

Yachting as a economy promoter –
What can Portugal learn with New Zealand?

Portugal started its connection with the sea in the XVth Century, through the discovery of new territories in America, Africa and Asia. Due to the maritime traffic with the former colonies, the connections with the sea had a major importance until 1974.

Portugal joined the European Union in 1986, and then the political choices led to priority investment in mainland activities. As a consequence, Portugal almost lost its maritime vocation.

Beyond 2013 the EU will release a trust fund to support major important maritime affairs. With the current crisis, as well as the tourist vocation and tradition that Portugal has, it is an urgent need to take this opportunity to relaunch the economy, bringing the population back to the sea.

It was for this purpose - (re) learning to interact with the sea - that we studied the cohesive relationship between New Zealand and the sea in the yachting sector. This territory is one of the countries with the highest ratio of boats per capita.

New Zealand and Portugal are countries with a large coastline and both considered geographically peripheral to the major world economies. What explains this relationship between New Zealanders and the sea? In one of my contacts with institutions and individuals connected to the economy of the sea, I got an answer from a maritime bookstore owner who said: "It's simple, we live on an island (North Island), away from other countries, there is not much to do, so we sail". Obviously, there are many more leisure activities, especially in Auckland. However, the geographical factor is inseparable as well as history is.

The territory of New Zealand consists of several islands, but there are two main ones: the North Island and South Island. The country has a surface of 268.021 km²

and a population around 4.4 million inhabitants. It's a small population compared to the surface of the territory, but the majority of the population is concentrated in urban centers. The largest city is Auckland with a population of 1,377,000, which means almost one-third of the total population.

Auckland was the studied city in this research because it's the largest city in terms of population and also the biggest economic development center of New Zealand. The city area has about 11 marinas and 48 yachting and sailing clubs / associations.

New Zealand's coast has many bays and sheltered coves that allow a smooth navigation for small boats. The climate is generally temperate with mild winters. The cyclones season in the South Pacific does not usually affect this country, promoting the practice of sailing and boating throughout the year.

One of the main economic activities in New Zealand caused by the European settlement was shipbuilding. In fact it was necessary, in order to transport timber to the United States and Australia. At the time, this industry led to the arrival of skilled workers from European countries which helped the empowerment of naval activity.

The country had no sufficiently developed road land means of communication. So, shipping was vital for people transport between settlements. With the arrival of shipbuilding skilled workers, having a small boat became easier as well as it was essential for transporting goods and people. Over the time, they began to be used for leisure through regattas which were organized by groups of individuals who later led the naval clubs. Geography and history are therefore a key element of success in New Zealand yachting.

The cult of the "regattas", which are nowadays frequently organized, developed the spirit of competition and camaraderie, having made New Zealand a world power in terms of sailors. Just look at the case of New Zealand sailors participation among the two major World sailing competitions: Volvo Ocean Race and America's Cup. This

last one made Auckland Waterfront a business card to the world sailors. This area of the city gathers support services for naval repair as well as promotes tourism.

The shipbuilding and repair services generate a significant proportion of national wealth and jobs. The country has some international leader market construction companies in what concerns to luxury and "super yachts". Therefore, it is essential to have university courses, such as Marine Engineering, Nautical Science and Design to create a skilled workforce.

An important element in the organization of the sea economy in New Zealand goes through the action of the national policy for this theme. It is joined in just one institution: The "New Zealand Marine Industry Association." It includes the skills of membership publicity and export matters, as well as gathers all the companies that are related to the maritime industry. From shipbuilding, passing through trailer manufacturers and specialized bookstores. This institution also makes the connection between the State and the members through the training of young people, having also intermediate level stages and courses.

In New Zealand, the purchase and sale of boats has a free regime. That means that the possession of navigation licenses is not required for the use of vessels at sea, except when sailing is for commercial purposes and / or in international waters.

The Portuguese reality is opposite to what happens in New Zealand. However, in recent years we have been discussing the importance of the sea in what national economy is concerned. From the marine resources point of view, Portugal has one of the largest maritime territories of the world. Portugal has also the increasingly need of being another option for yachtsmen to stop when passing by the coast country.

One of the solutions, in the Portuguese case, should be the representation of institutions, companies and national services related to the sea in a single institution, as well as reviewing and simplifying the training and accreditation of the navigation licences. It is crucial, in order to have a serious nautical tourism development, that the Portuguese population is involved in maritime activities That is only possible with a larger size market where businesses can grow and innovate, attracting new

international clients. Naval clubs should take a more active role among its members, promoting the sailor spirit through regular competitions.

The New Zealand brand is inseparable from the sea. The quality, the great publicity and the presence of New Zealand products and services in international trade fairs greatly contributes for this. It is also relevant the presence of national crews in major sporting events worldwide.