



**EUROPEAN STRAITS INITIATIVE**

**ESI coordinator progress report**

**2012**

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[www.europeanstraits.eu](http://www.europeanstraits.eu)

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## Introduction

The year 2012, the second year of the initiative formally launched in November 2010, was marked by several highlights. They demonstrate a strong commitment of the European Straits Initiative to a better recognition of the specificity of the straits and increased cooperation around these territories where many issues are at stake.

Axis 1 of the Cooperation Agreement begins to materialize. Thus, the actions of the Kent County Council and the Pas-de-Calais County Council, leaders of the Initiative (provision of Kent local in Brussels, the recruitment by Pas-de-Calais of a coordinator of the initiative, the launch of a study on lobbying EU institutions, interventions in international conferences, coordination of responses to European consultations) helped further strengthen the capacity of the network. The emphasis on communication ([www.europeanstraits.eu](http://www.europeanstraits.eu) website launch in November and publishing newsletters) had a multiplier effect in terms of visibility.

Axis 2 of the Agreement has also found its first implementation with the launch of the INTERREG project NOSTRA (Network Of STRAits) in April. This was an important step for European straits, which gained recognition in Europe and means of cooperation in order to better understand and explore issues related to straits.

The year 2013 promises to be just as rewarding with participation in international events (IMPAC3), continued lobbying efforts in the context of the preparation of the next EU programming period 2014-2020, and the prospect of cooperation between straits, without neglecting outreach efforts to welcome new straits and partners in the initiative.

## PART 1: PROGRESS REPORT OF THE ESI COORDINATOR

This section is meant to highlight the progress made during the year 2012 from the recruitment of the coordinator in **August 16<sup>th</sup>** by Pas-de-Calais County Council, as co-lead partner, but also before this date.

### 1. Participation to International Conferences

Pas-de-Calais County Council, as co-lead partner, participated to several International Conferences in 2012 in order to give visibility to the Initiative.

- **Conference on diplomacy of local authorities (Angers, 23 May 2012):** The Pas-de-Calais County Council took part in the seminar named "diplomacy of local and regional authorities: a tool at the service of dialogue and peace", which was held in Angers on 23 and 24 May 2012, and which presented one of the cornerstones of its policy: increase the visibility, reputation and renown of the County Council and the Dover Strait. More information on [ESI website](#).
- **13th World Conference Cities and Ports (Nantes, Saint-Nazaire, 18-21 June 2012):** the conference brought together 450 participants from 46 countries. The most recent world conference of the AIVP (International Association of Cities and Ports) aimed to discuss the

solutions found by stakeholders for the development of port cities and related issues. ESI has seized this opportunity to promote the specificities of straits. More information on [ESI website](#).

- **The 1st Conference on Smart Cooperation (La Coruña – Spain - 25 and 26 June 2012):** ESI took part in the 1st Conference on Smart Cooperation: "Territorial cooperation fostering European Integration: Cities and Regions linking across borders" in La Coruña in Spain on 25 and 26 June 2012, with 400 participants from the four corners of Europe and beyond. This conference aimed to highlight the advantages and opportunities of European Territorial Cooperation to overcome the challenges and difficulties Europe faces in a time of crisis, while close to 196 million European citizens, 37% of the population, live in a border region. More information on [ESI website](#).
- **3rd CAMIS Cross-Channel Forum (Southampton, 20 September 2012):** The 3rd Cross-Channel Forum held on 20 September 2012 in Southampton (United Kingdom), aimed to further the development of the Integrated Maritime Strategy (IMS) in the Channel and identify actions that will increase cooperation in the area. The European Straits Initiative took an active part in order to have the specificities of the Dover Strait recognised in the Channel area. More information on [ESI website](#).
- The coordinator also attended some **other international and European conferences** in order to get in touch with key actors, notably from the European Commission: Littoral 2012, a conference on integrated coastal zone management in Oostende in November 2012; the annual event of Interreg France(Channel)-England. Besides, the ESI coordinator attended some European institutions meetings in Brussels as recommended by the study about lobbying (see below): European parliament (Committee on Regional development), Committee of the Regions (COTER: meeting commission for territorial cohesion policy). The participation to the 10<sup>th</sup> European week of Regions and cities in Brussels in October 2012 allowed to have an idea of the organization of the event in the perspective of an ESI event in 2013.

## 2. [Lobbying at local, national and European levels](#)

During the ESI meeting in Sardinia on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, a study on the lobbying towards the European Institutions in order to have the straits specificities recognized in the European policies was presented. This lobbying study sets out a long-term strategy to be followed regularly in the perspective of the post-2020 European programming period. Following the study's recommendations, lobbying actions must be undertaken directly in Brussels but, in the meantime, the other geographical levels are not to be neglected.

- **Local level:**

This level is more of each partners' responsibility. Nevertheless, ESI has also a role in that (1) other ESI partners experiences can be helpful to each partner and (2) the ESI coordinator's advice/opinion can be sought on lobbying methods or knowledge of European processes.

- As mentioned in the joint letter dated 18 November 2012 from Alex King from the Kent County Council and Dominique Dupilet from Pas-de-Calais, the latter *institution's assembly adopted a resolution* last 25 July 2012 on the preparation of the European programmes 2014-2020 which gives a particular place to the question of straits.
- Writing of the Operational programmes for the next programming period: each European region is in charge of the writing of operational programmes. Pas-de-Calais, as infra-regional local authority, is part of the governance of the regional groups that will prepare the writing of the operational programmes for the next programming period 2014-2020 and is then in a position to influence the discussions and make sure the specificities of the straits are mentioned in the final texts.

ESI website private section – wordpress – will serve as an exchange platform in 2013. Some local assemblies' deliberations on straits will be downloadable and serve as exemples.

- **National Level:**

2 processes are of particular importance in France but might also exist in other ESI countries being also EU member states. The first one is about the definition of a national maritime policy and the second process is linked to the preparation of the next EU programming period 2014-2020.

- *The definition of the national maritime policy:* in France, the government is in a process of defining a new maritime policy, to be adopted by the end of 2013. A Marine Action Plan (Plan d'action pour le milieu marin), which is the environmental pillar of the maritime policy, is to be adopted this summer. This marine action plan is a response to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive at EU level and each member state should be involved in the same process (initial assessment of the current environmental status, definition of a good environmental status, establishment of environmental targets and indicator, etc. The coordinator has been involved in the consultation process and a first result has been to influence the advice of the Conseil maritime de façade, which is a multi-stake-holders consultative body which gives advice on marine issues. Pas-de-Calais obtained a mention of the specificities of the Dover Strait in the advice on the Marine Action Plan. A coordinated action between Pas-de-Calais and Corsica where two famous straits are located is currently being organized for a better impact at the national level.
- *The consultation process about the Partnership Agreement between France and the European Commission on priority actions to deliver Europe 2020 objectives and the*

*writing of the operational programmes:* The European Commission has adopted a draft legislative package which will frame cohesion policy for 2014-2020. The new proposals are designed to reinforce the strategic dimension of the policy and to ensure that EU investment is targeted on Europe's long-term goals for growth and jobs ("Europe 2020"). Through Partnership agreements with the Commission, Member States will commit to focusing on fewer investment priorities in line with these objectives. The package also harmonises the rules related to different funds, including rural development and maritime and fisheries, to increase the coherence of EU action. In France, the institutions responsible for the implementation of the consultation process (SGAE and DATAR) rely on specific networks to have the broadest consultation. Pas-de-Calais responded to the consultation by insisting inter alia on the importance of the specificities of the straits that have to be taken into account in the European operational programmes.

- **European level:**

Besides the meetings in the European institutions in Brussels mentioned in section 1, the joint ESI responses to European consultations are part of the lobbying strategy to get a better recognition of the straits at a European level. In 2012, ESI responded to 3 consultations on:

- o Blue growth (May): read more on the [ESI website](#)
- o The creation of a European Label for quality tourism (May): read more on the [ESI website](#)
- o Marine knowledge (December): read more on the [ESI website](#)

**3. Cooperation between straits**

Under the ESI memorandum of understanding, the second aim of cooperation is to work towards the emergence of cooperation projects, either under the Interreg programme or any other European programmes, and to develop mutual cooperation through joint actions and projects, to promote and improve economic development, the protection of the coast, transport and logistics, cultural exchange and tourism.

- **Launch of NOSTRA project:** Launched on 3 April 2012 in Wimille, near Boulogne-sur-mer, the NOSTRA project is the result of the European Straits Initiative and is part of the second above mentioned aim of the initiative. Read more on the [ESI website](#) but also on the NOSTRA website: [www.nostraproject.eu](http://www.nostraproject.eu).
- **Fehmarnbelt/Pas de Calais straits:** Pas-de-Calais was invited to the Fehmarnbelt days in Lübeck (26 September 2012) to share its experience of the construction of the Channel Tunnel to link both sides of a strait. Following this presentation, a project of visit from Lolland Kommune, the Danish city which will be at the exit of the tunnel to be built from 2015 between Denmark and Germany in the Fehmarnbelt strait, has been set up (to be organized in April 2013). Read more on the [ESI website](#).

#### **4. Extension of the Initiative**

As provided for in article 7 of the Memorandum of Understanding on European Straits Initiative signed on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2010, new parties may enter into the Memorandum with approval from the majority of the parties. In this context, following up with the local authorities that have been first contacted in 2010 to join the Initiative but didn't join for some reasons, new contacts have been made through French embassies in Turkey, Tunisia and Morocco in December 2012. These contacts will have to be confirmed during 2013.

#### **5. Communication**

- The **website** [www.europeanstraits.eu](http://www.europeanstraits.eu) has been launched on November 2012 in English and French. Within one month from November 26 to December 31, 69 new visitors consulted the website, sometimes several times, for a total of 136 visits. 69% of the visitors are French speaking visitors (see annex attached for more details on the statistics on the visits and visitors to the website). Some links with partners' websites (first and foremost ESI partners' websites) were asked for a better reference of ESI website.
- A **newsletter** linked to the website has been launched in December and is intended to be issued four times in a year. The mailing list is currently composed of around 400 persons, mostly French for the moment (partners, people met in International conferences, people involved in marine issues in Ministries, NGOs, local authorities, European institutions, etc.). ESI partners are asked to send their contacts to complement the mailing list.

**PART 2: PROGRESS REPORT OF THE ESI PARTNERS**

In 2012, most of ESI partners were involved in NOSTRA project's launch (April) and other meetings (study visits, territorial meetings).

*NB: The following table is to be completed by each partner for 2012 undertaken actions.*

STRAIT	For a better recognition of the straits (lobbying, communication)	For the emergence of cooperation projects at straits level
1. <a href="#">Strait of Dover</a>	A number of actions from <b>Pas-de-Calais</b> County Council have been taken in the name of ESI and Pas-de-Calais and are therefore described in Part 1. <b>Kent</b> County Council placed its Brussels office at the disposal of the Initiative.	September 19: NOSTRA local territorial meeting in Calais. December 18: NOSTRA territorial meeting between stake-holders from Kent and Pas-de-Calais in Wimille.
2. <a href="#">Strait of Bonifacio</a>		2-4 October: NOSTRA Study visit n°2 - Strait of Bonifacio. Read more on <a href="#">NOSTRA website</a> . 7 December: Corsican Environment Office and the National Park of Maddalena Arcipelago created the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation – Parco Marino Internazionale delle Bocche di Bonifacio (EGTC-PMIBB). Read more on <a href="#">ESI website</a> .
3. <a href="#">Strait of Sicily</a>		February 28: NOSTRA Steering Committee in Trapani.
4. <a href="#">Strait of Otranto</a>		
5. <a href="#">Strait of Messina</a>		
6. <a href="#">Strait of Kvarken</a>		4-7 June: NOSTRA Study visit n°1 - Kvarken Council. Read more on <a href="#">NOSTRA website</a> .
7. <a href="#">Strait of Fehmarn Belt</a>	26-28 September: Fehmarn Belt Days in Lübeck.	See Part 1 Section 3 on the cooperation between Fehmarn Belt and Pas de Calais / Dover Straits. Read more on <a href="#">ESI website</a>
8. <a href="#">Gulf of Finland</a>		