

# Synergistic Perceptions on the Regulations Oriented Towards the Development of Romanian Coastal Tourism in the Context of Maritime Spatial Planning

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## Abstract

In this article, the authors' intention, in the context of developing the maritime spatial planning plan (MSP) of Romania, is to make an analysis of the regulations aimed at developing coastal tourism in the Romanian Black Sea area from the perspective of stakeholders. The objectives of this article are to detect the impact in which the lack of control exerts on some activities specific to the coastal area as well as possible similarities / differences regarding the perception of stakeholders according to all the variables analyzed. To achieve the research objectives, we conducted a questionnaire on tourism activity in the Black Sea coastal area which was addressed to stakeholders, entities directly interested and involved in activities carried out in this space. To write this article, we used the Principal Components Analysis (PCA) method, an exploratory, descriptive method. This approach is made from the perspective of completing the study on the integrated and updated analysis of conflicts/synergies of maritime and environmental uses carried out within the MARSPLAN BS-II project in which the authors are involved. The processing of data resulting from the stakeholder consultation process led to the identification of possible problems concerning the application of the relevant legislative framework for the development of the Black Sea maritime space in Romania. The results of the analysis of this article may be the starting point for further detailed research.

## Keywords

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP), legal regulations, Romanian coastal tourism, stakeholders.

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## Introduction

The European Union has established the legal regulatory framework for the adoption of maritime spatial plans in the maritime areas of its Member States, being concerned about the role and importance of seas and coastal areas in the European economy from the perspective of economic, social, and territorial cohesion and sustainable development.

The Black Sea region has great geopolitical and strategic importance for the stability, cohesion, and prosperity of the region and great potential for development, to achieve the "Europe 2020" goals of smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth, including "Blue Growth" (Directiva 2014/89/UE). The Black Sea is considered an economic, geopolitical, and trade corridor of strategic importance, connecting the Mediterranean Sea through the Marmara Sea and the Aegean Sea and Europe with Asia to the Caspian Sea, Central Asia, and the Middle East and Southeast Asia and China (EUNETMAR, 2014).

Despite a large number of international, European, regional, and local initiatives, programs, and documents developed since the early 1990s, the Black Sea region suffers from a lack of synergy and sufficient coordination. In this sense, the MARSPLAN BS (2015-2018) and MARSPLAN BS II (2019-2021) projects were initiated, which are two important projects because they include the development of a formal, complete maritime spatial plan for the Mangalia-Shabla cross-border area (Romania and Bulgaria). While the first project aimed at developing the methodology, indicators, rules, strategies for the maritime spatial planning (MSP) plan as well as the development of several case studies in Romania and Bulgaria, the second project aims at developing a common MSP strategy based on results obtained and which should lead to the elaboration of maritime spatial planning (MSP) plans for both countries in 2021.

For the elaboration and implementation of the maritime spatial planning (MSP) plan of Romania, the consultation and involvement of the stakeholders, of the competent public administration authorities, and the targeted public was ensured.

The maritime spatial planning process is important because it presents the mechanism through which stakeholders are involved, the exchange of information playing an important role in the development of beneficial relationships (Ordinance No. 18/2016, art. 8). Maritime planning, as well as MSP stakeholders, have been addressed in a large number of projects, studies, specialist articles, covering a wide variety of issues and experiences related to this process (Văidianu and Ristea, 2018).

Following, this article contains a literature review, methodological procedures, research results, final considerations, and references.

### **Literature Review**

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) is a practical way to create and establish a more rational organization of the use of marine space and the interactions between its uses, to balance development demands with the need to protect marine ecosystems and to achieve goals in an open and planned way (Ehler and Douvere, 2009).

Maritime spatial planning (MSP) is defined as a process by which public authorities analyze and organize human activities in marine areas to achieve environmental, economic, and social objectives (Directive 2014/89/EU).

Directive 2014/89/EU sets out a common approach for European Union countries to maritime spatial planning, which allows each member country to plan its maritime activities. The aim of the directive is to promote the sustainable growth of maritime economies, the sustainable development of marine areas, and the sustainable use of marine resources. Maritime spatial planning also aims to identify and encourage multiple uses, in accordance with relevant national legislation and policies.

The purpose of maritime spatial planning is to promote the sustainable development of the offshore energy sectors, maritime transport, fisheries, and aquaculture, conservation, protection, and improvement of the environment, including increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change, promoting sustainable tourism and sustainable extraction of raw materials (2014/89/EU Directive, art. 5).

In this sense, Romania has transposed into national legislation Directive 2014/89/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal management by Government Ordinance No. 18/2016 on maritime spatial planning and Law No. 88/2017 on the approval of Government Ordinance No. 18/2016 on maritime spatial planning.

The maritime spatial planning plan has a directional and regulatory character, integrating, without limiting, the following activities, uses and fields (Ordinance No. 18/2016, art. 7): aquaculture areas; fishing areas; facilities and infrastructure for the exploration of crude oil, gas and other energy sources, mineral resources, as well as for the production of energy from renewable sources; shipping routes and traffic flows; military exercise and training areas; protected natural areas in the national network; raw material extraction areas; scientific research, including facilities and infrastructures for scientific research and monitoring of the marine environment; the routes of submarine cables and pipelines, as well

as their safety and protection areas; tourist activities; underwater cultural heritage; coastal protection measures against erosion; intervention plans in case of accidental pollution or in case of a marine natural hazard with risk for the coastal area; areas where there are port and hydrotechnical infrastructures.

### **Consultation of stakeholders on the regulations aimed at developing coastal tourism**

Coastal areas face many competing claims about their use and development, such as tourism, fishing and aquaculture, raw material extraction, shipping routes, and marine protected areas. It also faces common challenges, such as the pressure on fragile marine ecosystems, the impact of climate change, and pollution (Friess and Grémaud-Colombier, 2019). The importance of studying coastal areas is justified by their resources, ecosystem services, and the key role played in socio-economic development (Petrișor, et al., 2020).

The Romanian coastal area hosts a multitude of economic activities (tourism having a preponderant share) to which the environmental problems in the area are added (coastal erosion, degradation of protected areas, and so on), which is why the development of coastal tourism must be seen from the sustainable development perspective that is based on the three traditional pillars - economic, social and environmental to which the cultural pillar was added (Petrișor, 2017), a sustainable development that requires simultaneous communication between different levels of governance (Arlati, et al., 2021).

In his research paper Kiși (2019) showed that sustainable tourism should ensure optimal use of environmental resources, respect the socio-cultural characteristics of local communities and still provide socio-economic utility to stakeholders. Therefore, the decision-making to promote sustainable development in the Romanian coastal area must be based on the integration of economic, social, and environmental factors, this integration being possible only through a holistic view of the various interested parties that influence the process of the Black Sea maritime spatial planning in Romania.

Recent research (Ólafsdóttir, 2020) presents a stakeholder-focused approach to developing a framework that effectively integrates public participation and highlights the importance of combining local knowledge and experts in these processes. In this sense, the stakeholders in the planning process of the Romanian maritime space are persons or groups of persons who have an interest or are affected by the results of the MSP.

Therefore, in the process of maritime spatial planning, the sharing of knowledge, activities, and experience of stakeholders can increase the effect obtained in achieving the objective of developing the maritime spatial planning plan (MSP) in Romania.

### **Methodology**

To achieve the research objectives, we conducted a questionnaire on tourism activity in the Black Sea coastal area from the stakeholders' perspective. The questionnaire, prepared by the authors of this article, was sent on October 17, 2020, and completed within 3 weeks. To find the most appropriate way to obtain the respondents' answers, the questions were structured in two types: open-ended questions and closed-ended questions. Because our research was exploratory, the open-ended questions were dominant in the questionnaire, and they played a very important role in structuring and ordering the information. To obtain information of a particular nature given the existence of specific problems faced by the analyzed subjects and whose formulation is difficult given the heterogeneity of the respondents, we also introduced some open-ended questions.

The questionnaire applied to the stakeholders involved in the elaboration and implementation of the maritime spatial planning process is part of the activity which support the work of national competent authorities in charge of developing and implementing Maritime Spatial Planning and defining and analysing existing conditions in the maritime space. This study will be integrated and updated in the analysis of conflicts/synergies of maritime and environmental uses.

The analysis method used to process the data in the questionnaire is Principal Components Analysis (PCA), an exploratory, descriptive method, through which we tried to capture both the possible links

between the variables used (lack of control, port activities, industrial activities, tourism, use of pesticides in agriculture and fish poaching), as well as the similarities and differences in the stakeholders' perception according to all these variables.

**Results and discussion**

The legal framework related to maritime spatial planning (MSP) in Romania can be structured in three components, namely: specific legislation for MSP, sectoral legislation with an impact on MSP (environment, water, protected areas, landscape, construction, energy, transport, and navigation, fishing, cultural heritage, and archeology) and horizontal legislation: international law, environmental impact analysis (Vintilă, et al., 2018).

The normative framework in Romania regarding the elaboration and implementation of the maritime spatial planning plan provides to ensure the consultation and involvement of the interested parties, of the competent public administration authorities, and the targeted public, by informing them since the stage of drafting the maritime space (Ordinance No. 18/2016, art. 8).

In this regard, one of the issues brought to the attention of stakeholders was to see to what extent the provisions of Directive 2014/89/EU and Government Ordinance No. 18/2016 are known, which establishes the necessary framework for maritime spatial planning to harmonize ecological, economic, social, and safety objectives. 32.4% stated that they know the legislative provisions regarding maritime spatial planning, while 67.6% do not know them. Therefore, the main problem identified cannot be eliminated from the conclusions of the research, namely the fact that it is not known what maritime spatial planning (MSP) is. The parties involved are either not at all aware of the impact of this process or do not consider them important for their work. This lack of knowledge or interest, in turn, can lead to inactivity in the stakeholder involvement process.

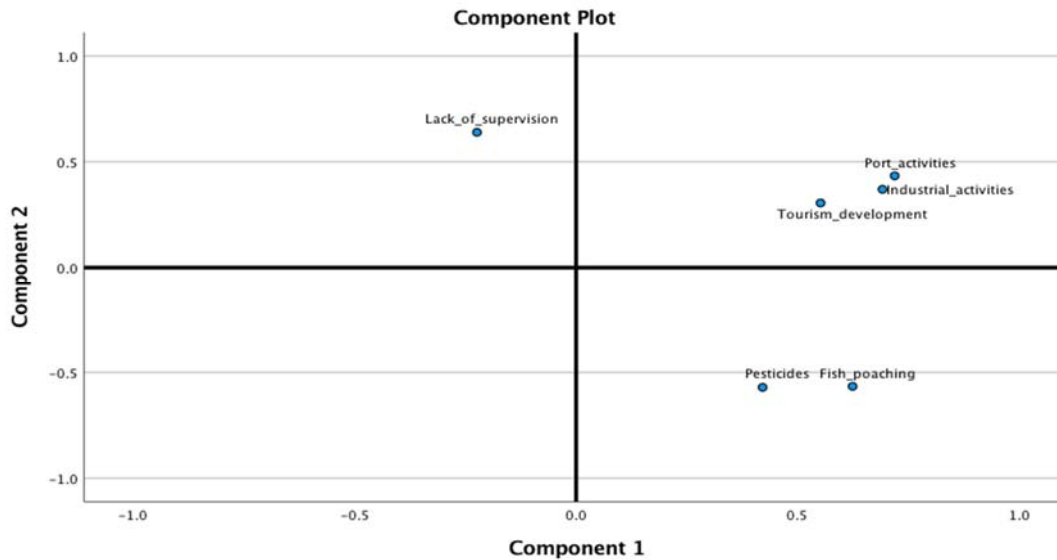
In the context of the Romanian legal regulations, when asked “to what extent it is necessary to adopt/modify the normative framework in the tourism sector to contribute to the economic development of the maritime space at local and regional/national scale”, 91.5% consider that to a large extent the regulatory framework needs to be changed, while 5.6% believe it is not necessary and only 2.8% do not know. It is noted that most stakeholders agree that it is necessary to adopt/change the regulatory framework in the tourism sector to contribute to the economic development of the maritime space, which shows how important the communication of stakeholders is. What is interesting to note is that this perception does not come from the knowledge of the legislative provisions, because a significant percentage of respondents are not yet familiar with maritime spatial planning.

Regarding the question “In which of the following areas of activity do you consider that legislative changes are needed at the national/local level to implement maritime spatial planning” it is noted that stakeholders consider that there is a lack of control (regulation/sanctions) in terms of port activities, industrial activities, tourism, pesticide usage in agriculture and fish poaching (Table no. 1).

**Table no. 1. Correlation Matrix**

	Fish poaching	Tourism development	Port activity	Industrial activity	Use of pesticides
Fish poaching	1				
Tourism development	0.057	1			
Port activity	0.169	0.362	1		
Industrial activity	0.247	0.239	0.498	1	
Use of pesticides	0.417	0.097	0.059	0	1
Lack of control	-0.332	-0.021	0.062	0.04	-0.139

The correlation matrix, obtained with the help of the SPSS program by applying the PCA method, indicates significant, direct, and medium intensity links between port activity and tourism development, between port activity and industrial activity, as well as between pesticide use and poaching.



**Figure no. 1. The diagram of activities affected by lack of control**

Regarding the question “In which of the following areas of activity do you consider that legislative changes are needed at national/local level to implement maritime spatial planning”, it is observed that there is an obvious difference between variables, more precisely, between lack of control and variables related to port activities, industrial activities, tourism, pesticide use in agriculture and fish poaching (Figure no.1). Factorial component 1 obviously separates these variables. In other words, stakeholders consider that there are gaps between the control and the legislative framework in all areas of activity concerned.

Although most stakeholders agree that the legislative intervention is needed for port activities, industrial activities, tourism, pesticide usage in agriculture, and fish poaching, for all these identified activities there are national legislative regulations in line with the European regulatory framework, an example in this regard being the legislation on the administration of ports and port services that has existed since 1999, being amended and supplemented subsequently.

Stakeholders' perception of the need to adopt/modify the regulatory framework may result both from the fact that the government, state institutions do not communicate effectively, and from the lack of control and verification of the activities in the fields mentioned. On the other hand, stakeholders are willing to participate when they see/have an opportunity to have an influence on regulations in the field.

A collaborative relationship between different societal actors (stakeholders, competent public administration authorities, target audience) is a mutually beneficial challenge in approaching consultation and involvement in the MSP process. According to recent research (Banerjee, Murphy, and Walsh, 2020), there are many benefits of partnerships between different societal sectors, which have the ability to fill a gap created by the government's inability to reach certain social segments, either due to lack of desire or due to lack of resources.

Therefore, in this conceptual framework of developing and implementing maritime spatial planning, it is necessary to take into account the commitment to openly communicate with all stakeholders about the impact of activities on economic, social, and environmental development, as well as about the actions taken to better meet their expectations.

### Abbreviations and acronyms

- MSP – Maritime Spatial Planning  
PCA – Principal Component Analysis  
SPSS – Statistical Program for the Social Sciences

### Conclusions

The development of the framework regarding the elaboration and implementation of the maritime spatial planning of Romania aims at the better involvement of the stakeholders in the consultation processes and the involvement of the interested parties, of the competent public administration authorities, and the targeted public using efficient integration of public participation.

The sustainable development of coastal tourism is only achievable if the interests of the local population are protected, the conservation of natural resources is represented among its objectives by authorities, citizens, and service providers, and, finally, local social capital is constantly improved by the implemented legislation.

The maritime spatial planning process is important because it presents a mechanism for stakeholders' involvement, the exchange of information playing an important role in developing beneficial relationships. In this sense, the stakeholders' perception regarding the regulations oriented towards coastal development and sustainable tourism in the Romanian coastal area of the Black Sea according to all the analyzed variables indicates the lack of state control in the application of legislation (regulation/sanctions). The processing of data resulting from the stakeholders' consultation process led to the identification of possible problems related to the application of the relevant legislative framework for the development of the Black Sea maritime space in Romania.

The results obtained by previous research (Văidianu and Ristea, 2018) on maritime planning show that Romanian stakeholders have a relatively poor understanding of European, national and regional regulations for sea planning, as demonstrated by this study, namely 67.6% of stakeholders are unaware of the legislative provisions in this area. This reality is a challenge that should increase the capacity of the competent authorities involved in the implementation of the MSP to provide viable solutions to develop a collaborative relationship and to actively involve stakeholders.

In conclusion, the study shows the need to analyze the reaction and involvement of stakeholders in the maritime spatial planning process. Stakeholders' perception, according to their responses, that in all areas of activity there are gaps in control and the legislative framework may lead to a strategic approach of complex decision-making issues in the tourism sector.

This article completes the study on the integrated and updated analysis of conflicts/synergies of maritime and environmental uses carried out within the MARSPLAN BS-II project. The results of the analysis of this article may be the starting point for further detailed research.

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