

International Congress  
University of Barcelona

**'SUSTAINABILITY IN THE SEA:  
A GAZE FROM  
THE MEDITERRANEAN BARCELONA'**

19th December 2022

 Máster en Estudios Internacionales (MEIUB)
  Universitat de Barcelona
  Instituto Salvador de Madariaga (IUEE)
  Ajuntament de Barcelona

  International Organisations Interest Group
   Interest Group on the Law of the Sea

 Tres Quarts de mil·lenni Consolat de Mar
  Cambra de Comerç de Barcelona

## TOPIC AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CONGRESS

In the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, one of the main challenges for the sustainability of the planet lies in marine areas. Global warming implies irreversible changes and transformations in their morphology; many of the human activities that take place in these spaces contribute to such warming and increase the degradation of the marine environment. At the same time, the seas and oceans constitute a new opportunity for the development of renewable energies, the installation of which creates contradictions with the legitimate interests of coastal populations. The joint treatment of this reality is unavoidable, both from an international and European perspective and from the specific perspective of a city like Barcelona, where the different dimensions of the problems identified converge for different reasons.

The Congress aims to address, from an academic perspective, the challenges posed by the demands of sustainability on the main uses of maritime spaces and, therefore, the transformations and impact that these demands impose in economic, social, regulatory and environmental terms, also for the local communities particularly affected.

Accordingly, the Congress is structured in three successive sessions, each made up of two round tables, which will address the following topics:

**(a) Sustainability of maritime activities in historical perspective: Barcelona and the Consulate of the Sea.**

The approach of the Congress seeks to connect the current challenges with Barcelona's historical tradition as a reference in the international regulation of the uses of the sea, a circumstance that deserves to be taken advantage of in parallel with the progressive configuration of the city as an international reference in sustainability policies and in the context of the celebration in 2022 of the 750th anniversary of the *Consolat del Mar*. Just as then, the city of Barcelona is an ideal neuralgic centre to offer the international community the required framework of reference for the 'sustainable uses of maritime spaces', especially in terms of its regulatory dimension.

**(b) Sustainable and responsible tourism and transport.**

Tourism and marine spaces are two specifically connected realities. The tourism sector needs to address a process of recovery and transformation that simultaneously minimises its impact on the natural environment and its contribution to CO2 emissions, as reflected in the Glasgow Declaration for Climate Action in Tourism (COP26, 2021) and in recent EU proposals on sustainable tourism, among others. These requirements are clearly manifested in the case of tourism activities at sea, both in terms of the erosion of the coastal marine environment and - especially - in terms of the multiple effects of some of these forms of tourism, such as cruise tourism. Consequently, the notion of 'sustainable and responsible tourism', which is being developed within the World Tourism Organisation, needs to be analysed from the perspective of the economic, regulatory, and social implications for tourism at sea, whose possible repercussions for the city of Barcelona are obvious.

Likewise, the seaways are the main means of transporting goods, with the repercussions and problems that this entails in terms of marine sustainability. It is no coincidence that in its Communication on a Sustainable and Intelligent Mobility Strategy: Harnessing Europe's transport for the future (COM(2020) 789 final), the European Commission set the objective of "making Europe's maritime areas sustainable, smart and resilient". An objective which, from a universal perspective, falls within the mandate of the World Maritime Organisation, specifically regarding the prevention and control of pollution of the seas and oceans and the preservation of the marine environment. Transport is a key element of sustainability directly related, like tourism, to SDG 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure and SDG 13 on climate change. The recovery of maritime freight traffic highlights the challenges that international transport logistics pose for the achievement of these goals.

**(c) Sustainable Fisheries and Blue Energy.**

The overexploitation of the seas and oceans is of particular concern in the Mediterranean: according to reports by the Food and Agriculture Organisation, overfishing affects and jeopardises the survival of more than 62% of the fish stocks inhabiting the Mediterranean. The economic and social importance of the fisheries sector in Spain and in Catalonia adds additional reasons to the need to plan and advance in the transformation of the sector under parameters of sustainability and to identify, to this end, the regulatory, industrial and socio-economic changes that must take place. The timeliness of this assessment is accompanied, in the Spanish context, by the ongoing processing of the Law on Sustainable Fisheries and Fisheries Research, the preliminary draft of which was approved by the Council of Ministers on 1 June 2021.

At the same time, energy transformation in the medium and long term has a fundamental vector in marine energy, the development of which opens up clear industrial, economic and social opportunities which, however, must be compatible with the protection of environmental values and the other uses and exploitation of the marine environment. The development of 'marine

energy' is promoted, at a universal level, by the Renewable Energy Organisation (IRENA) and, at a regional level, in the Strategy on Marine Renewable Energies, presented by the European Commission in 2020, both of which are specified in Spain by means of the Roadmap for offshore wind and marine energy in Spain, approved by the Council of Ministers in December 2021. However, as it has recently become clear in the case of certain offshore wind projects, the development of blue energy is not free of social and environmental contradictions, which introduces additional demands in terms of sustainability.

The Congress is organised at the initiative of the University of Barcelona and the Salvador de Madariaga Institute of European Studies, with the support of the ESIL Interest Groups on International Organisations and on the Law of the Sea, and with funding from the Barcelona City Council.

**ORGANISED BY:**

MEI – University of Barcelona

Instituto Salvador de Madariaga de Estudios Europeos – Universidade Da Coruña

The organization of this congress has been funded by the Ajuntament de Barcelona

**IN COOPERATION WITH:**

ESIL Interest Group on the Law of the Sea

ESIL Interest Group on International Organisations

The Congress is one of the activities celebrating the 750<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Consolat del Mar

**The Congress will be held at the Law Faculty of  
the University of Barcelona  
on 19 December 2022  
(Av. Diagonal 684, Barcelona 08034)**