

A THREE SEAS VIEW OF THE UNITED NATIONS – THE POTENTIAL IMPORTANCE OF THE THREE SEAS INITIATIVE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND RELATED INSTRUMENTS OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

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ABSTRACT

In 2015, on the sidelines of the 70th General Assembly of the United Nations (UN), the Three Seas Initiative (3SI) was established. It is a format of economic cooperation between 13 countries in Central, North- and South-Eastern Europe that are the eastern part of the European Union (EU). However, the Three Seas Initiative can also evolve using instruments of the United Nations (UN) and play a significant role within this international organization in the context of infrastructure. The author will focus on the research problem of international infrastructure cooperation in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and related forms of partnership based on the Three Seas Initiative. The objectives of the article are to analyze the possible impact of the Three Seas format on the evolution of the above-mentioned forms of cooperation and to explain possible actions taken within their framework for the development of the Three Seas Initiative. The issues mentioned will be clarified primarily based on specific Sustainable Development Goals and actions taken within their scope in the countries covered by the SDGs, also neighboring the 3SI area, which are part of the transregional infrastructure projects of the Initiative. In addition, this issue will also be explained using the example of Resolution 77/282 "Building global resilience and promoting sustainable development through infrastructure connectivity", adopted on 26 April 2023 by the UN General Assembly, which draws inspiration from the 3SI format and its current and potential further impact on international infrastructure cooperation. Possible joint actions of the countries that are co-authors of this document and which could implement projects related to the Three Seas Initiative will also be discussed. Moreover, the possible use of other existing UN infrastructural instruments will be indicated. The conducted research will be based on the analysis of initiatives at the UN forum concerning communication, energy and digital infrastructure, correlated with the Three Seas. In this context, investments for the implementation of the SDGs according to specific goals (including their subject and geographical scope) and Resolution 77/282 and possible actions related to it will be analyzed. The final part of the publication will present conclusions resulting from the conducted analyses and recommendations regarding further undertakings and directions of actions that should be taken in these aspects within the Three Seas Initiative and the United Nations.

Keywords: Three Seas Initiative, Three Seas, 3SI, United Nations, UN, Sustainable Development Goals, SDG, international cooperation, infrastructure

INTRODUCTION

This article aims to analyze the possible synergy between the Three Seas Initiative and the United Nations in taking into consideration the Sustainable Development Goals. Additionally, its reaches are also to explore the previous and the potential cooperation within other UN instruments like the some held events within this international organization which refer to the 3SI format. This is the first publication where the 3SI-UN correlation and collaboration are examined.

Significantly, there are opportunities to synchronize the implementation of SDGs with the Three Seas and build the 3SI-UN ties. The author of this article analyzes the concrete Sustainable Development Goals, UN agencies and agendas with the specific projects related to the paper's topic. The analysis of the previous 3SI-UN collaboration and the conclusions from it, and also the description of the given examples of the eventual further partnership, would bring benefits to the Three Seas Initiative and the United Nations if they are implemented. They could be achieved by realizing SDGs devoted to infrastructure in transport, energy and digital aspects, and other UN instruments.

In examining the above issues, the author uses and analyzes mainly the sources of the United Nations referring to the infrastructure like the articles from the sites of the US agendas and their peculiar tools. They also include specific data concerning the realization of SDGs. Furthermore, there were used the statistics and descriptions of the particular 3SI projects from the list of priority ventures of Three Seas. Among others, the press articles about new UN offices, projects, or the evolution of some of its instruments, also helped to describe the mentioned issues and set the appropriate conclusions and recommendations precisely.

Figure 1. The map of the member countries of the Three Seas Initiative



Source: Three Seas Summit Vilnius 2024. Three Seas, 2024. <https://3seas.eu/>

1. Infrastructure collaboration globally within the United Nations. The UN infrastructural institutionalization

1.1. Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the concrete Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, all the United Nations member countries adopted The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which, based on the declaration embracing it, considered within the UN as an extensive, long-range and human-oriented set of universal and evolutionary goals. This document consists particularly of the 17 Goals and 169 tasks (where indicators are assigned) at once, which realization is a fundamental part of the Agenda and to achieve the main aims which are reaching sustainable development in economic, social and environmental aspects in a steady and correlated method. Despite these factors, other important target effects are listed in the document such as ending poverty and hunger in every place worldwide, countering inequalities within and in states, ensuring the inclusion of societies, wide-spreading human rights, gender equality and equal rights in other different issues. In this list, some other assumed achievements, related more to infrastructure (at least indirectly), combating and preventing the consequences of climate change are specified like protecting the planet and its natural resources (on the land and water tanks), generating conditions for durable, equable and environment-friendly development, financial involvement, sustainable agriculture and industry deployment, and access to affordable, constant and modern green and renewable energy and transport services are given. The whole Agenda, and also the infrastructure within it, has a universal character, due to its scope (all over the world), in all countries because of their level of wealth (least-developed, developing and developed countries), in different area types (urban, village, regional, sub-regional, national and global) and with the participation of diverse actors (governments, international and non-governmental organizations, private sector and other entities). Moreover, as it was emphasized Agenda 2030 was accepted by every state, it takes into consideration the diverse national specificities and abilities and has to esteem national policies and settled priorities.

The concrete SDG goals and their names, aims and targets which sign in the infrastructural dimension (including communication, energy and digitalization) of the United Nations and the Three Seas Initiative, are mentioned in Tables 1-2 below.

Table 1. List of SDG Goals 6-11, their names, aims and targets within the synergy of the United Nations and the Three Seas Initiative

Goal	Name	Aim	Targets
6	Clean water and sanitation	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all	6.3. Halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally; 6.6. Protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes
7	Affordable and clean energy	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all	7.1. Ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services; 7.2. Increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix; 7.3. Double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency; 7.a. Enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and advanced and cleaner fossil-fuel technology, and promote investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology; 7.b. Expand infrastructure and upgrade technology for supplying modern and sustainable energy services for all in developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States, and land-locked developing countries, in accordance with their respective programmes of support
8	Decent work and economic growth	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	8.1. Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries; 8.2. Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors; 8.6. Substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training; 8.10. Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all; 8.a. Increase Aid for Trade support for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, including through the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries; 8.b. Develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization
9	Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation	9.1. Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all; 9.2. Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and, by 2030, significantly raise industry's share of employment and gross domestic product, in line with national circumstances, and double its share in least developed countries; 9.3. Increase the access of small-scale industrial and other enterprises, in particular in developing countries, to financial services, including affordable credit, and their integration into value chains and markets; 9.4. Upgrade infrastructure and retrofit industries to make them sustainable, with increased resource-use efficiency and greater adoption of clean and environmentally sound technologies and industrial processes, with all countries taking action in accordance with their respective capabilities; 9.a. Facilitate sustainable and resilient infrastructure development in developing countries through enhanced financial, technological and technical support to African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States; 9.b. Support domestic technology development, research and innovation in developing countries, including by ensuring a conducive policy environment for, inter alia, industrial diversification and value addition to commodities
11	Sustainable cities and communities	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	11.2. Provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons; 11.5. Significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations; 11.6. Reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management; 11.a. Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning; 11.b. Substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels

Source: THE 17 GOALS. 2024. United Nations Department of the Economic and Social Affairs. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

Table 2. List of SDG Goals 12-17, their names, aims and targets within the synergy of the United Nations and the Three Seas Initiative

Goal	Name	Aim	Targets
12	Responsible consumption and production	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns	12.2. Achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources; 12.8. Ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature
13	Climate Action	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts	13.1. Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries
15	Life on land	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss	15.3. Combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world
17	Partnership for the goals	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development	17.2. Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of ODA/GNI to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries; 17.3. Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources; 17.7. Promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed; 17.9. Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the Sustainable Development Goals, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation; 17.14. Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development; 17.15. Respect each country's policy space and leadership to establish and implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development; 17.16. Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries; 17.17. Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships; 17.18. Enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts; 17.19. Build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product, and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries

Source: THE 17 GOALS. 2024. United Nations Department of the Economic and Social Affairs. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

The other United Nations instruments directed to improve infrastructure, and related to the Three Seas format at once, concern the collaboration within the UN concrete agencies, presented in Table 3.

Table 3. United Nations agencies responsible for particular aspects of the infrastructural development by their tasks and goals, connected with the Three Seas assumptions and aims

UN Agency	Tasks	Goals
United Nations Secretary-General's Strategy on New Technologies	protecting and promoting global values in using new technologies, ensuring greater inclusion and transparency in this field (by providing a platform for different entities like governments, civil society and businesses to decide together about new technologies); collaboration in partnership gathering diverse actors in the technological field	increasing the UN's ability to use new technologies to achieve the goals within the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 2030 Agenda and the norms and standards of international law; raising awareness and improving knowledge about technology due to the greater collaboration; facilitation the decisive process in the technological area
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	working worldwide in 170 states and territories to support them in achieving the SDGs and deploy policies, leadership skills and partnerships in 6 fields: poverty and inequality, gender equality, energy and environment, resilience and governance	getting rid of poverty, making the governance democratic; establishing a rule of law; creating inclusive institutions; linking states to knowledge, resources and experience to enable people build a better life
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)	conducting the actions in the environment protection and its regular monitoring worldwide; providing information, inspiring and enabling peoples and nations who need to build a better life; collaborating with governments, private and UN entities and civil society in the most urgent environment challenges	raising their standard of living of the excluding people; supporting and making the economies of states become more low-carbon; contributing to use the resources reliably and effectively; addressing environmental challenges in the UN Environment Assembly; helping member countries to ensure and speed the climate stability in the implementation of all 17 SDGs
United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)	ensuring knowledge, and advice in policy matters and providing cooperative action and technical support	promoting transformative changes and build safe, resilient and sustainably developed cities and other urban communities in 90 states all over the world; reducing social and economic equality; fostering climate change in these areas
United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)	providing leadership and supports the acceleration of efforts in risk management; giving the expertise in its 5 regional offices in this aspect	reducing disaster risk; promoting the increase of resilience through the use of multi-hazard disaster risk management for the hazards such as, among others, floods, droughts and earthquakes; intensifying the relations with and between local and national governments, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector and civil society in the risk prevention
United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)	giving support to the member countries through research and policy-advice services, technical collaboration, actions related to normative standards and enhancing partnerships for technology transfer and knowledge	wide-spreading, accelerating and making industrial deployment more dynamic; the realization mainly of the Goal 9 of SDGs, and also other ones connected with this aim (implementing the vision of a world with a low-emission industry, sustainable development and no poverty and hunger)
United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)	providing practical actions, expertise and results devoted to infrastructure; strengthening the communication networks, creating renewable energy solutions and advising governments to use the infrastructure more effectively	ensuring its partners maximize the positive impact of their peace and security, humanitarian and development projects; realization of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement
International Telecommunication Union (ITU)	coping with issues related to communication technologies (ICTs)	providing digital access to every person and a reliable multilateral tool; arrange international standards and agreements in the ICT sector; widespreading knowledge, building capacity and enhancing the collaboration with various partners in communication technologies; increasing access to technology worldwide
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)	bringing expert support and diplomatic and technical support in air mobility all over the world; constituting the global forum for international civil aviation; developing standards and policies, creating analyses and collaborating with its member countries and stakeholders in this field	helping 193 states to the joint-cooperation and sharing their skies to their joint benefit; providing a strategic worldwide vision and sustainable and effective solutions

Source: Secretary-General's Strategy on New Technologies. Secretary General's Strategy on New Technologies. <https://www.un.org/en/newtechnologies/>; About us. United Nations Development Programme. <https://www.undp.org/about-us>; About the United Nations Environment Programme. UN Environment Programme. <https://www.unep.org/who-we-are/about-us>; About us. UN Habitat. <https://unhabitat.org/about-us>; "Our work." UNDRR. 2024. <https://www.undrr.org/our-work>; Our work. UNIDO. <https://www.unido.org/about-us/who-we-are>; About International Telecommunication Union (ITU). ITU. <https://www.itu.int/en/about/Pages/default.aspx>; Infrastructure. UNOPS. <https://www.unops.org/expertise/infrastructure>; About ICAO. ICAO. <https://www.icao.int/about-icao>

2. "Building global resilience and promoting sustainable development through infrastructure connectivity". The significance of this Resolution and its potential impact on boosting infrastructural cooperation

On 26th April 2023, during the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly, the resolution called "Building global resilience and promoting sustainable development through infrastructure connectivity" was adopted. It was a joint cross-regional undertaking of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Hungary, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Japan and El Salvador and approved by above 80 states from all the regions. This UN document assumes that the universal global priority is developing high-quality, sustainable, resilient and reliable infrastructure. To precise this issue, it calls for boosting the infrastructure connectivity and resilience in transport, energy and digitalization at every level, among others regional and transborder. Having read this resolution and noticed outstanding postulates to achieve, also reaching SDGs (particularly Goal 9), connecting the small Island developed countries with the regional markets and global supply chains, supporting other deploying states enabling them to reach sustainable development, and exchanging of expertise regarding infrastructure were emphasized. In the speech of the President of Poland Andrzej Duda at the United National General Assembly on 18th April 2023, he underlined that the world is tackling various global crises which influence the infrastructural systems. He emphasized that all the states handled the consequences of climate change, natural disasters, pandemics, wars and conflicts. These phenomena resulted in disrupted supply chains, blocked communication routes, energy insecurity and the lack of safe telecommunication infrastructure. The Polish president also said that the inspiration for proposing the resolution comes from the Three Seas Initiative, a regional format devoted to deploying transport, energy and digitalization infrastructure between the Adriatic, Baltic and Black Seas. Simultaneously, the implemented projects within the 3SI are to contribute to the economic prosperity and security of the European Union. In this statement, President Andrzej Duda referred to the Russian invasion of Ukraine too, which has a great impact on Central and Eastern Europe which was successful in getting rid of the energy sources from Russia due to the construction of the Three Seas investments. The last issue that was touched on in this speech was the cruciality of making great efforts to develop infrastructure worldwide as the United Nations has been preparing for the Third UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, the Fourth Conference on Small Islands Developing States and the Summit for the Future. A similar attitude regards the resolution, apart from the President of Poland, came from other heads of state. One of them was the Latvian President Egils Levits who highlighted similar perspectives. He accented that to maintain competitiveness, there is a need to enhance smart infrastructural investments comparable with the highest social and environmental standards. To reach these goals, The head of state of Latvia mentioned the cruciality of the close cooperation between different entities like states, partners, regions, businesses and financial institutions. Like Andrzej Duda, Egils Levits also referred in his speech to the Three Seas Initiative which constitutes a valuable platform of collaboration that links the private sector with geopolitics. Moreover, following this format, he added that the recent Three Seas Summit in Lithuania (on 11 April 2024) highlighted its strategic significance. He also accented the participation of high-level representatives from not only the member countries but also other states such as Great Britain, Finland, Spain, Montenegro, Türkiye and Georgia. What is more, he expressed delight in Japan obtaining the status of the strategic partner of the 3SI format (like the United States, Germany and the European Commission earlier).

Concerning the further evolution of international collaboration regarding the Resolution, there is official information only about one organized initiative. Precisely, it was the *Informal dialogue on building global resilience and promoting sustainable development through*

infrastructure connectivity, by the General Assembly, held during the first-ever Sustainability Week (taking place owing to the adopting of *Resolution 77/335 „Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly”*) in the period of 15-19 April 2024. Accompanying the other four meetings and especially in the implementation of SDG Goal 7 (Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all) towards 2030 and beyond, the mentioned event took place on 18th April. This dialogue included an opening and plenary session and two panels and was devoted to member countries, observers, the UN system, ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations and other related policymakers. It aimed to create a platform for sharing best practices and strategies to foster international, regional, over-regional and interregional infrastructural cooperation, based on the high-quality, reliability, sustainability, resilience and risk prevention. Overall, the thematic of both of the panels concerned the results of the current global problems. In this aspect, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and geopolitical tensions were visibly underlined which have deepened inequalities and lowered the realization of the SDGs where building resilient infrastructure is a solution to tackle these processes. Concretely, two panels within the meeting referred especially to the least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries and small island developing states (SIDS). Furthermore, they served to mark the member countries' main challenges which were faced and critical aspects that have provided the advancements in building the infrastructure connections. Besides, the representatives of several countries who gave speeches at the meetings, also introduced the attitudes of the member countries towards global resilience and promotion of sustainable development by infrastructural connectivity.

3. Moving on to the visible specifics. Transport, energy and digitalization in UN's projects and SDGs

Analyzing the potential significance of the Three Seas Initiative for the realization of Sustainable Development Goals, attention should be paid mainly to the infrastructural investments (in communication, energy and digitalization) which are the basics of the evolution of the mentioned format. Taking into consideration the concrete goals of the Agenda 2030 and particular 3SI connections, it could be noticed that the assumptions, aims and planned actions of the Three Seas projects are strongly related to the SDG goals. These similarities and correlations between, at least, chosen 3SI investments and SDGs, are seen in the two comparisons below.

3.1. The first 3SI projects: Modernization of Port of Rijeka and Construction or upgrading of the Intermodal Logistics Centre within the Rail Baltica¹ | SDG Goal 9 – Logistics Performance Index: Infrastructure Score

Figure 2. Port of Rijeka



Source: Port of Rijeka. Eldmarc. <https://www.eldmarc.com/port-of-rijeka/>

Figure 3. The map of the Rail Baltica

¹ This investment concerns transport and digitalization – 2 of 3 main pillars of the Three Seas Initiative.



Source: Popławski, Kazimierz. Finlandia dołącza do projektu Rail Baltica. Przegląd Bałtycki, February 6, 2019. <https://przegladbaltycki.pl/9488,finlandia-dolacza-do-projektu-rail-baltica.html>

Both of the investments mentioned above are related to the following targets of SDG Goal 9:

- Target 9.1. Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all
- Target 9.2. Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and, by 2030, significantly raise the industry's share of employment and gross domestic product, in line with national circumstances, and double its share in least developed countries

3.2. The second 3SI project – North-South Gas Corridor| SDG Goal 7. Affordable and clean energy

Figure 4. The map of the North-South Gas Corridor



Source: Stoica, Adrian. Clearing up energy war in Europe. Energy Industry Review, November 1, 2018. <https://energyindustryreview.com/analysis/clearing-up-energy-war-in-europe/>.

This investment can correlate with the below SDG 7 targets:

- Target 7.1. By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services
- Target 7.3. By 2030, double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency

4. Not only SDGs. The concurrence of the 3SI with and within other UN instruments. How they could be synergized?

4.1. 3SI Towns and Cities within the Three Seas and UN-Habitat

Based on the New Urban Agenda (the document of the UN-Habitat sharing, explaining and encouraging cooperation to accelerate sustainable urban development at the local level in its broad sense), there were listed the basic forms of collaboration within the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. These partnerships such as, among others, the World Urban

Forum, World Habitat Day, World Cities Day and World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments. Concerning at least the first raised initiative, particularly the 12th edition of the World Urban Forum (WUF) in Cairo in 2024, there was the underrepresentation of the member countries of the 3SI (by their specific organizations) which are actively involved by organizing their events within the Forum. Only such states of the region as Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic and Estonia held their peculiar panel discussions. Apart from them, Ukraine (which is the associated participating state of the Three Seas) has organized some meetings concentrating on the recovery of the Ukrainian economy. Moreover, the underrepresenting attendance of the 3SI states within the UN-Habitat is seen in other areas. In, as an additional example of cities sharing the best practices, there are only Greece and Croatia with 1 project and Austria with 3 ones.

4.2. UNEP and UNIDO towards the trans-regional Three Seas cooperation

In the case of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, there is one form of collaboration concerning strictly Central Europe, accurately The Secretariat of the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians. The office implements different projects and takes other actions to promote ratification and facilitate collaboration between member countries and also between other international entities. This secretariat is administered by the UNEP and gathers 7 countries, including 5 from the Three Seas Initiative – Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, and also Serbia and Ukraine. According precisely to the UNIDO and the Secretariat, on 12 October 2023, both sides signed a Joint Declaration to intensify their cooperation by initiating new joint undertakings related to the sustainable industrial development of the Carpathian region. The UNIDO and the Secretariat pledge the commitment to accelerate the collaboration in clean energy and its efficiency, industrial policy research, promotion of investments, support the private sector, sustainable forestry and food security of the states of the Carpathian region.

4.3. Establishment and launch of UNOPS offices in Warsaw and Rzeszów. What else about this Agency and Three Seas?

Concerning the United Nations Office for Project Services and Central Europe, it should be highlighted that they will establish and launch its new headquarters in Warsaw with its branch in Rzeszów, both in Poland. On 21st September 2023, UNOPS signed a Host Country Agreement with the Polish government to set up its branch there. In the announcement of this UN office, it is given that this workplace will support Ukraine by taking early actions aiming at its response, recovery and rebuilding because of the Russian-affected war and its consequences there. Conscientiously, the new office branches in Poland must use their expertise in infrastructure, procurement and project management. Additionally, their goal will be also to increase the possibilities for Polish citizens to be hired in international structures like the UNOPS (about a hundred employees primarily from Poland). Besides it, the other aim is to raise the access for the Polish companies to the UN procurements and their involvement in this process. The new offices, which are part of the UN structures, will be coping with the realization of the structural programs, as well as financial schemes management and human resources. By its extension to Poland, the UNOPS will manage to use the Polish expertise in various sectors like transport, energy, green transformation and sanitation infrastructure. Referring to the infrastructural undertakings, some investments of UNOPS devoted to Ukraine could be correlated with the Three Seas Initiative. One of them is Repairing Essential Logistics Infrastructure and Network Connectivity (RELINC) in Ukraine whose goal is to help reconstruct railroads and bridges to reconnect communities and improve communication with the West by buying the appropriate materials to restore these connections and financing the purchase of wagons and the railway rolling stock. This rebuild could greatly suit and be linked with the different 3SI projects like the Construction of the

CPK (Central Solidarity Hub) railroad line Warsaw-Lublin-Lviv and the Projects Development of a network of logistics terminals.

CONCLUSION

Sustainable Development Goals in the Agenda 2030, devoted to the various aspects of infrastructural cooperation in communication, could be greatly linked with the Three Seas Initiative. The potential correlation between the implementation of the SDGs and the 3SI format should be considered by the infrastructure projects of Three Seas. This synergy ought to be perceived by the connection of the SDG Goals 6,7,8,9,11,12,13,15,17 with the particular 3SI investments. For example, this correlation has to be noticed by some combinations of the Three Seas undertakings with the achieving appropriate Sustainable Development Goals. In this matter, there should be listed, among others, the linking between, not only, the Modernization of Port Rijeka and the Construction or upgrading of the Intermodal Logistics Centre within the Rail Baltica with the SDG Goal 9 (Logistics Performance Index: Infrastructure Score), but also the connection between the North-Sough Gas Corridor and SDG Goal 7 (Affordable and clean energy). To be more precise, the upgrading the Port Rijeka and the construction or modernization the Logistics Centre of Rail Baltica could contribute to reaching the peculiar targets of SDG Goal 9 like developing the infrastructure that is high-quality, sustainable and resilient in its regional and transregional dimensions, and also promoting of the inclusive and endurable industrialization. In the second case which concerns the North-South Gas Corridor and SDG Goal 7, due to the implementation of the mentioned investment, particular targets could be achieved such as ensuring access to reliable, modern and affordable energy.

Moreover, the concrete action that was taken within the potential concurrence of the 3SI and the UN, was the adoption of the "Building global resilience and promoting sustainable development through infrastructure connectivity" Resolution in the UN General Assembly. This act was a joint proposal of 8 3SI states (Poland, Lithuania, Latvia Estonia, Hungary, Croatia, Romania and Bulgaria), Japan and El Salvador. This document emphasizes that developing high-quality, reliable, resilient and sustainable infrastructure is a universal global priority. It also calls for enhancing the improvement of the infrastructural conditions in transport, energy and digitalization universally on varied conditions. Following the Resolution adopted in the General Assembly of the United Nations on April 2023, a Sustainability Week on 15-19 April 2024 of the UN was organized which refers to the document mentioned above, particularly the Informal dialogue on building global resilience and promoting sustainable development through infrastructure connectivity, within the above bigger event. The issues touched there conveyed the current global problems and challenges impacting the infrastructure worldwide.

However, the synergy between the Three Seas Initiative and the United Nations in a greater context should be marked by the distinctive instruments of the specific UN agendas and agencies related to the infrastructure like the UN-Habitat, the UNEP, the UNIDO and the UNOPS. As it has been seen in the realization of the SDGs in the correlation of the Three Seas, there are also no or almost no remarkable initiatives developing within the UN agencies. It could be observed that some peculiar 3SI states have held various events in the UN, but they had individual characters, not joint ones, bringing together some Three Seas countries or their perspectives. This phenomenon should be especially perceived by the example of the UN-Habitat were organized different events and other projects by Austria, Croatia, Czechia and Estonia, and Poland held the World Urban Forum in Katowice in 2022 too, but they did not follow the concretes (or they were not seen) which could constitute

foundations for the deployment of the cooperation in Central Europe. What is more, some initiatives in the UN agendas refer strictly to the Central European region like The Secretariat of the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians which is developed within the UNEP and UNIDO. The aims of the Office could be indicated by the implementation of the particular 3SI projects in ensuring clean and efficient energy and promotion of other eco-friendly and proficient investments. But to evaluate this initiative in the future and its potential better, there is a need for its further evolution and the specifics of the implemented instruments of the Secretariat. The big opportunity for the promotion of the infrastructural interests in Central Europe, and to be more accurate, with the Three Seas Initiative, could be the establishment of the UNIDO Office in Poland in the future. It could allow some 3SI countries to play a bigger role in the rebuilding of Ukraine by proposing or even realizing various infrastructural projects (which could be connected with the Three Seas undertakings) and enable some Three Seas states to propose their unique ideas to be carried out in the international dimension, within the United Nations.

In recommending the better synergy of the SDGs (and the goals and targets that are their continuation under other agendas) with the 3SI, and in a broader context of the United Nations and the Three Seas Initiative, firstly, there should be much greater synchronization of particular UN's tools with the special 3SI's ones. What the Three Seas countries especially ought to do jointly on the forum of the UN, is to introduce common visions and projects, including organizing some events referring to the infrastructural specificity of Central Europe and the concrete efforts and effects of their side, connected to the infrastructural SDGs, which they achieved. In this aspect, they have to show that some joint investments (being also within the 3SI format and correlated to it) support reaching various targets. Furthermore, because the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals is hugely focused on the least developed countries, developing states and ones that suffer due to ongoing conflicts, to increase the importance of the Three Seas Initiative within the UN, it is needed to go beyond the 3SI region. In this matter, the realization of some Three Seas projects, precisely the transregional undertakings (including its neighbor countries like Ukraine, Moldova and the West-Balkan ones), ought to be linked with the reaching of SDGs. This action could influence more on different politics of the United Nations in the mentioned context, showing that the infrastructural difficulties could be solved by the effective collaboration of states in different areas. To realize this assumption, there is a demand for a bigger number of consultations and diverse projects and their intensiveness taken by some 3SI countries. To achieve it, the Three Seas members have to set some forms of cooperation with the UN agencies (related to the 3SI) which will enable them to work out the joint undertakings, and also within the 3SI format. Regarding the Resolution initiated by some countries of the Initiative, Japan and El Salvador, the UN Sustainability Week, and similar projects related to the document mentioned above, should be continued and approach more 3SI member states, the associated participating countries like Ukraine and Moldova, and Japan and El Salvador which were, among others, the initiators of the Resolution. Also, the other partnerships such as the Three Seas with the Eastern Partnerships and the Western Balkans, and the 3SI-Japanese-Salvadoran ones, and even within the instruments of the European Union, could promote the transregional and global infrastructural projects and standards.

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