

Possible legal contributions of the French system in the fight against accidental and intentional marine pollution

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ABSTRACT This study aims to offer an overall perspective of the French system regarding maritime safety and the fight against marine pollution. We will be looking at the most novel contributions of French policy and the French legal system with regard to preventing, preparing for and fighting accidental marine pollution.

1. INTRODUCTION

We will look at the most important aspects of the POLMAR plans, with the two-sided POLMAR plans *Terre* and *Mer*. The evolution of the POLMAR plans and their present form, as well as the extensive experience acquired by the French authorities in this field, can offer us some extremely interesting ideas which can, with the necessary adjustments, be applied to the weakened State and Autonomous Community systems concerning preparing for and fighting accidental marine pollution.

On the organisational front, the French system offers some aspects to bear in mind: the existence of a sole command group to manage and coordinate maritime crises; or the existence of a technical back-up advisory centre to manage maritime crises: the CEDRE.

The legal system offers some further novelties of note, such as the case of the regime repressing the intentional spilling of waste from vessels in transit. In recent years, after the social impact of the Erika crisis, steps have been taken to develop regulations on repressing intentional spillages of waste, as well as to develop the material and human resources available to this respect. Specialist courts have been created to deal with cases of accidental marine pollution. The Mediterranean ecological protection zone has contributed towards extending the powers of the French State in matters of environmental protection, beyond its territorial sea.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study of French policy and law, as well as the extensive experience of the French State in matters of maritime safety and the fight against marine pollution are a key point of reference on which to base possible solutions which, once the necessary adjustments have been made, will considerably improve our system with regard to preventing and repressing marine pollution.

The aim of this paper is to highlight the aspects of the French system which, in the light of experience, have proved to be the most efficient.

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