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## PREVENTION OF MARINE POLLUTION FROM SHIPS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION: ECONOMIC, LEGAL AND TECHNICAL ASPECTS

**ABSTRACT:** PATRUNO R., *Prevention of marine pollution from ships in the Mediterranean region: economic, legal and technical aspects.* (IT ISSN 0391-9838, 2008).

The Mediterranean region, considered to be the cradle of the Western culture and civilization, is an area characterized by the exceptional beauty of its landscapes and its environmental richness. Due to those characteristics the Mediterranean is the most popular tourist destination in the world, and attracts the 31% of the worldwide tourist flow, half of them visiting the coastal area. At the same time the maritime traffic in the region, which represents only the 0,7% of the total area covered by the world's oceans is particularly high, with the 30% of the international sea-borne trade volume, and the 27% of the oil globally transported by sea. Moreover, both those types of traffic are going to significantly grow in quantity and volume in the coming years. In other words, the Mediterranean is now in danger of environmental breakdown due to pressures exerted by booming coastal population, growing coastal economic activities and tourism, growing of maritime traffic. For all those reasons, in particular the Sicily Strait is quoted as a sea area at very high risk of pollution from ships, in a region where, between 1978 and 2003, 470 accidents recorded by the regional institutions spilt at sea 305,000 tonnes of oil and 136,000 tonnes of various chemical products.

Furthermore, although the Mediterranean is declared a «special area» by MARPOL Convention, where any discharge of oil or oily residues and mixtures from ships is prohibited, the so-called operational pollution, which is the marine pollution originated by routine shipping activities and voluntary discharges, became recently more and more significant. Monitoring campaigns carried out by the EC-Joint Research Centre using satellite platforms reported to be between 100,000 and 150,000 tons the total amount of oil spilt in the Mediterranean every year due to illicit vessel discharges. Without adequate countermeasures taken by the Mediterranean community, that kind of pollution may dramatically increase

in the next years, producing serious harm to the economic activities in the affected areas, especially tourism and fishing. On the contrary, an appropriate answer, conducted and coordinated at regional level by the combined implementation of all the available legal and technical instruments, may significantly reduce the risk of accidental pollution, and eventually achieve the complete elimination of voluntary pollution from ships.

**KEY WORDS:** Marine pollution prevention, Maritime traffic, Operational pollution, Tourism, Regional cooperation.

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