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IPA STRATEGIC PROJECT **BALMAS**

In November 2013 the Strategic Project BALMAS: **BALLAST WATER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR ADRIATIC SEA PROTECTION** started and will end in March 2016. The project involves 17 Partners and 7 Associate Partners from 6 countries around the Adriatic Sea. The Leading Partner is Institute for water of the Republic of Slovenia.

Project BALMAS addresses the protection from ballast water pollution in the Adriatic area, and risk prevention and protection and enhancement of the marine and coastal environment. The project addresses the problem of Ballast Water, which are necessary for safe navigation, but on the other hand represent a prominent vector for the transfer of Harmful Aquatic Organisms and Pathogens (HAOP) across natural barriers. In 2004 the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments (BWM Convention) was adopted to provide a globally uniform Ballast Water Management (BWM) approach, and is now nearing entry into force. As the ballast water issue is very complex, the implementation of the BWM Convention is far from being simple. Adriatic countries recognised that the Ballast Water issue is very critical and complex, and that a key barrier is the lack of data (e.g. the presence and invasiveness of HAOP in Adriatic ports, Ballast Water uptake and discharge activities, sediment disposal, chemical pollution with Ballast Water) and knowledge (e.g. port baselines and monitoring, Ballast Water sampling for compliance control, risk assessment, how to deal with non-compliant vessels, early warning system, effectiveness of BWM systems and measures) to enable Adriatic countries to implement BWM Convention requirements through a common BWM plan, and provide for effectiveness with a Decision Support System (DSS). A strategic common cross-border approach was recognised to be crucial also because of shared, specific, vulnerable, economically important, semi-enclosed environment, in which HAOP as well as international shipping cannot be limited by political borders. The BALMAS proposal integrates necessary activities to enable a long-term, environmentally efficient, and financially and maritime



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transport sustainable implementation of Ballast Water Management measures in the Adriatic. Thus, the port baseline surveys in 12 biggest ports in the Adriatic already have started. This will be followed by ballast water sampling and monitoring in ports.

The general BALMAS objective is a common cross-border System linking all Adriatic research, experts and national responsible authorities to avoid the unwanted risk to the environment and humans from the transfer of HAOP, through the control and management of ships' ballast water and sediments.

Also an Early Warning System for ships and the competent authorities will be established for environmental protection in case in the ports will be identified HAOP, in purpose to maximise environmental protection and protection of all sea users and to minimise or eliminate the transfer of HAOP with ballast waters. This will enable Adriatic countries to implement the requirements of the International Convention for the Control and Management of ships' ballast water and sediment.

Two regular meetings of the project partners have been performed so far, first in January 2014 in Piran (Slovenia), and second in April 2014 in Split (Croatia). The third will follow in October 2014 in Kotor (Montenegro).

More information about the project, project partners and ongoing activities are available on the project website www.balmas.eu.

