



EUROPE AND THE SEA

It took spills to give rise to a maritime safety and pirates for *Atalante* to see the light ... Europe may well be a continent surrounded by four seas and two oceans, it often needed a strong - sometimes tragic - event to move it to action. This philosophy of reaction produced a collection of disparate sector policies, without a global vision. This could change today with the establishment of governance tools that permit it to meet the maritime challenges.

INTEGRATED MARITIME POLICY

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, at a time when the world is slowly realizing that the sea is the future of the Earth, the EU embarked on the establishment of an Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP). Focused on the so-called "blue growth", it seeks a sustainable and controlled use of the oceans by opting for a comprehensive approach to the marine environment. It was urgent! The multiplication of sector policies had resulted in a lack of coordination detrimental to proper maritime action at a Community level.

The EU started looking at the sea from a primarily economic perspective with the Common Fisheries Policy in 1983. New areas were then added to community action at the pace of new concerns emerging. Environmental concerns explain the launch in 1992 of the Natura 2000 network, a wide range of protected marine areas meant to combine nature conservation and socio-economic objectives. Similarly, the sinking of the Erika tanker in 1999 led to the adoption of new rules on maritime safety: Erika I, II and III.

These dispersed policies are gradually imposing new institutional tools, such as the 2007 IMP. The objective is clear: "building new policy frameworks for sustainable use of the oceans and seas that embrace every aspect of maritime affairs and set clear objectives, based on a comprehensive cross-sector strategy". On June 17, 2008, the "Strategy for the Marine Environment" Framework Directive poses the ultimate stone as environmental component of the IMP, seeking an integrated action on the marine environment.

If the EU today has appropriate strategic and governance tools to replace a reactive policy with planning and anticipation, it still has to export its model and contribute to maintain order in the vast space of freedom that is the sea. Maritime safety issues too have considerably evolved and are part of this civilization effort.

NEW CHALLENGES FOR MARINE SPACE PROTECTION

While land borders have long been the main entry point for illegal migrants to Europe, the sea is now the preferred route. The fight against illegal immigration in this space has pushed Member States to seek better coordination through the creation of a dedicated agency: Frontex. Nine joint operations have already been launched. However, these operations are launched to deal with refugees whose number is constantly growing and smugglers who will stop at nothing playing with the subtleties of international law

which imposes the rescue of shipwrecked persons (Convention of Hamburg). Illegal immigrants end up reaching the European Continent through the very relief efforts implemented by European navies.

The fight against piracy is also a major maritime challenge for the EU. In October 2008, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on piracy, particularly the piracy off the Somali coast. The objective is to increase the cooperation of relevant organizations on maritime surveillance to ensure safety in international waters and to protect ships, including those of the World Food Programme, to Somalia. Operation *Atalante* was born. The mission was recently extended to December 2016, and was able to bring together Member States around common commitments to deter and repress acts of piracy but also ensure and maintain global economic flows transiting the region.

As in the civil domain, the need to coordinate these policies created in the emergency was quickly felt. A maritime security strategy of the European Union (SSMUE) was launched in June 2014. It resulted in an action plan that revolves around different themes: maritime surveillance, information exchange, risk management, protection of critical marine infrastructure, research and innovation ... These broad themes all share a vocation to protect European maritime interests.

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