Methodologies for Sustainable Development of TEN-T/RFC Corridors and Core Ports: Public Incentives for Industrial Activities Location in Port Related Areas

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Abstract. The Special Economic Zone (SEZ) is a regulated area where industrial activities are facilitated and have many incentives in order to become more competitive and attractive. The establishment of a SEZ is the responsibility of the national government which provides a model based on specific measures to attract investment. The local administrations have to define a plan, according to the national model, for the development of the SEZs in order to respect and enhance the peculiarities of each area. The goal is to push the strategic connection among logistics, industry and ports through incentive packages, including fiscal and non-fiscal ones, in order to have strong repercussions on economic development.

The impacts of the SEZs can be assessed in terms of sustainability: social, environmental and economic. In relation to economic sustainability, the paper proposes a general model developed to estimate the financial burdens borne by the regional and national administrations deriving from the establishment of the SEZ. The paper introduces a test case of Calabria Region to estimate the financial burdens necessary for the SEZ establishment in the Gioia Tauro macro-node, into the TEN-T core network and the RFC.

Keywords: Special Economic Zones · Economic development · financial model · public incentives · industrial activities location · TEN-T corridors · RFC corridors · sustainable ports · smart ports

1 Introduction

A port can be classified in relation to its generation [1] defined on the basis of quantitative characteristics [2]. A third-generation port is strategic node in the supply chain able of generating added value [3–10]; it requires the creation of a high level of services also through the implementation of continuous innovation processes. A third-generation port can be pursued through the creation and upgrading of industrial areas. Nowadays, the SEZs are established, representing a type of industrial areas capable of generating added value.

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The SEZ *represents a powerful tool for the development of a region thanks to the presence of adequate financial, fiscal, simplification and bureaucratic support* [11].

The SEZ is therefore a tool for sustainable development which, within a global economic growth strategy, allows to increase exports, foreign investments and employment levels; it also provides an efficient control of companies through adequate services [11–15]. The pursuit of sustainable development is the main goal already set in 1987, in the Brundtland report [16]. The main components of the sustainability are economy, society and environment that are important and independent but closely connected.

The concept of sustainable development then evolved over time and in 2015, thanks to the 2030 Agenda, was broken down into 17 goals [17]. Each goal refers to a general issue, the goals 9 and 11 are attributable for important parts to the transport sector [18].

The SEZ is a tool for sustainable development of a port, therefore it generates added value, only if some conditions, necessary but not sufficient, are verified (Fig. 1). The first condition requires that the port, in which the SEZ is established, belongs to the TEN-T network [19, 20]; the SEZ must be closely linked to the major European transport infrastructures. Moreover, the port must be smart in which transport, energy and ICT components are integrated and interconnected [21–23]. The last necessary condition for the SEZ to work is that there are incentives; these incentives derive from the transport and logistics sector which are highly monitored activities and therefore respectful of all the constraints and agreements established at European level. The incentives must allow the achievement of objectives of common interest [24], in accordance with the Treaty of Lisbon (2007) [25], and must not lead to distortions of competition. Incentives can be given if some critical issues that hold back the development of a port are resolved, such as export time; some studies conducted by the World Bank [26] showed that some European countries, such as Italy and Greece, have export times almost double as the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium.

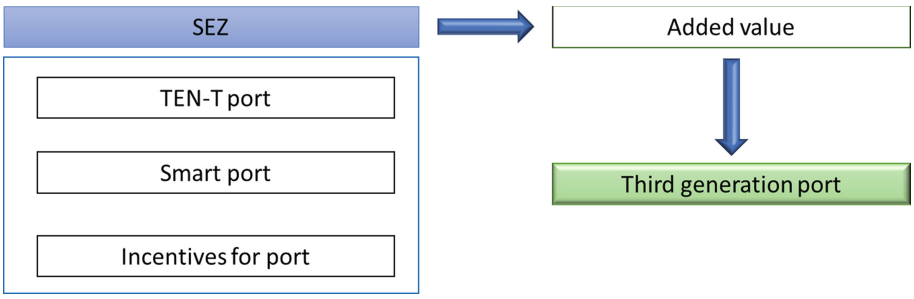

Fig. 1. Necessary conditions for SEZ

The impacts deriving from the establishment of the SEZ can be evaluated with respect to the three aspects of sustainability.

Economic sustainability has to be understood as efficiency and effectiveness, considering specific objectives ranging from the reduction of costs borne by users and the production costs of services with an increase in production efficiency and product effectiveness, to raising the quality of services and of labour, the processes of liberalization

and regulation which can constitute a tool. The impacts in terms of economic sustainability of the SEZ mainly concern the export growth through the acceleration of economic growth and diversification of the export sectors; the growth in employment levels in relation to the availability of areas for the settlement of new activities and the growth of those already in the SEZ; the growth of foreign capital investments by offering companies adequate services and infrastructures; industrial upgrading and technology transfer through the implementation of basic research lines functional to economic activities, promotion of start-ups and spin-offs, training and retraining of the workforce; the financial statements through the tax policies envisaged by current legislation to companies.

Social sustainability includes the prevention (reduction) of accidents related to the mobility of citizens and goods (safety) with the consequent reduction of the related social costs, and as protection from criminal acts (security), and understood not only as a cost, but as a prospect of technological, industrial and economic growth. Social sustainability also includes participation that is the form of both accessibility and reliability of services for all citizens, passenger rights and participation in decisions relating to mobility systems. The impacts in terms of social sustainability of the SEZ mainly concern the raising working standards by implementing safety development lines both through the introduction of new technologies and the verification of work organization methods, considering that safety is not a cost, but a resource and an opportunity for growth for the entire economic system; the development of human resources both in term of retraining of the workforce and the growth of skills.

Environmental sustainability is divided into different specific objectives relating to anthropized and non-anthropized areas. Some topics concern the increase in energy efficiency and environmentally friendly propulsion; the reduction of environmental pollution with particular reference to air quality; the reduction of visual intrusions and noise pollution in urban and non-urban areas. The impacts in terms of environmental sustainability of the SEZ mainly concern the environmental standards that can be achieved by providing companies with specifically designed infrastructures and services, in the awareness that effective management of the environment is a key point for optimizing the resources used by investors.

In the scientific literature, there are many researches focusing on the incentives related to the SEZ area. Some studies delve into the structure of incentives in some countries [27, 28], others evaluate the impacts deriving from such incentives [29, 30]; there is no model that unequivocally clarifies how these incentives can be estimated.

The aim of the paper concerns the analysis of the impacts of the SEZ from an economic point of view. In particular, an incentives model is proposed which makes it possible to estimate the financial charges deriving from the establishment of the SEZ.

The paper is addressed to technicians, politicians, researchers etc. who are interested in knowing the frame of incentives necessary for the establishment of a SEZ.

The paper is structured in four sections including the introduction (Sect. 1) and the conclusions (Sect. 4). In the Sect. 2, after a general framework that allows to define a structure of models for the evaluation of the impacts of the SEZ, the paper presents the formulation of an incentives model. In the Sect. 3, an application to a real context is proposed by presenting the case of the Calabria SEZ. Calabria SEZ has its center in the port of Gioia Tauro, a core port of the TEN-T network and constitutes a southern

gateway to Europe. The port of Gioia Tauro is crossed by the Scan-Med corridor and ScanMed RFC which are the axes that connects Finland and Sweden in the north, up to the island of Malta in the south, crossing Denmark, Germany, Austria and Italy. The regions along these corridors constitute the most important socio-economic area of the EU.

Gioia Tauro, as an Italian port, is affected by the critical issues related to export times which make the node uncompetitive compared to other European countries. According to data provided by the World Bank [26], export times in Italy are 19 days, more than double compared to the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany.

2 An Incentives Model

2.1 A System of Experimental Models for the SEZ

The impacts produced by the SEZ can be quantified through the use of experimental models. These models are of a different nature and allow for different outputs; they are part of a general system which, through a "trial and error" procedure, will have the SEZ model as its final output.

The models can be structured as: Aggregated Direct Impacts; Land Capacity Constraint; Economic - Functional Integration; Settlement of Firms; Incentives; Aggregated Indirect and Induced Impacts.

The Aggregated Direct Impacts model allows, on the basis of literature data, an aggregate estimate of the impacts deriving from the establishment of the SEZ; these impacts are consistent with the constraints deriving from the surface availability and the socio-economic characteristics of the areas analyzed in Land Capacity Constraint model, with a disaggregated approach. The economic-functional link between the areas is estimated using Economic-Functional Integration model, based on the origin-destination matrix among the areas and a gravity model including service level attributes expressed in terms of distances and travel times. The feasibility of the hypotheses with respect to possible establishments and expansions of companies, on the basis of the available surfaces, and the need for resources is verified with Settlement of firms and Incentives models. Finally, Aggregated Indirect and Induced Impacts model allows to estimate impacts in terms of direct and induced employment.

2.2 The Formulation

The incentives model allows to estimate the financial burdens deriving from the establishment of the SEZ.

The incentives derive from the transport and logistics sector which are highly monitored activities and therefore respectful of all the constraints and agreements established at European level. The incentives have to allow to achieve objectives of common interest as services of general economic interest, social and regional cohesion, employment, research and development, sustainable development, promotion of cultural diversity, etc., in accordance with the Treaty of Lisbon (2007) [25], and must not lead to distortions of competition.

It is possible to define different types of financial burdens [31]: incentives for investments; operating incentives for small and medium companies (SMEs); additional incentives.

The incentives for investments F^I will be granted to companies that start an investment program in the SEZ, within the limits of the established resources and in compliance with the community regulations on incentives for regional purposes and in particular on the basis of the provisions of Regulation 651/2014 [32]. These incentives, expressed in Gross Grant Equivalent (GGE), can be used by the company up to the value of the grant granted. Furthermore, the beneficiary companies must maintain their activity in the SEZ area for at least five years from the completion of the investment covered by the grant, under penalty of retroactive revocation of the benefits granted.

Incentives for investments can only be recognized for:

- creation of a new establishment or for the expansion of the capacity of an existing establishment;
- diversification of the production of an existing plant to obtain products never manufactured before;
- fundamental change to the overall production process of an existing plant.

Operating incentives for small and medium companies (SMEs) F^{SME}, based on European legislation, can only be recognized to reduce a company's current expenses not linked to an initial investment. Such expenses include costs for personnel, materials, contracted services, communications, energy, maintenance, rent, administration, but not depreciation and financing costs if these have been included in the eligible costs when the incentives for investments have been granted. Operating incentives for SMEs, unlike incentives for investments that can be activated without notification pursuant to Regulation no. 651/2014, are bound to the express authorization of the European Commission which will have to evaluate the reasons why a Member State requests it.

Additional incentives F^{ADD} are a faculty of the Region that can institute such forms of incentive considering that the regulatory provisions do not produce any expenditure automatism, as the capital account charges in question are of an eventual nature.

The estimated financial burdens depend on the expected scenario of SEZ. In particular, the expected scenario of SEZ is defined leaving from the Settlement of Firms model that gives:

- the number and type of equivalent companies that can settle, and/or can be under expansion if already settled, in the industrial agglomerations of the SEZ;
- increase in the occupied area.

In particular, the estimated financial burdens can be expressed as:

$$F = \sum_t I_t \cdot w_t \tag{1}$$

where I_t is the total unitary incentive for the t type of company and w_t is the number of companies of t type obtained from the Settlement of Firms model.

The financial burdens F can be expressed as the sum of its three components as follows:

$$F = F^I + F^{SME} + F^{ADD} = \sum_t \left(I_t^I + I_t^{SME} + I_t^{ADD} \right) \cdot w_t \tag{2}$$

This formulation defines the complete framework of the incentives that a company can request to establish itself within a SEZ. The components of incentives model include all contributions that can be granted to companies; not all companies request for or can receive the whole package of incentives, but some rates can be requested or granted.

3 Application

The proposed model has been applied to a real case, the SEZ established in Calabria, in the Gioia Tauro macro-node. Gioia Tauro is one of the main commercial hubs in Italy specialized in container transhipment operations. In 2020, it was one of the few ports that increased the container traffic, + 26%, respect to 2019 [4]; in 2021, it handled around 1.15 million TEUs [33]. Gioia Tauro is also specialized in Ro-Ro services [34, 35]; as regards the import/export traffic, the volumes of vehicles were respectively about 0.28 in 2018 and 0.21 million in 2019 [33]. It has a strategic location in the centre of the Mediterranean; it is a core port of the TEN-T network also crossed by the RFC.

3.1 Incentives for Investments

The estimated incentives for investments depend on the regional aid map which sets limits on the intensity of investment aid in the different regions. For the Calabria Region, which is positioned among those areas with a GDP between 65% and 75%, the maximum aid intensities are envisaged: 25% for large companies; 35% for medium companies; 45% for small companies.

As regards the new settlements, two types of companies have been considered which, on the basis of the economic system of Calabria, can be assumed to have the following characteristics: NG Type (15 ha of occupied surface, 300 employees); NM Type (10 ha of occupied area, 100 employees).

As far as the existing settlements are concerned, the presence of two further types of companies has been hypothesized:

- MG Type, if after the establishment of the SEZ, a company already existing in the base year of reference 2018 expands, becoming, in the reference decade 2019–2028, a NG type company, with consequent increase of 5 ha of occupied area and increase of 200 employees;
- MM Type, if after the establishment of the SEZ, a company already existing in the base year of reference 2018 expands without changing the surface occupied, but still undergoing an increase in employees in the reference decade 2019–2028.

In relation to the previous ceilings, it should be noted that for major projects, involving investments of more than 50 million euro, the ceiling in GGE (Gross Grant Equivalent, unit of measurement that is used to calculate the amount of economic aid in relation to the entire amount of the investment) is calculated as:

$$Maximum\ aid = max(GGE)\% \cdot [50 + (0.5 \cdot B) + (0.34 \cdot C)] \tag{3}$$

where *max (GGE)%* is the ceiling in *GGE* or investments, equal to 25% for large companies; *B* is the cost between 50 and 100 million euro and *C* is the cost exceeding 100 million euro.

Large projects mean the establishment of NG companies.

The real intensity of the benefit is progressively reduced with respect to the ceiling for amounts exceeding 50 million euro.

For the estimation of the financial endowment, it can be hypothesized to set a spending ceiling. Specifically, if the recognition of the benefit is assumed for a baseline scenario defined by *Nc, Tc* and *GGE* that correspond to:

- 4 NG type companies setting up in the territory, with a ceiling of 25% in GGE for investments up to 50 million euro;
- 4 existing NM type companies, with an average ceiling of 40% GGE for investments up to 3 million euro.

In this scenario, an annual financial allocation for incentives for investments of 54,800 million euro is estimated, for a total of 164 million euro over the three-year period.

3.2 Operating Incentives for Small and Medium Companies

The operating incentives, in compliance with European legislation, only for SMEs operating in the SEZ and for a duration not exceeding three financial years of the same SMEs, can be disbursed according to the *de minimis regime*, with a maximum allowable plafond equal to 200 million euro for each company.

For the estimation of the operating incentives, it can be hypothesized to set an amount for the *de minimis regime*. Specifically, can be the recognition of the benefit is assumed for a baseline scenario defined by *Nc* and *Tc* that correspond to:

- 100,000 euro for the 50 SMEs already established;
- 200,000 euro for 4 new SMEs settling in the area.

In this scenario an annual financial allocation for operative incentives of 5,8 million euro is estimated.

3.3 Additional Incentives

The additional incentive can be estimated on the basis of estimates referring to SMEs with an intensity of subsidy referring to the similar administrative program implemented by the Calabria Region with the ISP call (Integrated Subsidy Packages) of 2010, relating to the realization of technical feasibility studies, research and development projects technology and projects for companies innovation and competitiveness.

The maximum amount of the contribution cannot, in any case, exceed:

- 22,500.00 euro for each Technical Feasibility Study;
- 500,000.00 euro for each Research and Technological Development Project (industrial and pre-competitive);
- 50,000.00 euro for each Innovation and Technology Transfer Service.

In this scenario an annual financial allocation for additional incentives of 4.18 million euro is estimated.

3.4 Framework of Incentives

It is possible to summarize all the financial burdens for the scenario hypothesis considered. For each type of burden, Table 1 shows the economic nature of the expenditure, the temporal nature of the expenditure and the expected amount of expenditure.

Table 1. Financial burdens

Type	Economic nature	Temporal nature	Expected amount (Million euro)
Investment incentives	I	P	164
Operating incentives	C	P	5.8
Additional incentive measures	I	P	4.18
Total			173.98

C: current expenditure; I: investment expenditure; A: annual; P: multi-year

3.5 Incentives for Different Scenarios

The incentives estimation procedure can be performed on the basis of the results of Settlement of Firms model relating to the quantification of the number of companies and scenarios A and B based on the surface area available at the base year.

In particular, in Calabria, considering the constraints relating to the surfaces available throughout the SEZ, it's possible to hypothesize two development scenarios respect to an increase in the occupied area:

- Scenario A - high, an increase in the occupied area of 100% of the free area is expected compared to the 2018 value.
- Scenario B - low, an increase in the occupied area of 50% of the free area is expected compared to the 2018 value.

Table 2 reports the estimates incentives for investments for scenarios A and B based on the area available in the base year. Table 3 shows the estimates incentives for investments for scenarios A and B based on the upgraded area, in which it is also hypothesized that the actual available surface can be considered double.

Considering the upgraded surface area and scenario A, a cost of around 308 million euro is obtained; in the hypothesis that there is an additional financial support of 100 million euro to be allocated to NM-type companies, an overall cost of the SEZ equal to 400 million euro can be estimated.

Table 2. Estimates incentives for investments based on available area at base year

Scenario	Companies (Number)	Type	Amount of incentives (Million euro)	Maximum aid intensities	Total/year (Million euro)	Total/year (Million euro)
A	6	NG	360,000	25%	90,000	154,000
	3	NM	60,000	40%	24,000	
	4	MG	160,000	25%	40,000	
B	3	NG	180,000	25%	45,000	73,000
	1	NM	20,000	40%	8,000	
	2	MG	80,000	25%	20,000	

Table 3. Estimates incentives for investments based on upgraded area

Scenario	Companies (Number)	Type	Amount of incentives (Million euro)	Maximum aid intensities	Total/year (Million euro)	Total/year (Million euro)
A	12	NG	720,000	25%	180,000	308,000
	6	NM	120,000	40%	48,000	
	8	MG	320,000	25%	80,000	
B	6	NG	360,000	25%	90,000	154,000
	3	NM	60,000	40%	24,000	
	4	MG	160,000	25%	40,000	

4 Conclusions

A SEZ is a regulated area where industrial activities are facilitated and have many incentives in order to become more competitive and attractive. The aim is to push on the strategic link among logistics, industry and ports to have strong impacts on economic development working on sustainability terms.

To evaluate the impacts from the SEZ, starting to the analysis of the specific characteristics in which the SEZ is established, such as economic and legislative ones, it's possible to use of experimental models which develops on several levels. One of these levels concerns the estimate of financial burdens to make the SEZ operational. The paper has proposed a model for technicians, politicians, researchers etc. in order to evaluate the incentives necessary for the establishment of a SEZ.

The model has been applied to a real context of the Calabria SEZ. In Calabria, the package of incentives necessary for the SEZ has been estimated assuming a scenario based on the availability of areas and the type of industry. The expected amount is about 174 million euro for investment, operating and additional incentives.

Two scenarios have also been considered in relation to the increase in occupied area (high and low). The model has allowed to estimate the incentives for the two scenarios also considering a doubling of the available surface.

In the best scenario, which foresees an increase in the occupied area of 100% of the free area (compared to 2018) and a doubling of the current available area, the investment incentives are estimated at around 400 million euro.

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