRINET achieved another (unexpected) result in defining a professional qualification course for experts whose education and training encompass both scientific knowledge and social sensitivity on the ground of biodiversity protection and involvement of communities of the coastal areas and the sustainable management of fishery and aquaculture sector. This result is linked to enhancement of skills.

The three key-results were disseminated and discussed through the organization and implementation of 5 workshops and 1 B2B meeting, within the framework of ADRINET PLUS capitalisation:

Workshop n. 1 – Place: Italy – Topic: Methodology

Workshop n. 2 – Place: Montenegro – Topic: Methodology

Workshop n. 3 – Place: Italy – Topic: Toolkit

Workshop n. 4 – Place: Albania – Topic: Toolkit

Workshop n. 5 – Place: Italy – Topic: Key-experts

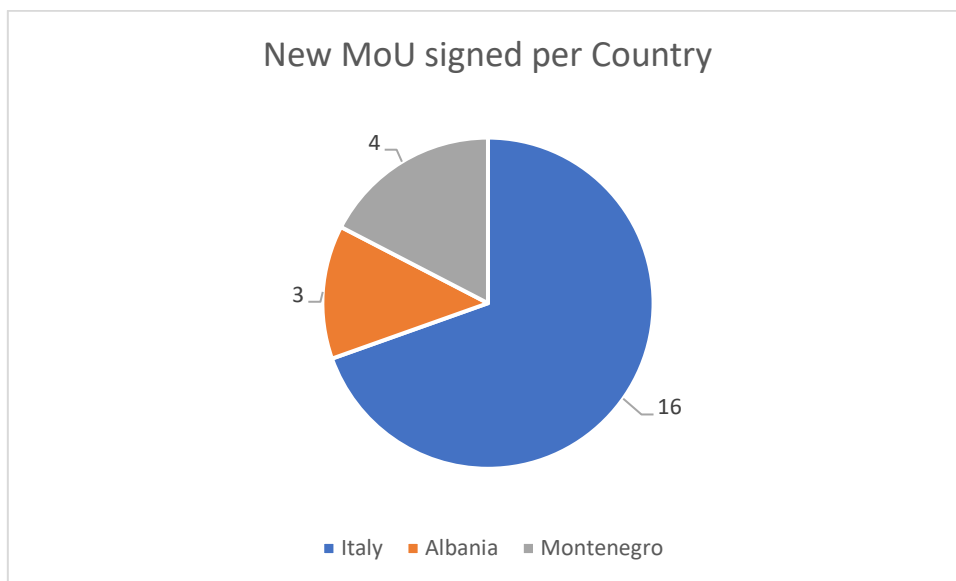
B2B meeting n. 1 – Place: Italy – Topic: Toolkit.

Each workshop was focused on **one single result** and was aimed at involving only relevant stakeholders, identifying among them new users for each result. For results 1 and 2, the capitalisation occurred regarding the same issue (ghost fishing) or similar ones related to environmental risk management (e. g. macro and micro plastics, aquaculture debris and pollution). The goal was to set the conditions for ADRINET’s replicability (**geographical scaling-up**) or for the application of the model in other sectors (**thematic scaling-up**). For result 3, the capitalization goal was to identify education and economic players interested in **training or hiring key-experts**, as defined and formalized by ADRINET. The B2B meeting was specifically focused on the toolkit (result 2) and it was aimed at identifying a group of “blue” economic operators (fishing, canning and distributing industries) interested in **adapting and re-using** the project findings and policies to their activities.



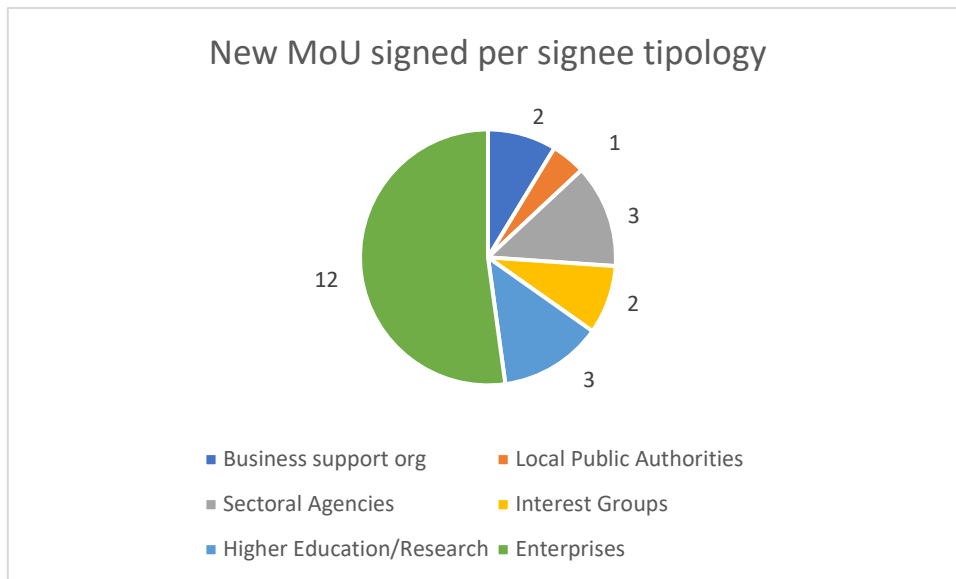


ADRINET PLUS reached a large **number** of stakeholders: **266** people attended in person (+20% in comparison with the targeted amount). The careful selection of the audience also generated **23** new MoU signees, 15% more than expected, and 2 more than the ones involved during ADRINET. The new MoU were signed in all the Programme Area: Italy (16), Montenegro (4), and Albania (3).



The last figures also show another aspect, or the prevalence of Italian new players signing the MoU (more than 69% of the total). The data can be partially justified by the differences in the local economies involved in the Project (where Apulian fishing sector is clearly more articulated and developed than the other two). Another explanation could be linked to the different momentum in the 3 areas, as Italian companies are normally more sensitive regarding the environmental policies because they already must commit to some of them in a way, while Albanian and Montenegrin fishing companies are generally smaller, locally based, and tend to follow environmental policies only when these are enforced by the regulatory authorities.

The new signees of the MoU encompassed different **categories**, including Universities and research centers, enterprises, and public agencies – as shown by the following chart:



### Beyond ADRINET: emerging risks, new challenges

Unsurprisingly, the results achieved reflect the challenges facing the integrated management of coastal environments involves. Added to these challenges are not only further emerging risk factors, but also unexpected opportunities. As for the risks, for example, the greatest of them concerns the need to investigate in more depth the presence of **microplastics** in the marine environment: this topic, in fact, was not directly the subject of ADRINET, but has emerged due to its relevance and pervasiveness following the laboratory analysis conducted during the Project.

Regarding opportunities, it is worth mentioning first the possibility of addressing the topic of **academic training** on the issues of coastal area management on a transnational basis, encouraging the creation of homogeneous study paths in the three countries of the South Adriatic area.

Furthermore, the interest aroused by the MoU on sustainable fishing has generated the idea of involving the **entire local fish supply chain** on the topic, including those responsible for controlling and regulating the sector, with the aim of strengthening the recognizability and enhancing management processes of the so-called “blue economy” of each country.

From this perspective, the enrollment of a wide range of entities who agreed in developing the policies foreseen by the MoU represents a **significant starting point** for the implementation of common projects for tackling the emerging risks and seize the opportunities that will arise.