



Sustainable development of Blue economies through higher education and innovation in Western Balkan Countries – BLUEWBC

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – VLORA AND IONIAN COST

Blue Economy is believed to have great economic potential. The concept of the “Blue Economy” has become increasingly popular. International society believes that blue economy covers three economic forms: economy coping with global water crisis; innovative development economy and development of marine economy. The Albanian Ionian Sea Region is far from a sustainable Blue Economy today, but we have ample opportunities and strengths to build on. We need to begin seeing the Ionian Sea as an irreplaceable and uniquely valuable natural and economic asset. Sustainable use of the sea should be seen not as an “environmental cost,” but as a long-term investment in our region’s economic future. An investment that will create jobs, income, and global export opportunities for regional companies.

We need to set more ambitious goals that work together to create a circular economy, with zero negative impact on the Ionian Sea, and monitor our progress towards achieving them. While we urgently need to implement existing marine policies, goals and targets, we also need to plan for long-term economic growth through efficient management of natural resources and mitigation of negative impacts on the Ionian Sea. The Ionian Sea Region has the potential to be not just prosperous and blue, but also a role model and agent of change.

Many of the challenges involved in creating a sustainable Blue Economy are too big for any single actor to solve alone. Achieving a sustainable Blue Economy requires cooperation. By joining forces, as well as by sharing ideas and information, the process of innovation and change can speed up dramatically. To accomplish all of this, we need actors in the public, private and civil sectors to pull together and act now. A sustainable Blue Economy needs adequate rules and economic incentives, truly integrated maritime policies, and maritime spatial planning that fully applies the ecosystem-based approach. The private sector should implement a circular economy along and across their value chains. Public and private investment should be directed to support these objectives. Without these actions, we risk losing our most precious shared asset and our hope for a prosperous maritime future in our region. Consider tourism and related activities, which currently accounts for more than half of the Blue Economy jobs in our region.

Opportunities

- Implementing existing policies will help keeping a healthy sea that will generate more income and new jobs.
- There are business and investment opportunities for companies that lead the sustainability transformation.
- The Ionian Sea can become a model in the region for a truly sustainable Blue Economy that is based on clean technologies, renewable energy and circular material flows.

In South Albania the snow-capped mountains and green valleys meet the blue waters of the Ionian Sea, small villages spread on the slopes together with olive groves and trees heavy with citrus. The city of Vlore is an easy entry point to the coast of southern Albania. There are many options to get to South Albania include taking a ferry from Brindisi in Italy to Vlore or Saranda, or from the Greek island of



Corfu, which is close to Albanian coast, to Saranda. The city itself is the third largest in Albania, with population of around 80 000. Narta Lagoon to the north of Vlore is an important pristine area with a rich population of birds and plants. The lagoon supports significant bird species, like flamingos and pelicans. A wooden footbridge connects mainland to the small pine covered Zvërnec Island, where a well preserved 13th century Byzantine Monastery is situated.

2. STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF I&E COURSES:

Blue economy challenges in Europe in the near future should include: marine litter (especially plastics), the impact of climate change, increased food insecurity and the need for a sustainable exploitation of marine resources. In this respect, understanding land-sea interactions and making a sustainable use of the marine environment and resources, exploring options for common/shared research infrastructure requires interdisciplinary research.

Actually, the University of Vlore does not offer a diploma fully or relatively based on the principles of the Blue Economy, and Blue Economy related issues are not widely addressed in specific classes. Of course there are some classes, which integrate aspects of sustainable use of maritime resources, such as sustainable shipping and maritime transport discussed in the class of Maritime Pollution or sustainable port management and operations discussed in the class of Port Management and Operations. However, a detailed class in Blue Economy does not exist at the University of Vlore.

Entrepreneurship offers to individuals a chance to build successful careers. Entrepreneurship is about growth, creativity and innovation. Many institutions of higher education around the world have stepped forward to support entrepreneurship by developing programs that provide students with the skills, knowledge, abilities and opportunities to be successful entrepreneurs and business managers.

Courses suggested:

BSC in Navigation

ENG-E 216 Maritime English 2

CS-E 130 Information and Communication Technology

DET 223 Electronic Navigational Equipment

DET 314 Maritime Communication

MP (Professional Master) - Master of First Level - Maritime Advanced Study

DET 420 Maritime Engineering Systems



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Bachelor in Naval Engineering (Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering)

NAV 320 Ship Construction

NAV 330 Maritime Energetically Systems

NAV 356 Maritime Diesel Engine

EE 225 Ship Electrical Systems

EE 346 Electrical Power Systems

MP (Professional Master) - Master of First Level - Industrial and Naval Operations

MEK 414 Software Application in Industry

Nowadays, in European universities is quite common to find interdisciplinary study programs, providing students with a flexible degree specifically oriented to students career goals. In interdisciplinary studies programs students can combine science with other interests such as business, psychology, humanities or social sciences. When it comes to Albania, and the University of Vlore, interdisciplinary study programs are still missing. An effort is underway to offer an MSc degree in Management of Intermodal Transport and Logistics, where two departments - the Department of Maritime Studies and the Department of Engineering and Marine Technology - from the University of Vlore and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU, Norway) are involved. This interdisciplinary study program combines knowledge from three disciplines, specifically, air, land and sea transport and management. The knowledge and working methods of one discipline are applied to the others disciplines to provide a broader perspective and a deeper learning experience.

3. ECOSYSTEM INVOLVEMENT IN I&E EDUCATION

At the University of Vlore teaching is focused on theoretical based knowledge with little space for practicing and research. As in other universities in Albania, at the University of Vlore the approach of involving students in initiative taking is largely lacking. The lecturers are focused on theoretical aspects, analyzing case studies and promoting group work among students. Almost always lecturers are full time employees of the University, with the exception of few guest lecturers, which are also employed in some other university. Guest speakers coming from companies, business and industry are mostly absent, therefore missing the link between university and industry. We must emphasize that business and industry are not involved since the first stage, developing of I&E courses. In class, especially in Master level students are encouraged to work as a team, and try to develop and promote ideas into projects. However, the support does not continue at later stages. The students are not supported financially in their projects; find no support from private actors and industry, therefore developing further their projects is very difficult.



4. I&E ENVIRONMENT AT CAMPUS

As regards to the research and I&E environment at the University of Vlore, the Scientific Research Center of the Faculty of Technical Sciences is the entity in charge. In general, the Center until now has conducted environmental studies, such as, environmental monitoring in relation to polluting gases, aromatic and polyaromatic hydrocarbons, pesticides and bacteriological load, physical/chemical parameters, marine biology, etc. One of the main objectives of the Center is to create a modern research infrastructure and enable the realization of scientific research near its premises for the students and the academic staff of the Faculty. In this aspect the Center has some problems regarding the equipment of laboratories in the Center. Some of the equipment is complex and requires in turn for the staff to be trained in their use, therefore extra budget for training is required. Furthermore, the premises of the Center are located in the same building where other activities, such as, teaching and studying are accomplished. It would be appropriate for the Center to have more dedicated spaces for its purposes in the University Campus. From the other side, students' organizations, such as, students' senate or other students' circles should be more active in promoting innovative ideas and competition in the campus.

FOCUS AREA	BEST PRACTICE	CURRENT STATE	GAP
I&E COURSES	Mandatory I&E courses in all study programs. Electives I&E courses in all study programs for those who would like to specialize.	Some I&E topics are discussed in some study programs. Offered only in some Master level study programs.	Mandatory I&E courses missing entirely. Not all study programs offer I&E courses for those who would like to specialize.



<p>I&E ENVIRONMENT AT CAMPUS</p>	<p>Have dedicated I&E spaces for students at campus.</p> <p>I&E extracurricular activities for students (for example student organizations)</p> <p>Arrange business idea competition at campus.</p>	<p>There are some spaces in the Scientific Research Center.</p> <p>Missing</p> <p>There are some initiatives: Albtelecom Innovation Ideas IT</p>	<p>The dedicated space is not sufficient.</p> <p>I&E extracurricular activities for students should be developed</p> <p>More activities are necessary.</p>
<p>ECOSYSTEM INVOLVEMENT IN I&E EDUCATION</p>	<p>Industry involvement in development of I&E courses.</p> <p>Cooperation with I&E ecosystem for students during and after I&E courses.</p>	<p>No collaboration at all between university and industry in development of I&E courses.</p> <p>Weak cooperation, mainly based on lectures and students connection with ecosystem.</p>	<p>Industry involvement missing from the first phase, development of I&E courses.</p> <p>Cooperation is weak or missing, therefore compromising chances of success.</p>



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