

#### **Case Study 4b: Adriatic – Ionian Sea.**

The Adriatic-Ionian Sea is a semi-enclosed arm of the Mediterranean Sea between Italy and the Balkan Peninsula. It extends for around 800 km from the Gulf of Venice, at its head, to the Strait of Otranto, which leads to the Ionian Sea. The Adriatic is home to some of the most significant treasures of world heritage, including the Venice Lagoon and the fortress city of Dubrovnik. At the same time its rocky coves, historical cities, and pristine beaches mark it as an economically significant region for tourism and recreation.

The landscape and environmental differences between the two coasts of the Adriatic-Ionian basin are important because of their geomorphological characteristics, the high pressure of urban development and demographic differences. The Italian coast, in fact, is affected by a high level of urbanisation, which has assumed a continuous linear form with peaks around centres of production and areas of intense tourist development. Excessive pressure of productive use, localised demand and the consequent transformations of the coastal habitat have caused widespread congestion and a constant reduction of the natural environment. There are nonetheless, excellent environmental sites such as national and regional protected areas both in the north and the south of the country. The eastern part presents a continuity of landscape and environmental heritage, which is, however, now increasingly threatened by development processes, a lack of sewage and waste disposal systems and constant atmospheric emissions of polluting substances deriving from transport and industrial processes and, in particular, combustible fuels for energy production are frequently detected in these countries.