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HIGH REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE UNION FOR
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JOINT STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

Black Sea Synergy: review of a regional cooperation initiative - period 2015-2018

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Black Sea Synergy: review of a regional cooperation initiative - period 2015-2018

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 2007, with the accession of Bulgaria and Romania, the European Union's maritime boundaries reached the shores of the Black Sea. The Black Sea region is a distinctive geographical area, strategically located at the junction between Europe, Asia and Africa and rich in human and natural resources. The centre of gravity of the region is the Black Sea basin¹. Acknowledging the importance of the Black Sea region, in April 2007 the European Commission proposed the Communication on the **Black Sea Synergy initiative**² to the Parliament and the Council. Since 2007, two reports³ on the implementation of Black Sea Synergy have been issued. In two resolutions⁴, adopted in 2008 and 2011 respectively, the European Parliament highlighted the importance of strengthening regional cooperation in the Black Sea region and called for the EU's policies in this area to be further developed. Black Sea Synergy was a topic of discussion for the relevant Council working party, also during the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2018. To date, Black Sea Synergy has been the EU's key regional policy framework for the Black Sea region⁵. The initiative provides practical support for developing and better coordinating regional cooperation in the Black Sea region, and between the EU and the region as a whole. The initiative seeks to seize regional opportunities and boost the stability, sustainability, resilience and prosperity of the Black Sea region for the benefit of citizens.

The Black Sea Synergy initiative supports the implementation of the 2016 Global Strategy on EU Foreign and Security Policy⁶ and the European Neighbourhood Policy, reviewed in 2015⁷. The Global Strategy calls for support for a cooperative regional order to build a more peaceful, stable and favourable regional environment, while consolidating resilience in EU's neighbourhood, both at state and societal level. The European Neighbourhood Policy aims to build more effective partnerships between the EU and its neighbours and it seeks to involve regional actors beyond the neighbourhood in addressing regional challenges. Fostering regional cooperation in the Black Sea region helps reinforce the value of multilateralism at the regional level and strengthens the EU Global Strategy's objective of promoting a rules-based global order. Furthermore, the Global Strategy underlines the clear need to support multiple partnerships, increase the participation of all stakeholders and ensure better coordination with other regional and international organisations. The

¹ The Black Sea riparian countries are the following: Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine.

The Black Sea is connected with the Mediterranean Sea through the Bosphorus/Istanbul and Dardanelles/Canakkale Straits and with Azov Sea through the Kerch Strait. Via the Danube, the Black Sea connects eastern EU Member States to central Europe, and up to the Rhine-Meuse corridor.

²<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0160:FIN:EN:PDF>

³ The first one, in June 2008 was the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, entitled 'Report on the First Year of Implementation of the Black Sea Synergy' <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52008DC0391&from=en>. The second report, in January 2015, covering the 2009-2014 period, was the Joint Staff Working Document of the European Commission together with the European External Action Service, entitled 'Black Sea Synergy: review of a regional cooperation initiative' https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/sites/maritimeaffairs/files/docs/body/swd_2015_6_en.pdf

⁴<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P6-TA-2008-0017&language=EN>;

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2011-0365+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

⁵ The countries covered by the EU's Black Sea Synergy initiative are: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Romania, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine.

⁶ <https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/global-strategy-foreign-and-security-policy-european-union>

⁷ Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions — Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (JOIN(2015) 50 final).

http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/documents/2015/151118_joint-communication_review-of-the-enp_en.pdf

European Union has consistently highlighted the value of cooperation with existing stakeholders in the Black Sea region, including regional stakeholders⁸.

This paper presents the progress made in implementing the Black Sea Synergy initiative during the **period 2015-2018**. It also highlights the lessons learned from this period and flags key elements. Having a more streamlined, reinforced and cross-sectoral presentation of this paper, in order to inform the future development of the Black Sea Synergy was also considered.

An annex to this paper includes a table with details of projects developed under the Black Sea Synergy umbrella and relevant EU initiatives closely connected to the Black Sea region and supported by the EU between 2015 and 2018.

2. THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BLACK SEA SYNERGY as determined by the 2007 Black Sea Synergy Communication and its implementation during the years are the following:

- (i) Black Sea Synergy is a coherent, long-term initiative. It complements the EU's bilateral activities in the Black Sea region and facilitates more sector-oriented EU support for the region.
- (ii) The initiative is inclusive in that participation is open to states in the wider Black Sea region. Key elements of the initiative include building confidence, fostering regional dialogue and achieving tangible results for states and citizens in the region.
- (iii) Encouraging a *bottom-up* approach to project development, identifying and supporting the needs, priorities and aims of partners in the region, and what they want to do together are fundamental for the Black Sea Synergy.

The countries in question implement the projects and measures developed under the Black Sea Synergy umbrella on a voluntary basis, at regional level and through different types of interaction (cross-border, local authorities, civil society, intergovernmental, etc.). Stronger links with other EU initiatives, policies and strategies are also reflected as specific for the Black Sea Synergy, in particular with the EU Strategy for the Danube Region⁹, the Integrated Maritime Policy¹⁰ and the EU Maritime Security Strategy¹¹. The 2018 EU Communication on 'Connecting Europe and Asia — Building Blocks for an EU Strategy'¹² refers in particular to the 'bridging role of the Black Sea basin' and to interconnectivity both within the EU (East-West, North-South from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea) and between continents (Europe and Asia).

3. FIELDS OF COOPERATION: PROGRESS MADE SINCE 2015, LESSONS LEARNED AND KEY POINTS

Drawing on the 2007 Communication on Black Sea Synergy and its subsequent implementation, the Black Sea Synergy initiative includes the following: *(A) a wide variety of areas with a list of main sectors and fields of cooperation; (B) links with other EU policies or strategies that are relevant for the Black Sea region; and (C) elements regarding cooperation with regional and international organisations.*

The registered progress and lessons learned of the Black Sea Synergy, and the measures related to the fields of cooperation are also impacted by the broader context, which is marked by *particular*

⁸ The Black Sea Synergy initiative was formally launched at a joint meeting of the EU and the Black Sea foreign ministers in Kiev in February 2008. A joint statement was released:

http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/blacksea/doc/joint_statement_blacksea_en.pdf

⁹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52010DC0715>

¹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy_en

¹¹ https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy/maritime-security_en

¹² https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/joint_communication_-_connecting_europe_and_asia_-_building_blocks_for_an_eu_strategy_2018-09-19.pdf

challenges and risks. These include the geopolitical landscape of the Black Sea area, with its complex web of diverse and often conflicting interests, aspirations, interactions and identities; the volatile security situation and destabilisation actions in the region; the illegal annexation of Crimea and other violation of international law; the restrictive measures; the evolving security situation in the nearby Sea of Azov. Respect for the norms and principles of international law, including for the principle of territorial integrity within internationally recognised borders, as well as for the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is fundamental for the EU's approach to the regional cooperation in the Black Sea. Other particular challenges relate to the political will and the level of commitment of the partners to engage in regional cooperation programmes; the difficulties of and limited capacity for managing, developing and implementing projects and accessing financial opportunities; the complexity of EU rules and procedures. The impact of global issues, such as terrorism, migration or climate change is also to be considered.

(A): Main sectors and fields of cooperation — progress made and lessons learned

Field of cooperation #1: Blue growth, with particular focus on the integrated maritime policy, marine research and innovation

EU maritime policy promotes sustainable blue growth and regional cooperation strategies that harness the strengths and address the weaknesses of the sea basins bordering the EU. The reporting period (2015-2018) was marked by significant progress on cooperation on maritime affairs and blue growth in the Black Sea. Over recent years, the countries bordering the Black Sea have become increasingly interested in the potential that the blue economy has to offer.

The annual Black Sea stakeholder conference on the blue economy – Sofia (2015), Odessa (2016) and Batumi (2017) – raised awareness in the region of the sustainable use of the sea and its resources. The conference has become an important annual forum for political leaders, public authorities, maritime practitioners, entrepreneurs and other interested parties from the entire Black Sea region. The discussions held during this event have helped to identify how the Black Sea countries can increase their blue growth potential, embrace innovation, improve access to funding and develop the coastal areas sustainably.

Over the years, these stakeholder conferences have given rise to important initiatives, notably the process of developing a Common Maritime Agenda and the Strategic Blue Growth Research and Innovation Agenda. In 2018, following the success of the annual Black Sea stakeholder conferences, the European Maritime Day - a flagship initiative of the Commission for raising awareness about the potential of the blue economy, was celebrated for the first time on the shores of the Black Sea, in Burgas (Bulgaria), 31 May – 1 June 2018. The event focused on the Black Sea and brought together a record number of over 800 stakeholders and political leaders from the EU and the Black Sea region.

On 31 May 2018, Bulgaria, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Turkey, and Ukraine endorsed the *Burgas Ministerial Declaration* [‘Towards a Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea’](#) in the margins of the European Maritime Day, held in Burgas. The Burgas Ministerial Declaration commits the participating countries to jointly drawing up and agreeing on priority actions to tackle challenges linked to the blue economy in the shared sea basin. The Ministerial declaration underlines the voluntary and sectorial nature of the cooperation and stresses the countries’ ownership over this process. It also acknowledges the role of key regional organisations such as the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Black Sea Commission. The main areas of cooperation targeted are transport, skills, the environment, tourism, research and innovation. The future Common Maritime Agenda will serve as a reference framework for aligning policies on maritime affairs and funding tools, including national, EU and international

funding. To support the development of the Common Maritime Agenda, in 2017 the Commission launched an assistance mechanism project - the Facility for Blue Growth in the Black Sea. The Facility team provides capacity-building support to help Black Sea countries make the best use of the integrated maritime policy and identify common priorities for regional cooperation.

During the 2015-2018 period, the EU also supported emerging sectors and stakeholders in the blue economy. For example, it funded projects on improving the management of maritime clusters, boosting access to marine data, developing blue skills and exploring underwater cultural heritage in the Black Sea.

In the field of marine research, a series of technical meetings between leading Black Sea and European marine institutes, supported by the European Commission throughout 2017 and 2018, led to the development of work on a common vision of a marine research and innovation agenda. The Burgas Vision Paper ‘A Blue Growth Initiative for Research and Innovation in the Black Sea’ was adopted by prominent marine researchers and experts and presented at the European Maritime Day in Burgas. The vision paper sets out four main avenues for action: 1) addressing fundamental research challenges for the Black Sea; 2) developing products, solutions and clusters underpinning blue growth in the Black Sea; 3) building critical support systems and innovative research infrastructure; and 4) education and capacity building. The aim is to achieve a productive, healthy, resilient, sustainable and better-valued Black Sea by 2030. A ‘Blue Growth Research and Innovation Agenda’ setting out specific research and innovation measures is under development. This should inform and guide the development of research programmes at national and EU level beyond 2019 and become a pillar of the future Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea.

The European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODNet) is a network of organisations supported by the EU’s integrated maritime policy. Within this framework, a new single web portal and a low-resolution seabed map of the Black Sea are available, with the resolution of the latter to be progressively improved by 2020. The project is based on the efforts of research organisations from the Black Sea region to make their marine data more accessible, interoperable and useful to end-users. The ‘collect once and use many times’ philosophy benefits all marine data users, including policy-makers, scientists, private industry and the public.

Lessons learned and key points

- The 2015-2018 period was marked by the commitment of the Black Sea riparian countries and the Republic of Moldova to establishing structural cooperation on maritime affairs in the Black Sea, based on sectoral, non-political, voluntary and bottom-up initiatives and projects. Ownership by the countries over the setting-up, endorsement and implementation of this cooperation has proven to be essential for progress to be made towards a Common Maritime Agenda in the Black Sea.
- The maritime stakeholder community in the Black Sea region continues to expand. However, awareness of the potential and opportunities of the blue economy is still limited. In that spirit, the EU will continue to promote cooperation, including by matching up stakeholders, developing maritime clusters, building capacity for project application and focusing on access to financing.
- Having a regional cross-border cooperation programme, such as the Joint Operational Programme Black Sea basin, is crucial to bringing the joint maritime priorities and measures identified by the Black Sea countries to life.
- Work on the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for the Black Sea confirms the strong culture of cooperation on research and innovation in the region. EU support has paid a key role in scaling up cooperation and going beyond smaller, more limited national projects. The participating countries intend to include the priorities identified by the SRIA in their national research programmes. That would allow for a longer-term vision for both EU and national funding to support these priorities.

Field of cooperation #2: Fisheries

Black Sea fisheries are traditional activities that support the livelihoods and local economies of coastal communities and provide high quality food and income to fishermen and -women, thereby contributing to the socioeconomic viability of Black Sea coastal areas¹³. Fisheries and aquaculture are important sectors of the Black Sea blue economy¹⁴.

At the initiative of the EU, in October 2016, Black Sea riparian states came together in the context of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) where they endorsed the *Bucharest Declaration* and paved the way for improved fisheries governance in the Black Sea. In 2017-2018, the GFCM adopted a set of concrete multilateral measures in the Black Sea with the support of the EU. These include the multilateral multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries, a regional plan of action to fight illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, a pilot project on joint control and an inspection scheme for turbot fisheries, the BlackSea4Fish scientific project and the Black Sea aquaculture demonstrative centres.

The *BlackSea4Fish* project is a successful regional example of ongoing multilateral cooperation derived from the Bucharest Declaration¹⁵. Launched in 2016, the project became an important scientific initiative supporting collaboration between scientists on marine fisheries. A number of issues have been identified as a result of the project, based on the biological, economic and social specificities of the Black Sea. These include: 1) the need for enhanced cooperation to address multiple pressures using an ecosystem approach; 2) the need to strengthen conservation and control

¹³ At least 10 000 fishing vessels are operating in the Black Sea belonging to the fleets of Black Sea riparian countries. Fisheries directly support the employment of about 23 500 people, with many more jobs indirectly dependent on the fishing sector. An estimated 8 700 aquaculture farms, both marine and freshwater, generate direct and indirect jobs for more than 39 000 people in the riparian countries.

¹⁴ According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation, total value of fish landings in the Black Sea amounts to almost USD 700 million.

¹⁵ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7109e.pdf>

measures for key species and enforce the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, which is an endemic problem for the Black Sea; 3) the need to improve data collection and data quality and develop scientific cooperation and stocks assessment; 4) the need to find ways to ensure the recovery of stocks, which is critically linked to a more prosperous fishing sector; and finally, 5) the need to secure jobs in coastal communities.

In June 2018, with the leadership of the EU and under the GFCM, a *High-Level Conference on Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture* took place, resulting in the signing of the *Sofia Ministerial Declaration*¹⁶. This declaration renewed the political commitment to take joint action towards the sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture in the Black Sea. It contains a work plan for joint action and a timeline for implementation by the Black Sea riparian states over the next ten years. This involves enhancing data collection and scientific evaluation, establishing ecosystem-based fisheries management, developing a culture of compliance, eliminating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and supporting sustainable small-scale fisheries and aquaculture. Bulgaria, Romania, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Turkey, and the European Commission, on behalf of the EU, signed the declaration. The Russian Federation and Ukraine were, in principle, supportive of the declaration's core objectives. Implementing the measures provided for will lead to the integration of new dynamic fisheries governance in the Black Sea.

Lessons learned and key points

- Enhancing multilateral cooperation at regional level in the Black Sea on fisheries governance is a pillar for joint action towards the sustainability of fisheries and the sustainable development of aquaculture. Both the 2016 Bucharest Declaration and the 2018 Sofia Ministerial Declaration made multilateral cooperation a core objective. The GFCM is the appropriate and effective fisheries and aquaculture forum for Black Sea enhanced multilateral cooperation, which promotes ownership over joint action and creates a culture of compliance.
- Shared responsibility is a key element, recognised by the Bucharest and the Sofia Ministerial Declarations, for ensuring the biological, social and economic sustainability of Black Sea fishery resources for future generations and for taking responsible management, conservation and control measures. The Black Sea riparian countries have undertaken to act jointly at Black Sea level. Working together and acting jointly are key elements of the new fisheries governance.
- Fisheries management is based on scientific advice. The establishment of the GFCM BlackSea4Fish project has provided a multinational scientific operational platform. This is an important instrument, supporting the effective collaboration between scientists on marine fisheries in the Black Sea.

Field of cooperation #3: Environmental protection and climate change

The Black Sea remains one of the seas most heavily impacted by human activities in the world. A combination of features¹⁷ renders its ecosystem highly sensitive to pressures from such activities. The area is also marked by the effects of climate change, although this issue has not been sufficiently addressed. Knowledge of Black Sea ecosystems remains very limited compared to other seas. For example, all biodiversity features of its marine region have an 'unknown' status.

¹⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/sites/fisheries/files/docs/2018-06-07-sofia-declaration_en.pdf

¹⁷ A large catchment-to-surface area ratio, large population centres and many industrial activities not far from its coasts, hydrocarbon transport and potential for extraction activities, important shipping routes, many fisheries and touristic areas, poor drainage to oceans (residence time of water over 100 years) with a respectively high accumulation potential for pollutants, stratified waters, and the saturation of seawater layers below 150 m with hydrogen sulphide (H₂S).

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)¹⁸ remains the main instrument promoted by the EU for the protection of the Black Sea marine environment. The Directive encourages enhanced regional cooperation, building upon relevant existing programmes and activities developed in the framework of structures stemming from international agreements¹⁹. Thus, for the Black Sea, EU's cooperation with the Black Sea Commission established by the Bucharest Convention is encouraged. At the same time – although most Black Sea coastal countries are committed to MSFD concepts and methods²⁰ - just 46 % of the Black Sea surface area is reported by EU Member States under the MSFD.

Since 2013, the EU has supported the *'Improving Environmental Monitoring in the Black Sea'* (EMBLAS) project. EMBLAS has been registered as 'voluntary commitment' to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14²¹. Between 2014 and 2018, phase II of this project was implemented and follow-up work has been launched under EMBLAS Plus. EMBLAS II provided support for strengthening policies, monitoring and capacity building in Georgia, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. The project involved cooperation with the Joint Research Centre (JRC), the European Environment Agency (EEA), and with many institutions, experts and projects in the Member States (Greece, the Czech Republic, Romania, Italy and Belgium). Using state-of-the-art methods, the national pilot monitoring studies and two EMBLAS joint Black Sea surveys in 2016 and 2017 generated a critical amount of data. These provided the first results of the Black Sea environmental status assessment, according to MSFD requirements. A brochure²² for the public was produced based on the 2016 and 2017 scientific reports. An online Black Sea water quality database has been enhanced using a critical amount of data. Strong links have also been built with civil society organisations. This has resulted in a new tradition of public Black Sea Clean Beach Days in Georgia, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. An effective communication strategy was implemented, including a mobile phone application for identifying 'sentinel' species, which helps monitor the state of the sea through public participation. A film was produced to raise awareness about the pressures faced by the Black Sea and possible solutions to address them. An EMBLAS Plus project, building on the achievements of EMBLAS II, was approved for financing in 2018. Additionally, the EU funded a project led by the Barcelona Convention (UNEP) to assist the development of a regional action plan against marine litter in the Black Sea.

Between 2015 and 2018, the EU continued to officially express, through technical and diplomatic dialogue, its interest in becoming a party to the *Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution* (Bucharest Convention) and to its body, the Black Sea Commission. The 7th EU Environmental Action Programme²³ sets out the EU's commitment to accede to the Black Sea Commission. Membership to the Bucharest Convention could bring the institutional status of the EU in line with the EU substantial contribution to the protection of the Black Sea marine and coastal environment. The EU membership could also provide grounds for further support to the environmental protection activities of this marine region.

¹⁸ Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (MSFD).

¹⁹ Article 6 of the Directive 2008/56/EC Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

²⁰ Georgia and Ukraine have committed to implementing through their respective association agreements with the EU; and Turkey, as a candidate state to EU membership, is expected to increasingly adopt and apply EU policies and methodologies.

²¹ <https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/?id=15806>

²² '12 Facts about the Black Sea': http://www.ua.undp.org/content/ukraine/en/home/library/environment_energy/12-facts-black-sea.html

²³ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/action-programme/>

Lessons learned and key points

- Environmental protection remains a pressing issue for the region. Without international cooperation, the environmental situation of the Black Sea is at high risk of degradation. Achieving ‘good environmental status’ of the Black Sea by 2020 remains a key EU goal, also taking into account its impact on human health.
- EU support delivers results on the ground. It also needs to translate into action beyond institutional development. The EMBLAS project has significantly contributed to an essential part of the MSFD implementation (assessment) and supplied unique and relevant data for the programmes developed by the Black Sea Commission. At the same time, significant gaps still exist regarding a number of pressures to the marine and coastal environment, such as waste management in the region and regarding the decarbonisation of key economic sectors. The adaptation of critical infrastructure to climate change has not been sufficiently addressed. Building popular support and attracting private sector involvement is crucial.
- The EU’s accession to the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution (Bucharest Convention) remains a priority.

Field of cooperation #4: Cross-Border Cooperation — Black Sea basin programme 2014-2020

The Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) Joint Operational Programme Black Sea basin remains an important strand of cooperation in the Black Sea in areas of major importance for the region, such as sustainable growth and joint environmental protection. The programme is highly appreciated by partners and is perceived as a positive, high-profile story from the region, despite its complex situation. Businesses, national authorities, academia and civil society from the eight participating Member States and partner countries²⁴ are well aware of the opportunities and the objectives of the programme and participate actively and with a significant interest in cross-border cooperation.

During the ongoing 2014-2020 programming period, the programme supports projects to develop businesses, including small and medium-sized enterprises, promote environmental protection, reduce marine litter in the Black Sea basin, and support climate change mitigation and adaptation. A number of important cross-cutting elements for successful, sustained and inclusive cross-border cooperation have also been supported. These include promoting local and regional good governance, promoting regional integration and coordination, using and developing relevant information and communication technologies, and promoting gender equality and opportunities for youth.

The first call for projects under the 2014-2020 programming period was launched in January 2017. 23 projects were selected and the available financial support of EUR 18.6 million from European Neighbourhood Instrument was committed to stakeholders from all participating countries. A second call for proposals was opened in October 2018, amid growing interest and an increasing number of applicants.

²⁴ Armenia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine. The Russian Federation and Azerbaijan are also eligible.

Lessons learned and key points

- The Cross Border Cooperation, Joint Operational Programme Black Sea basin is an important driver for cooperation in the region among local and regional authorities, civil society, stakeholders and businesses, for the benefit of citizens.
- The support available under the programme helps home-grown initiatives find joint solutions for common economic and environmental challenges, good governance and regional integration and coordination.
- The significant interest and number of applications for support under cross-border cooperation programmes demonstrates the commitment of the region to the Cross Border Cooperation Joint Operational Programme Black Sea basin.

Field of cooperation #5: Civil society engagement, democracy and human rights

Between 2015 and 2018, the *Black Sea NGO Forum* continued to be held annually²⁵ by the non-governmental development organisation (NGDO) platform FOND. The forum is regarded as a success story of Black Sea Synergy, bringing together more than 1000 participants from civil society organisations since its creation in 2008. Over time, it has grown in size and scope. It acts as a network, driven by and reflecting members' interests and needs.

The 10th anniversary of the Black Sea NGO Forum was held in Bucharest in September 2017. At the event, an evaluation report for the Forum's activities for the period 2012-2016 was presented and debated. Following this report, subsequent forums became more interactive with more networking and fewer, shorter plenary sessions, to the benefit and appreciation of participants. During these years, the forum maintained its focus on issues such as youth, children's rights, community development, citizen participation and anti-corruption measures. In 2018, the annual edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum was held in Brussels. This was the first time the forum was hosted outside the Black Sea region. In the same year, the EU awarded FOND a direct grant of EUR 400 000 for 3 years to help consolidate the Black Sea NGO Forum and its follow-up activities.

The EU also continued to support civil society in the countries in the Black Sea region using all available mechanisms, including the Eastern Partnership and the Turkey Civil Society Facility, the Civil Society Organisations Programme and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.

Lessons learned and key points

- The Black Sea NGO Forum continued to be a Black Sea Synergy success story. The broad membership of the forum ensures greater and diverse participation. Guaranteeing momentum between annual fora, increasing visibility of Black Sea NGO Forum activities and ensuring more strategic communication could enable better use of the expertise that the forums can provide.
- It remains essential to monitor the environment in which civil society organisations operate. The EU adapted its foreign funding infrastructure to the reality on the ground by supporting small budgets and relying on greater support from volunteers. The shrinking space of civil society continued to be a cause for concern.

²⁵ Tbilisi, November 2015; Varna, November 2016; Chisinau, December 2017; Brussels, November 2018.

Field of cooperation #6: Education, research and innovation (beyond marine), culture and tourism

The EU has been actively supporting cooperation on education, training, youth issues and sport in the Black Sea region through the Erasmus+ programme, and in the areas of culture and audio-visual under the Creative Europe programme. More than 90 Erasmus+ projects in the Black Sea countries support partnerships, capacity building, youth cooperation and mobility, and the modernisation of education systems in these countries. The programme has also supported nearly 3 400 academic mobility opportunities in the region, specifically university exchanges between Bulgaria, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine. The Creative Europe programme has been funding 174 transnational cooperation projects involving cultural and audio-visual organisations from five countries in the Black Sea region: Bulgaria, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine.

Beyond the support for marine research under the Blue Growth measures, and the dedicated Black Sea Horizon Action, other parts of Horizon 2020 are also supporting research and innovation which is relevant to the Black Sea. The Black Sea Horizon Action Plan has facilitated important bi-regional and regional science, technology and innovation policy dialogues and project development. It has helped boost awareness and knowledge of the framework for science, technology and innovation cooperation. The supported project increases understanding of cluster policies and cluster management, establishing direct business contacts between cluster managers from the EU and target countries. Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Turkey and Ukraine are fully associated with Horizon 2020 and can participate on the same basis as EU Members States and other associated countries.

Tourism is traditionally an area that brings Black Sea countries together. However, this is limited to project-based cooperation. In this regard, a number of projects were launched between 2015 and 2018. These were supported by the Joint Operational Programme Black Sea basin and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

Lessons learned and key points

- Black Sea countries actively participate in Erasmus+, one of the most successful EU flagship initiatives.
- From a science, technology and innovation perspective, an important number of bilateral and multilateral projects exist in the region and there is a good culture of transnational cooperation. Science diplomacy is a positive example of such cooperation in the Black Sea region.
- Structural regional cooperation on maritime and coastal tourism enhances the competitiveness and the sustainable growth of the tourism sector in the region. The participation in cultural cooperation projects is very positive.

Field of cooperation #7: Energy and transport

The Black Sea is a bridge between key energy producers and the EU market. Between 2015 and 2018, developing key energy infrastructure projects remained an important element for improving Black Sea transit potential and enhancing energy security, both in the EU and in the region. Since the latest review of Black Sea Synergy in 2015, the Southern Gas Corridor has become operational and progress has been made in building the BRUA pipeline²⁶. Developments have also been made

²⁶The BRUA pipeline is a natural gas pipeline from Podișor, Giurgiu County (Romania) to Receaș, Timiș County (Romania). It is part of the future Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Austria gas interconnector and it is being built by the company Transgaz (Romania). The pipeline attempts to provide a new export route for the future natural gas

on electricity transmission as part of the Black Sea Regional Transmission Network, using Neighbourhood Investment Facility funding. With the support of the Connecting Europe Facility, steps have been taken to increase the interconnection capacity between Romania and Bulgaria and help integrate wind power from the Black Sea coast²⁷.

In the area of transport, common concerns of the EU Member States and non-EU countries bordering the Black Sea include maritime safety, maritime security and protecting the marine environment. Since 2017, the European Maritime Safety Agency has been implementing a project bringing together national, European and international stakeholders to raise the safety, security and protection of marine environment standards in the Black Sea. The Black and Caspian Sea Project has shown that more efforts are needed to further enhance the efficiency of maritime administration in several of the Black Sea coastal countries. This is key for the safety, security and protection of marine environment standards in the region.

Lessons learned and key points

- During the reporting period, energy projects, including major infrastructure projects, continued to be developed with EU support, showing the potential of the Black Sea region to become an energy hub. This brings further added value and growth to the region.
- The lack of major projects and cooperation relating to energy efficiency, clean energy, renewables and decarbonisation, particularly of sea transport, during the 2015-2018 reporting period shows that this area of the Black Sea Synergy requires increased attention, stakeholder participation and regional cooperation.
- The practical support provided by the European Maritime Safety Agency to the Black and Caspian Seas coastal countries is an example of successful cooperation at regional level. The Black and Caspian Sea Project has shown that further efforts to build institutions are needed to support the efficiency of the maritime administration in several of the Black Sea coastal countries.
- The development of innovative solutions enabling clean, safe, energy efficient and decarbonised sea transport within the Black Sea has emerged as a possible area of further research.

Other areas of cooperation mentioned by the 2007 Communication on Black Sea Synergy, such as employment, social affairs and trade, saw poor progress in cooperation at regional level between 2015 and 2018. As regards trade, the EU is an important economic and trading partner for the Black Sea countries, however, and closer economic cooperation ties and preferential trade relations remain an important element of our relationship.

(B): references to links with other EU policies or strategies relevant for the Black Sea region

Between 2015 and 2018, further efforts were made to develop the links between Black Sea Synergy and other EU initiatives, policies and strategies relevant for the region.

(i) The macro-regional *EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)*²⁸ is particularly important, considering the explicit reference in the Communication of 2010, which states that ‘since the

exploitation in the Black Sea. The BRUA pipeline will be eventually linked to the Giurgiu(Romania) - Ruse(Bulgaria) and the Arad(Romania) - Szeged(Hungary) pipelines.

²⁷ To this end, in January 2018, a grant of EUR 27 million was allocated from the Connecting Europe Facility to support the construction of a new 400 kV internal power line between Cernavoda and Stalpu (Romania).

²⁸ The EU Strategy for Danube Region was launched by the Commission Communication of 2010 (COM(2010) 715) and approved by the European Council in its Conclusions of 23-24 June 2011. It brings together fourteen countries: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany (Baden Wuerttemberg and Bavaria),

Danube River flows into the Black Sea, the Danube Strategy should be coherent with Black Sea perspectives'. The common challenges identified by the Danube macro-region countries are the following: connectivity (transport and energy infrastructure, tourism and people-to-people contacts); environment (water quality and management, environmental risks, biodiversity); socio and economic aspects (knowledge society, competitiveness, education and skills); and institutional capacity and security. The Danube strategy therefore facilitates the implementation of the fields of cooperation mentioned above in section 3(A), but at a macro-regional scale.

One of the objectives of the EUSDR is to open the Danube region up to the Black Sea region, given that the two regions partially coincide. Some of the priority areas of the EUSDR, such as navigability, are particularly important for the Black Sea region. Cargo transport on the river is to be increased by 20 % by 2020 compared to 2010. This requires the development and coordination of ports, including those in the Black Sea region. Competitive railway passenger connections between major cities in the Danube region are to be established by 2030. Other objectives include removing existing bottlenecks in the area of energy to achieve the goals of the Energy Union and better connect regions through joint activities with relevant initiatives and institutions. Joint environmental actions and security initiatives are highly relevant for the Black Sea region. For example, the quality of the water in the Black Sea depends significantly on the quality of the water discharged from the Danube.

(ii) *The 2018 Joint Communication on Connecting Europe and Asia – Building Blocks for an EU Strategy*²⁹ sets out the EU's vision for a new and comprehensive strategy to better connect Europe and Asia. With sustainable, comprehensive and rules-based connectivity at its core, this Communication will help to guide the EU's external action in this field. The document draws upon the EU's existing efforts to enhance connectivity, from bilateral dialogues to region-to-region action plans, to engagement with and in international organisations. The world is increasingly interlinked. This Communication seeks to help create conditions where connectivity is increasingly sustainable, considering the need for countries to adopt good regulatory frameworks, create better business conditions, follow sensible economic policies and tend towards open markets. While all regions and all sectors are important in their own ways, the Communication explicitly mentions the bridging role of the Black Sea in the area of sea transport. It stresses that '*the EU should continue to develop the bridging role of the Black Sea basin*'. Additionally, the key actions identified include the Black Sea countries when referring to the promotion of 'the digitalisation and administrative simplification of maritime transport (...) and the adoption of the Rotterdam rules'. Regarding the chapter on international cooperation, the references to *ocean governance*, freedom to navigate, sustainable governance of oceans and seas, and the blue economy are also intrinsically applicable to the Black Sea basin. In addition, a number of other aspects set out in the Communication, such as energy, digital backbones and decarbonisation of sea transport, are also relevant for the Black Sea region.

(iii) *The 2018 revised European Union Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) Action Plan*³⁰ includes for the first time a section dedicated to regions and sea basins. Four measures specifically designed for the Black Sea are listed. These are: to promote regional cooperation initiatives; to support the synergies promoted by the Facility for Blue Growth; to support the work done to tackle crime in the Black Sea basin; and to foster multi-stakeholder dialogue in the region.

Hungary, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine (four oblasts: Odessa, Chervivetska, Ivano-Frankivska and Zakarpatska).

²⁹ https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/joint_communication_-_connecting_europe_and_asia_-_building_blocks_for_an_eu_strategy_2018-09-19.pdf

³⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/sites/maritimeaffairs/files/2018-06-26-eumss-revised-action-plan_en.pdf

A Black Sea factsheet relevant for maritime security was published in June 2018³¹. Promoting regional maritime multilateralism and strengthening cooperation with international and regional partners remain a cornerstone of the EUMSS. Maritime security is an important part of EU ocean governance action.

Lessons learned and key points

- The cross-cutting aspects and links between Black Sea Synergy and other EU policies and strategies relevant for the region have been ensured to some extent.
- Black Sea Synergy's link with the EU Strategy for the Danube Region is key as it aims to address macro-regional challenges. In particular, joint action on environmental, transport and energy aspects are highly relevant for the Black Sea region.
- The bridging role of the Black Sea basin in the area of sea transport is a recognised element of Europe-Asia connectivity. Links on ocean governance and the blue economy are also relevant.

(C): elements regarding cooperation with regional and international organisations

Between 2015 and 2018, cooperation was pursued with three main multilateral organisations promoting regional cooperation in the Black Sea. These multilateral organisations are well established and work towards improving economic, fisheries and environmental cooperation at sea basin and regional level. The EU has different statuses within these organisations and therefore has the potential to promote Black Sea Synergy and influence the agenda of these organisations to different extents.

The Organisation for Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) is a multilateral organisation bringing together the Black Sea coastal countries– including EU Member States – and countries from the wider Black Sea area, including from the Western Balkans. The EU has had permanent observer status in BSEC since 2007. BSEC is recognised by its members as a relevant regional cooperation instrument and communication platform. Since 2017, the interaction between the EU and BSEC has been more dynamic and project-orientated and has enjoyed positive momentum. Cooperation between the EU and BSEC has been a consistent feature of the BSEC agenda. The EU has participated in BSEC ministerial and senior official meetings and working groups. The BSEC secretariat is consulted on a number of Black Sea-related initiatives developed under the Black Sea Synergy umbrella, such as the Common Maritime Agenda and the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda mentioned above. The annual informal meetings between members of the Council's Working Party on Eastern Europe and Central Asia and the BSEC open Troika continued to be organised in Brussels.

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) is a regional fisheries management organisation, established under the FAO Constitution. The EU is a member of the GFCM and contributes to its budget. The GFCM plays a crucial role in multilateral fisheries governance in the region through binding recommendations. A specific Working Group on the Black Sea has been set up as a GFCM subsidiary body, addressing the specific needs of the Black Sea and working to advance the GFCM's efforts in the sea basin. This working group serves as a stable framework where experts and scientists collaborate to improve fisheries management in the Black Sea. Since 2016 and with the active support of the EU, significant progress has been achieved, in particular with the adoption of the Bucharest Declaration and Sofia Ministerial Declaration (October 2016 and June 2018 respectively) for improving fisheries governance in the Black Sea.

³¹ https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/health/46708/black-sea-revised-eu-maritime-security-strategy-action-plan-regional-and-global-maritime_en

The Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution, also known as the Black Sea Commission (BSC), is the intergovernmental body established under the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution (Bucharest Convention). The EU's accession to this Convention remains a priority, as the EU could step up financial and technical support for the environmental sustainability of the Black Sea, which would bring benefits both for the Black Sea countries and for the EU. However, little progress was achieved between 2015 and 2018 towards EU membership of the organisation.

Lessons learned and key points

- Partnership and enhanced cooperation with the above three regional cooperation organisations is instrumental in promoting Black Sea Synergy. The working dynamics of these organisations differ depending on their respective mandates. There is a clear connection between the status of the EU in each organisation and the level of EU involvement and support for its work and objectives.
- The positive work with BSEC has continued, with a focus on EU-BSEC interaction for improved dialogue at the regional level.
- In the context of the GFCM, significant progress has been made since 2015 towards more sustainable fisheries management in the Black Sea. The EU had a leading role in this process and supported the efforts of the GFCM through an annual grant for implementing ambitious objectives.
- Becoming a member of the Black Sea Commission remains a priority for the EU. However, little progress has been made.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The EU gained valuable experience and a deeper knowledge of how to develop regional cooperation in the Black Sea region. The EU is no longer a newcomer to the region. A stable, secure, resilient and prosperous Black Sea region is in the direct interest of its citizens, but also of the European Union. Promoting cooperative and practical region-wide solutions is essential to address regional and global challenges. By openly implementing the Black Sea Synergy, the European Union has continued to play a constructive role and share responsibility in the Black Sea area, building its potential, for the resilient and prosperous development of the region and its citizens. The results seen during the 2015-2018 period confirm the practical utility of the initiative, its positive contribution to regional cooperation and its as yet untapped potential. Following the substantial progress in implementing the Black Sea Synergy between 2015 and 2018, *three streamlined and concentric circles* have been identified for the various fields of cooperation:

I. The first circle includes fields of cooperation under the Black Sea Synergy initiative that made important progress during the reporting period. These fields are of particular interest for cooperation between the partners in the region, with whom the EU is very engaged and to whom it offers a useful platform, guidance and financial support. These areas are as follows: #1 blue growth, with particular focus on the integrated maritime policy, marine research and innovation; #2 fisheries; #3 environmental protection and climate change; #4 cross-border cooperation; and #5 civil society engagement.

II. The second circle includes the fields of cooperation under the Black Sea Synergy initiative that made some and/or potential progress. These areas of cooperation are less developed than those in the first circle, but receive interest from the partners in the region. They are: #6 education, science and innovation (beyond marine), culture and tourism; and #7 energy and transport of different forms.

In particular, the region has key potential for interconnectivity both within the EU (East-West, North-South from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea) and between continents (Europe and Asia).

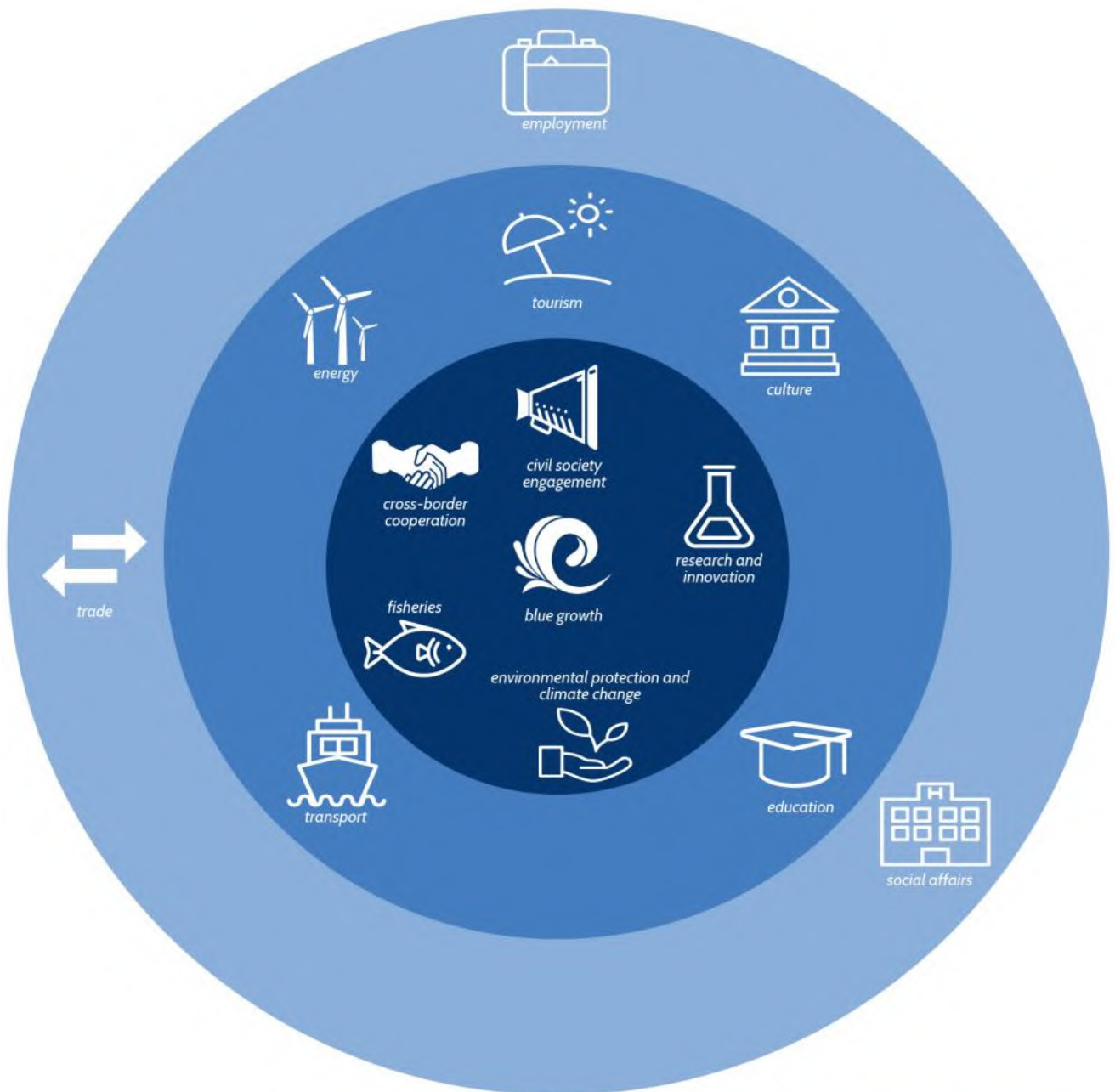
III. The third circle refers to the rest of the fields of cooperation under the Black Sea Synergy initiative.

The design of these concentric circles is flexible and dynamic. Topics can ‘move’ from one circle to another, depending on the progress made, regional ownership and grassroots needs and interests. The first two circles focus on priorities relating to building resilience at state and societal levels and on creating a more cooperative regional environment with clearly defined channels for cooperation. The opportunities arising from the third circle should also be constantly assessed, particularly those relating to social affairs.

Between 2015 and 2018, *the Black Sea Synergy links with other EU policies/strategies relevant for the region* were further enhanced, enabling thematic fields of cooperation to ‘move’ from one concentric circle to another, due to their progress and interest. These policies have a direct link with the needs and interests of the region, including at the very important grassroots level, and feed into their respective fields of cooperation. Positive developments were also seen in *the EU’s cooperation with regional and international organisations between 2015 and 2018*, particularly with the Organisation for Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM).

During the reporting period, *meeting the financial needs* remained essential for Black Sea Synergy's progress and success, its activities being financed through a variety of budget lines and programmes. The initiative continued to have a dedicated budget line under the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI). It also benefited from allocations via the cross-border cooperation programmes, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance; funding under cohesion policy; funds relating to the integrated maritime policy; the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD) and other EU programmes and financial instruments. These different financial instruments create opportunities, but also the need to ensure the sustainability, relevance and effectiveness of action under the Black Sea Synergy. Better policy steering, stronger ‘buy-in’ from partner countries and a more structural approach to funding could strengthen regional cooperation in the Black Sea. Cooperation with international financial institutions could be pursued further.

The three concentric circles summarising the fields of cooperation under the Black Sea Synergy initiative



- Fields of cooperation with consolidated progress
- Fields of cooperation with some and/or potential progress
- Fields of cooperation with no significant registered progress

(A) Field of cooperation #1: Blue Growth, with particular focus on the integrated maritime policy, marine research and innovation

ANNEX I

No 1	Flagship project Reporting period	Main actors Level of interaction – regional, national, local or civil society Funding sources	Main activities and results
<p>Integrated Maritime Policy for a resilient and sustainable Black Sea blue economy</p>			
1.1	<p>Annual High-Level Black Sea Stakeholder Conferences <i>2015-2018</i></p>	<p>Regional level of interaction, bringing together stakeholders from different blue economy sectors, public authorities and NGOs. Funding: EUR 360 000 – European Neighbourhood Instrument EUR 370 000 – European Maritime and Fisheries Fund</p>	<p>Since the first conference (Bucharest, 2014), the Annual High-Level Stakeholder Conference on Blue Economy has become an important forum for regional interaction on maritime affairs between political leaders, national authorities, maritime operators, entrepreneurs and various interested parties from the Black Sea. Three annual high-level conferences have taken place since 2014: in Sofia (2015), Odessa (2016) and Batumi (2017). This cycle culminated in the European Maritime Day in Burgas in 2018, which brought together over 800 participants from the EU and the Black Sea region to discuss topics linked to blue growth. These annual stakeholder conferences have become a landmark for the EU’s commitment to supporting the blue economy in the region. A number of measures in support of the blue economy have emerged during the discussions between policy-makers, stakeholders and businesses. During the annual conferences, stakeholders called for the launch of a process to develop a Common Maritime Agenda, including a marine research and innovation agenda for the region. The event is also a unique forum for following the implementation of agreed blue economy measures.</p>
1.2	<p>‘Facility for blue growth in the Black Sea’ project <i>October 2017-October 2019</i></p>	<p>Regional project supporting the development of the blue economy in the Black Sea, involving the six Black Sea coastal states and the Republic of Moldova. Funding: EUR 909 000 – European Maritime and Fisheries</p>	<p>The project is a capacity-building mechanism. It supports public authorities and key maritime stakeholders from the six coastal countries and the Republic of Moldova in their efforts to develop a sustainable blue economy at national and regional level. The main objectives of the project are to: 1) suggest recommendations for improving the governance of maritime affairs in the Black Sea; 2) help draw up strategic priorities for blue growth for the region in the form of a common maritime agenda, including a marine research and innovation agenda. The project’s team of experts is tasked with raising</p>

(A) Field of cooperation #1: Blue Growth, with particular focus on the integrated maritime policy, marine research and innovation

		Fund	<p>awareness about the benefits of maritime cooperation for the region; 3) offer capacity building and provide knowledge; 4) come up with ideas for projects in areas of mutual interest and with a cross-border dimension.</p> <p>Under the project, a series of national workshops are held in the participating countries aimed at: 1) raising awareness of the benefits of blue economy cooperation; 2) identifying cooperation initiatives and joint projects at regional level; and 3) providing technical assistance for national and regional stakeholders. At regional workshops, the results of the national visits are presented together with suggested goals, priorities and measures for developing the blue economy in the Black Sea region.</p>
1.3	<p>Burgas Ministerial Declaration Towards a Common Maritime Agenda in the Black Sea</p> <p><i>Endorsed on 31 May 2018</i></p>	<p>Regional initiative for voluntary cooperation on maritime affairs, supported by the Black Sea coastal countries and the Republic of Moldova</p>	<p>On 31 May 2018, the seven Black Sea countries participating in the Facility for Blue Growth in the Black Sea (see above)³² endorsed the Burgas Ministerial Declaration ‘Towards a Common Maritime Agenda in the Black Sea’ in the presence of the European Commission and BSEC Secretariat. The ministerial meeting took place alongside the European Maritime Day in Burgas.</p> <p>The declaration is a major stepping-stone towards a Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea. By endorsing the Burgas Ministerial Declaration, the countries committed to working together to agree on, by 2019, common priority areas and joint actions to support the blue economy at sea basin level.</p> <p>The Burgas Declaration sets out the following potential areas of cooperation on maritime affairs: 1) shipping, passenger and cruising lines; 2) maritime and coastal tourism in the Black Sea; 3) marine science, education and training, and marine research and innovation; 4) maritime investment through planning tools; 5) marine environmental protection, in particular addressing cross-border environmental challenges such as plastic marine litter; and 6) maritime and environmental observation and monitoring.</p>
1.4	<p>Feasibility study on potential projects on integrated maritime policy</p>	<p>Study carried out at sea basin level, in Bulgaria, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine.</p> <p>Funding: EUR 300 000 –</p>	<p>The study, which was supported by a scoping mission to the Black Sea countries, presented ideas for cross-sectorial cooperation projects on integrated maritime policy in the Black Sea and evaluated their feasibility.</p> <p>The study provided an overview of the state of the blue economies of the coastal states. The study is a key resource of information for the work of the Facility for Blue Growth in the Black Sea (see 1.2). It is also a main source of information and data used in work on</p>

³² Bulgaria, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Turkey, Ukraine

(A) Field of cooperation #1: Blue Growth, with particular focus on the integrated maritime policy, marine research and innovation

	in the Black Sea <i>2015</i>	European Neighbourhood Instrument	the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea.
1.5	Western Black Sea Underwater Cultural Tourist Routes project <i>January 2017- May 2018</i>	Cooperation between stakeholders – research institutes, small and medium-size enterprises– at regional level Funding: EUR 120 615 – European Maritime and Fisheries Fund	Two research institutes from Bulgaria and Romania, the National History and Archaeology Museum in Constanta (Romania) and two Bulgarian small and medium-size enterprises joined efforts to sustainably exploit and promote the underwater heritage of the Western Black Sea. An in-depth analysis of the quality of tourism opportunities and services relating to underwater tourism was produced. As a result of the project a new tourist product has emerged. Known as ‘Western Black Sea Underwater Cultural Touristic Routes’ it promotes Black Sea underwater cultural heritage on the tourism market.
1.6	Blue Careers Centre of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea (MENTOR) <i>March 2017- February 2019</i>	Cooperation between education institutions from Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece and Romania and a business cluster from Bulgaria. Funding: EUR 551 810 – European Maritime and Fisheries Fund	The careers centre aims to attract young people and experienced workers to fill skills gaps in the blue economy. To achieve this, the project supports activities to increase employability in key sectors of the blue economy in the region: maritime transport (shipping, ports, ship repairs and shipbuilding); cruises and nautical tourism; aquaculture; and offshore oil and gas. Expected results of the project include: 1) establishing a Blue Careers Centre secretariat in Cyprus, with representations in Greece, Bulgaria and Romania; 2) producing a catalogue of the maritime education and training on offer in the Black Sea region (Bulgaria and Romania); 3) developing re-training schemes for blue professionals in the maritime sector, cruise tourism, fishermen and offshore oil and gas; 4) establishing a Quality Assurance Agency in Cyprus and assistance for harmonising the requirements for professional training in the maritime sector.
1.7	Maritime Clusters Network for Blue Growth project <i>September 2016- August 2018</i>	Cooperation of clusters from Bulgaria and Italy, and stakeholders from Cyprus, Albania, Romania and Croatia Funding: EUR 223 237 – European Maritime and Fisheries Fund	The Blue NET project facilitated and developed SME collaboration and networking among maritime clusters in the Adriatic, Ionian and Black Seas. It also promoted the sharing of best practices among clusters and regional governments. The project helped: 1) boost the exchange of good practices for managing clusters and developing business sectors; 2) empower maritime clusters and/or regional centres of competence to become ‘blue-innovative’; and 3) enhance networking among relevant cluster stakeholders.

(A) Field of cooperation #1: Blue Growth, with particular focus on the integrated maritime policy, marine research and innovation

1.8	<p>Cross-Border Maritime Spatial Planning for the Black Sea – Bulgaria and Romania</p> <p><i>August 2015-August 2018</i></p>	<p>Cooperation among public and private stakeholders from Romania and Bulgaria</p> <p>Funding: EUR 2 000 000 – European Maritime and Fisheries Fund</p>	<p>The MARSPLAN project helped Bulgaria and Romania prepare for the implementation of the <i>Maritime Spatial Planning Directive</i>³³. It helped the countries create an institutional framework for cross-border maritime spatial planning, while improving cooperation between Romania and Bulgaria on maritime issues. As a result, a maritime spatial plan for the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area (Mangalia-Shabla) was developed. A detailed analysis of the maritime areas of both countries was also produced, together with a common methodology for conducting analysis in the area of spatial planning.</p>
1.9	<p>Stress test for marine observation systems in the Black Sea ('Checkpoints study')</p> <p><i>July 2015-July 2018</i></p>	<p>Cooperation between EU Member States and the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Turkey</p> <p>Funding: EUR 895 000 – European Maritime and Fisheries Fund</p>	<p>The EMODNet Black Sea checkpoint is a sea-basin monitoring system assessment activity. It supports sustainable growth in the maritime economy by assessing the potential of marine observation and data services for the entire Black Sea with respect to eleven 'challenges': 1) windfarm siting; 2) marine protected areas; 3) oil platform leaks; 4) climate; 5) coasts; 6) fisheries management; 7) fisheries impact; 8) eutrophication; 9) river inputs; 10) bathymetry; and 11) alien species.</p> <p>The result is the collection of data and cataloguing of data sources, as well as the development of specific data products relating to each of the above challenges. This 'collect once and use many times' philosophy benefits all marine data users, including policy-makers, scientists, private industry and the public.</p>
1.10	<p>Black and Caspian Sea Project technical assistance on maritime safety and security (BCSEA)</p> <p><i>2017-2021</i></p>	<p>European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), Maritime Administrations of Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Moldova, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Ukraine.</p> <p>Funding: EUR 4 000 000 – European Neighbourhood Instrument</p>	<p>The BCSEA project brings together international, European and national stakeholders to raise the safety, security and protection promoted by marine environment standards. The BCSEA project provides beneficiary countries with technical assistance in the areas of maritime safety, protection of the marine environment and maritime security. Examples of technical assistance include training sessions for flag state inspectors and seminars for port state control officers. Training sessions help the countries comply with the relevant requirements of the International Maritime Organisation III Code.</p> <p>The beneficiaries also benefit from EMSA's tools and services. They are given access to: 1) the EMSA compendium of relevant international and EU legislation RuleCheck; 2) the EMSA eLearning platform MaKCs; and 3) the satellite surveillance service CleanSeaNet. In order to incentivise regional cooperation and enhance maritime traffic monitoring in</p>

³³ Directive 2014/89/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning.

(A) Field of cooperation #1: Blue Growth, with particular focus on the integrated maritime policy, marine research and innovation

			the Black Sea region, beneficiaries also receive support for monitoring automatic ship identification system data.
1.11	<p>Workshops on marine research and Strategic Priorities for Marine Research and Innovation in the Black Sea (SRIA)</p> <p><i>June 2017 – April 2019</i></p>	<p>Regional initiative for cooperation on marine research and innovation supported by the Black Sea coastal states and the Republic of Moldova</p> <p>Funding: EUR 120 000 – European Neighbourhood Instrument</p>	<p>Following the 3rd High-Level Stakeholder Conference on Blue Economy in Odessa (2016), the European Commission set up a group of marine experts from all the Black Sea countries and the Republic of Moldova, as well as representatives of the main regional organisations – BSEC and the Black Sea Commission. The group is tasked with developing a vision paper and a related Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA). The Commission supports this bottom-up initiative by facilitating meetings of the group in a series of technical workshops. Six workshops, held between June 2017 and October 2018, were attended by prominent marine researchers and experts from the region and the main regional organisations.</p>
1.12	<p>Burgas Vision Paper:</p> <p>A Blue Growth Initiative for Research and Innovation in the Black Sea</p> <p><i>Adopted on 30 May 2018</i></p>	<p>Regional initiative for cooperation on marine research and innovation supported by all Black Sea coastal countries and the Republic of Moldova</p>	<p>On 30 May 2018, as a result of the workshops (see above) and the analysis of existing and past research and innovation projects in this region, the Burgas Vision Paper was adopted and presented at the European Maritime Day in Burgas. This milestone document was welcomed at ministerial level of all Black Sea riparian countries and the Republic of Moldova. The Burgas Vision Paper is referred to by the Burgas Ministerial Declaration ‘Towards a Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea’, issued on the same occasion.</p> <p>The Burgas Vision Paper identifies four main priorities: 1) addressing fundamental Black Sea research challenges; 2) developing products, solutions and clusters underpinning Black Sea blue growth; 3) building critical support systems and innovative research infrastructure; and 4) education and capacity building.</p> <p>The aim of this cooperation is to establish concrete measures for marine research and innovation in 2019, and to guide research programmes at national and EU level beyond 2019.</p> <p>The European Commission further supported the process by launching, in October 2018, a Horizon 2020 Blue Growth call for projects (Black Sea Coordination and Support</p>

(A) Field of cooperation #1: Blue Growth, with particular focus on the integrated maritime policy, marine research and innovation

			Action: LC-BG-09-2019: Coordination of marine and maritime research and innovation in the Black Sea) worth EUR 2 000 000. Additional investment to support this work will be included in the last Horizon 2020 work programme for 2020.
1.13	European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODNet) Supported by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund	Associated partner organisations from the following countries: Bulgaria, Belgium, Canada, Georgia, France, Italy, Spain the UK and the US.	Based on the efforts of research organisations from the Black Sea region to make their marine data more accessible, interoperable and useful to end-users under the framework of EMODNet, a new single web portal and a low-resolution seabed map of the Black Sea is now available. The resolution of the latter will be progressively improved by 2020. The European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODNet) is a network of organisations supported by the EU's integrated maritime policy (see 1.9). These organisations work together to observe the sea, process data according to international standards and make that information freely available as interoperable data layers and data products. This 'collect once and use many times' philosophy benefits all marine data users.

(A) Field of cooperation #2: Fisheries

No 2	Flagship project Period	Main actors Level of interaction (regional, national, local or civil society) Funding sources	Main activities and results
<p>Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture To fostering environmental, economic and social sustainability</p>			
2.1	<p>High-Level Conferences: High-Level Conference towards enhanced cooperation on Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture (Bucharest, Romania) Endorsement of the Bucharest Declaration <i>24-25 October 2016</i> High-Level Conference on sustainable Black Sea fisheries and aquaculture (Sofia, Bulgaria) Signing of the Sofia Ministerial Declaration <i>6-7 June 2018</i></p>	<p>Main actors: General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the European Union, Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine</p> <p>Funding: EU annual grants to the GFCM 2017-2019: EUR 2 900 000 and EUR 800 000 EU compulsory contribution to the GFCM – European Maritime and Fisheries Fund</p> <p>The EU provided financial support to this conference through the annual grant to the GFCM.</p>	<p>The Black Sea riparian countries came together in October 2016 under the initiative and leadership of the EU, and in the context of GFCM cooperation. They endorsed the Bucharest Declaration on fisheries and aquaculture that should be improved in the Black Sea. The need for enhanced cooperation and collective action involving the Black Sea riparian countries in all aspects relating to fisheries was identified as the main challenge to be addressed in order to: 1) establish new fisheries governance in the Black Sea; 2) achieve sustainability of marine resources; and 3) create a level playing field for all parties.</p> <p>The renewed political commitments were “stamped” in June 2018 with the signature of the Sofia Ministerial Declaration by the High Representatives of Black Sea riparian countries at the conference on sustainable Black Sea fisheries in Sofia, Bulgaria. This declaration renewed the Bucharest Declaration commitments in the form of a detailed action plan with measurable deliverables for the next ten years. The ministers and high representatives confirmed their commitment to enhancing multilateral cooperation, notably in the context of the GFCM. They committed to addressing the challenges for sustainable fisheries in the Black Sea to achieve the sustainability of fisheries and the sustainable development of aquaculture.</p>

(A) Field of cooperation #2: Fisheries

<p>2.2</p>	<p>Mid-term strategy towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries 2017-2020</p> <p>Resolution GFCM/40/2016/2 adopted at the 40th GFCM annual session, October 2016</p>	<p>Idem – see 2.1</p> <p>EU provides financial support through the annual grant to the GFCM (see 2.1)</p>	<p>The strategy had set targets to achieve the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea fisheries by 2020 to reverse the alarming trend in the status of commercially exploited stocks. It is structured around five targets/pillars with specific outputs and measures. These are: 1) to improve scientific advice in support of fisheries management; 2) to support the livelihoods of coastal communities through sustainable small-scale fisheries; 3) to fight illegal unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing through a regional plan of action; 4) to minimise and mitigate unwanted interaction between fisheries and marine ecosystems and environments; and 5) to enhance capacity building and cooperation. This instrument is based on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) and adapted to the needs of the Black Sea. The strategy was a key element in boosting multilateral cooperation and advancing fisheries governance in the Black Sea.</p>
<p>2.3</p>	<p>The strategy for the sustainable development of Mediterranean and Black Sea aquaculture</p> <p>Resolution GFCM/41/2017/1 adopted at the 41st GFCM annual session, October 2017</p>	<p>Idem – see 2.1</p> <p>EU provides financial support through the annual grant to the GFCM (see 2.1)</p>	<p>Aquaculture is a key sector of the blue economy and plays an important role in supporting coastal communities. This is recognised by the Bucharest and Sofia Ministerial Declarations (see above). The regional aquaculture strategy boosts the potential of Black Sea aquaculture towards sustainable development, taking into account the specificities of the area. The strategy is helping the Black Sea countries to: 1) develop harmonised aquaculture activities and action plans; 2) build an efficient regulatory and administrative framework; 3) enhance interaction between aquaculture and the environment while ensuring animal health and welfare; and 4) facilitate market-oriented aquaculture and enhance public perception.</p> <p>To this end, one concrete outcome is the establishment of the Black Sea aquaculture demonstrative centres (ADC) to share knowledge, practices and expertise among Black Sea countries. The activities of the two ADCs established in 2017 in Trabzon (Turkey) and Constanta (Romania), have already started.</p>
<p>2.4</p>	<p>The Regional Plan of Action (RPoA) to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing</p> <p>Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/7 on a</p>	<p>Idem – see 2.1</p>	<p>The RPoA, adopted in 2017, is important for the Black Sea due to the prevalence of IUU fishing activity in the area, acknowledged by all countries in the Bucharest and the Sofia Declarations.</p> <p>The plan will result in the reform of national legal systems and the adoption of effective measures to address IUU fishing in line with port state and flag state responsibility. These measures include the implementation of the International Maritime Organisation number scheme, the external marking of fishing gear, a sanctioning system, and monitoring and surveillance measures.</p>

(A) Field of cooperation #2: Fisheries

	regional plan of action, adopted at the 41st GFCM annual session, October 2017		
2.5	High-Level Conference on small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Seas (Valetta, Malta) <i>25-26 September 2018</i>	Idem – see 2.1	<p>This conference addressed the main challenges and socio-economic importance of small-scale fisheries, including in the Black Sea.</p> <p>It resulted in the signing of the regional plan of action in the form of a ministerial declaration to support the sustainable development of small-scale fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Seas. This will be done through a concrete set of measures to be implemented by 2028. The plan includes measures relating to: scientific research and small-scale fisheries data, management measures and value chain, participation of small-scale fisheries in decision-making processes, capacity building, decent work, role of women, climate and the environment.</p>
2.6	Forum on fisheries science in the Mediterranean and the Black Seas – FISH FORUM 2018, (Rome, Italy) <i>10-14 December 2018</i>	Idem – see 2.1	<p>This was the first GFCM Forum on fisheries science. It aimed at ensuring effective unity of action of scientific activities by effectively coordinating stock assessments, common guidelines on data collection and stock assessment methodologies to ensure reproducibility, data quality and data exchange on a ‘need-to-share’ basis. The outcome of the forum included a proposal to the GFCM scientific bodies on common working rules. The coming together of scientists and experts working on fisheries and the marine environment in the Mediterranean and Black Seas was a milestone in developing enhanced cooperation and building a lasting network, integrating scientific knowledge and identifying research priorities for the coming decade in support of decision-making.</p>
2.7	The multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/4, adopted at the 41st GFCM annual session, October 2017	Idem – see 2.1	<p>In 2017, the GFCM established the first multiannual management plan on turbot fisheries for stocks in the Black Sea. The plan includes, among other things, a total allowable catch system at regional level. It also includes catch limits for each Black Sea country, including a first-ever joint control and inspection pilot project, under the umbrella of the European Fishery Control Agency (EFCA). The multiannual plan include measures to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing in turbot fisheries, and measures to monitor, control and manage these fisheries. The Black Sea riparian countries are taking part in efforts to manage turbot stocks.</p>

(A) Field of cooperation #2: Fisheries

2.8	Pilot project for joint control and inspection for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea <i>2018-2019</i>	Idem – see 2.1	A two-year GFCM pilot project was launched in 2018 with a view to establish a permanent voluntary observation and inspection programme in 2019. The aim of this programme is to ensure compliance with conservation and management measures for turbot fisheries. The pilot project is implemented with the assistance of the European Fishery Control Agency (EFCA). Two joint operations took place in April 2018 in EU waters with multinational teams of inspectors. The implementation of this project results in enhanced cooperation between inspectors, creating a common understanding and a culture of compliance. These are substantial elements in the fight against IUU fishing.
2.9	GFCM BlackSea4Fish project <i>2016-2018</i>	Idem – see 2.1	The BlackSea4Fish project was launched as a follow-up to the Bucharest Declaration and in response to the need to enhance cooperation among scientists and experts in the Black Sea. The objective is to efficiently address the scientific specificities, challenges, needs and shortcomings in data collection in the region. The added value of the project is that the Black Sea riparian countries are working together to create a platform for scientific contribution and a network for exchanging best practices and scientific knowledge. The project also paved the way for a bottom-up approach to enhancing multilateral cooperation. It is a valuable instrument for addressing persistent weaknesses, improving the quality of scientific advice and advancing fisheries management.
2.10	Aquaculture demonstrative centres (ADC) in the Black Sea <i>2017</i>	Idem – see 2.1	In line with the Bucharest Declaration and in response to the need to develop an ad hoc approach to aquaculture development in the Black Sea, two aquaculture demonstrative centres have been set up. These are located in Constanta (Romania) for shellfish farming and in Trabzon (Turkey) for finfish farming. The centres showcase different aquaculture production technologies and productive systems. Other activities of the centres include training, exchange of best practices, sharing of technical knowledge and capacity building.
2.11	The regional research plan on rapana fisheries in the Black Sea <i>October 2018</i>	Idem – see 2.1	In line with the Bucharest and the Sofia Ministerial Declarations, a regional 2-year research plan will be established in the Black Sea, coordinated under the BlackSea4Fish project. The aim is to improve scientific, technical and socio-economic knowledge of rapana fisheries, a high commercial value species. The project is expected to further boost the management of rapana fisheries.

(A) Field of cooperation #3: Environmental protection and climate change

No 3	Flagship project Period	The main actors and Level of interaction (regional, national, local or civil society) Funding sources	Main activities and results
<p>Environmental Protection and Climate Change to a truly environmental sustainable Black Sea</p>			
3.1	<p>Improving Environmental Monitoring in the Black Sea, phase 2 (EMBLAS II) <i>April 2014 - May 2018</i></p>	<p>Regional cooperation between Georgia, the Russian Federation, Ukraine</p> <p>EUR 2 500 000 – European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument; EUR 300 000 – UNDP</p>	<p>The EMBLAS II project aimed at: 1) increasing knowledge about the environmental status of the Black Sea; 2) raising awareness of the need to protect marine ecosystems; and 3) improving environmental monitoring systems.</p> <p>It provided support for strengthening policies, monitoring approaches and technical capacity in Georgia, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. EMBLAS has been registered as a ‘voluntary commitment’ to Sustainable Development Goal 14. The project achieved significant progress as detailed below:</p> <p>EMBLAS II helped countries implement their obligations under the Bucharest Convention. In conjunction with Article XV, scientific cooperation between Black Sea countries was facilitated. The project also involved cooperation between the Joint Research Centre (JRC), the European Environment Agency (EEA) and a number of institutions, experts and projects in EU Member States (Belgium, Czech Republic, Greece, Italy and Romania). The environmental ministries of Georgia and Ukraine signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the field of environmental protection of the Black Sea and its catchment in September 2017.</p> <p>EMBLAS II enhanced the coverage and quality of, and access to, relevant data in support of decision-making. The proposals for the national monitoring programmes were tested in all participating countries. These programmes were aligned with the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD)³⁴ and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)³⁵. The Government of Ukraine adopted a new monitoring scheme for marine waters, which</p>

³⁴ Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/index_en.html

³⁵ [Directive 2008/56/EC — EU action in the field of marine environmental policy](#) (Marine Strategy Framework Directive)

(A) Field of cooperation #3: Environmental protection and climate change

			<p>will become operational in January 2019. Under their association agreements with the EU, Ukraine and Georgia committed to implementing the WFD and MSFD and thus follow the same approaches as the EU Member States. With the adoption of the MSFD, the key indicator of the health of the sea is no longer the concentration of specific pollutants; it is the health of the sea's inhabitants. This approach requires a complex study and diagnosis. The MSFD includes 11 descriptors and more than 60 indicators. The key goal for the EU Member States is to achieve 'good environmental status' of the Black Sea by 2020.</p> <p>EMBLAS II supported five national pilot monitoring studies and two joint open sea surveys in order to clarify the environmental status of the Black Sea. These surveys made it possible to screen 45 WFD priority substances, more than 70 suspected Black Sea specific substances, some 2100 target suspected substances and 14 000 suspected non-target substances. Seven new methodologies were used during the surveys and 25 methodologies for collecting samples were harmonised. The surveys produced the first results of the assessment of the environmental status of the Black Sea according to the MSFD. Based on this information, two scientific reports were issued in 2016 and 2017.</p> <p>The online Black Sea Water Quality Database has been populated with a critical amount of data. Some 140 000 new data entries have been added. Joint Black Sea surveys also supplied unique and relevant data for the Black Sea Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (BSIMAP), agreed by all Black Sea countries under the umbrella of the Black Sea Commission (BSC).</p> <p>Overall, EMBLAS II significantly enhanced shared knowledge about the Black Sea. During the joint Black Sea surveys, marine waters, sediments and biota (e.g. fish and mussels) were analysed to test for the presence of more than 2100 substances to find Black Sea specific pollutants. The results of the samples showed substances originating from oil spills from ship traffic. An example of such substances was polyaromatic hydrocarbons, whose measured concentrations frequently exceeded toxicity threshold values. Other dangerous chemicals such as mercury and dioxins were found in fish tissue samples at levels well above their threshold values. High concentrations of extremely toxic pesticides (cypermethrin, heptachlor and heptachlor epoxide), and other pesticides of potential concern were also discovered. Toxicity threshold values were exceeded for some industrial pollutants, including bisphenol A. One of the most worrisome results of</p>
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(A) Field of cooperation #3: Environmental protection and climate change

			<p>the surveys is that the oxygen layer in the Black Sea has decreased. Over the last 20 years, the hydrogen sulphide layer has risen by 20-25 metres. This trend was confirmed by the surveys carried out. Most of inhabitants live in the oxygenated upper surface layer. If the layer decreases, it means that their living space is reduced. At the same time, the results of surveys confirmed that there is actually diverse life in this hostile ‘dead oxygen-free zone’ of the Black Sea. However, this mainly consists of microbes. The oxygen-free zone appears to be an important component of the marine ecosystem, ensuring that organic pollutants deposited at the bottom of the sea are degraded by bacteria and do not accumulate as a future ‘chemical time bomb’. Large concentrations of floating litter are to be found in the Black Sea. These marine litter concentrations may be explained by the fact that currents in the Black Sea move the litter towards the sea’s interior.</p> <p>Strong links were built with civil society organisations and the general public. These have resulted for example in a new tradition of public Black Sea Clean Beach Days in Georgia, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. The project has developed a communication strategy that includes a mobile phone application to identify ‘sentinel’ species that help monitor the state of the sea through public participation. A short film was produced to raise awareness about the pressures faced by the Black Sea and possible solutions for addressing them. Around 250 000 people were reached.</p>
<p>3.2</p>	<p>Improving Environmental Monitoring in the Black Sea – Selected Measures (EMBLAS Plus) <i>March 2018 – September 2020</i></p>	<p>Regional cooperation: Georgia, the Russian Federation and Ukraine EUR 1 550 000 – European Neighbourhood Instrument; EUR 500 000 – UNDP</p>	<p>The aim of the project is to help improve the protection of the Black Sea environment. This will be pursued through further technical assistance and calls for proposals. The main purpose of this technical assistance is to help establish a functional system of environmental monitoring based on the achievements of the EMBLAS II project.</p>
<p>3.3</p>	<p>Regional Action Plan against marine litter in the Black Sea <i>October 2018</i></p>	<p>Barcelona Convention (UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan) and Black Sea Commission (Bulgaria and Romania)</p>	<p>The European Commission is managing a project coordinated by the UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan secretariat. This project supports the implementation of the regional action plan against marine litter in the Mediterranean. One component of this project refers to the Black Sea and is carried out in cooperation with the Black Sea Commission. This cooperation led to a draft regional action plan against marine litter, adopted by the Black Sea countries on 24-25 October 2018.</p>

(A) Field of cooperation #3: Environmental protection and climate change

			<p>UNEP/MAP signed a memorandum of understanding with the Black Sea Commission in 2016. It covers the following areas of cooperation: 1) collection and assessment of information on integrated marine monitoring programmes focusing on delivering data to manage regional seas sustainably; 2) awareness raising and joint action against marine litter; legal, institutional and policy-related cooperation; and 3) development of capacity-building activities (e.g. joint projects, training programmes, dissemination of relevant information, awareness building).</p>
3.4	EU's accession to the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution (Bucharest Convention)	<p>Multilateral cooperation</p> <p>Contracting Parties: Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine</p>	<p>The Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution was adopted in response to the need to step up environmental cooperation in the Black Sea. The Contracting Parties to the Convention have committed to implementing the Black Sea Strategic Action Plan approved in 2009. The Black Sea Commission is the intergovernmental body established to implement the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution (Bucharest Convention).</p> <p>The EU has had observer status in the BSC since 2001. The EU's accession to the Bucharest Convention remains a priority for the EU in line with the objectives of the Treaty of Lisbon. However, there has not been much progress on this since 2015.</p>
3.5	Technical and administrative support for the joint implementation of the MSFD in Bulgaria and Romania 2015-2017	<p>Bulgaria, Romania, Black Sea Commission</p> <p>Funding: EUR 835 000 – European Maritime and Fisheries Fund</p>	<p>The objectives of this project were to provide technical and administrative support for:</p> <p>1) ensuring a comprehensive and clear delivery by Bulgaria and Romania of all elements required by the MSFD reporting in 2018 either at regional or national level, and coherence between European, regional and national assessments; and</p> <p>2) capacity building events in the Black Sea marine region with the view to strengthening the administrative and technical capabilities in Bulgaria and Romania for joint MSFD implementation. The support under this project was provided in 3 phases.</p> <p>All three phases included a regional component and the Black Sea Commission was involved in its implementation.</p> <p>Phase I of the project, focused on the development of the monitoring programmes in Bulgaria and Romania according to art.11 of MSFD - finalised in January 2015. Phase II aimed to develop coordinated or joint Programmes of Measures - finalised February 2016. Phase III took into account the results of the previous phases- finalised in 2017.</p> <p>Under Task 1.1 Development of the "Roof Report on Common Indicators", there were</p>

(A) Field of cooperation #3: Environmental protection and climate change

			assessed approaches towards the development of common indicators under the following: the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM), the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR), United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) and the Black Sea Commission (BSC). They are using relevant documents and sending specific requests to the Regional Sea Conventions. The final report of the third phase of this support is available ³⁶
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³⁶ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/marine/international-cooperation/regional-sea-conventions/bucharest/pdf/RO-BG%20MSFD%20final%20report.pdf>

(A) Field of cooperation #4: Cross-border cooperation – Black Sea basin programme 2014-2020

No 4	Flagship project Period	Main actors Level of interaction (regional, national, local or civil society) Funding sources	Main activities and results
<p>Cross-Border Cooperation – Joint Operational Programme Black Sea basin 2014 - 2020</p> <p>To foster sustainable development along the EU’s external borders, reducing differences in living standards and addressing common challenges across these borders.</p>			
4.1	<p>Black Sea Basin Cross-Border Cooperation programme 2014-2020</p>	<p>Participating countries: Bulgaria, Armenia, Georgia, Greece, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine</p> <p>Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation are also eligible.</p> <p>Total funding: EUR 54 000 000</p> <p>Total EU contribution EUR 49 000 000</p> <p>European Neighbourhood Instrument and Instrument for Partnership Assistance</p>	<p>Cross-border cooperation (CBC) programmes bring together regional and local authorities and civil society organisations of Eastern Neighbourhood countries and EU Member States. In doing so they ensure a unique framework of cooperation across the EU’s land and sea borders. The Black Sea basin cross-border cooperation programme is a major funding tool for businesses and stakeholders in the region. It is focused on the following: tangible results; more sustainability; solutions for economic and environmental challenges; support for people-to-people actions and support for good governance at local and regional level. The programme is open to businesses, national authorities, academia and civil society in the eight participating Member States and partner countries (Armenia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine). The Russian Federation and Azerbaijan are also eligible.</p> <p>Joint Operational Programme Black Sea basin 2014-2020:</p> <p><u>Priority 1: Business and small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) development</u></p> <p>A call for proposals was launched in January 2017. Eight of the most competitive projects were awarded grants.</p> <p><u>Priority 2: Environmental protection and joint reduction of marine litter in the Black Sea basin</u></p> <p>The first call for projects under the 2014-2020 programming period was launched in January 2017. Eleven projects were selected and the full allocation of more than EUR 15 000 000 was awarded to stakeholders from all participating countries. The second call for proposals was opened in October 2018, amid growing interest and an increasing number of applicants, demonstrating the value of the programme.</p>

(A) Field of cooperation #4: Cross-border cooperation – Black Sea basin programme 2014-2020

			<p>Example of successful projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Zero Waste Strategy For Good Environmental Status (Turkey)- Improved online public access to environmental monitoring data and data tools for the Black Sea Basin supporting cooperation in the reduction of marine litter (Bulgaria)- Assessing the vulnerability of the Black Sea marine ecosystem to human pressures (Romania)- Black Sea Joint Environmental Monitoring and Protection (Bulgaria and the Republic of Moldova)- Innovative techniques and methods for reducing marine litter in the Black Sea coastal areas (Bulgaria)- Waste Free Rivers for a Clean Black Sea (Georgia)
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(A) Field of cooperation #5: Civil society engagement, democracy and human rights

No 5	Flagship project Period	Main actors Level of interaction (regional, national, local or civil society) Funding sources	Main activities and results
<p>Civil Society Engagement, Democracy and Human Rights to promote a vibrant and resilient civil society</p>			
<p>5.1</p>	<p>Black Sea NGO Forum <i>Annually</i></p>	<p>Regional level of interaction, bringing together civil society organisations, other stakeholders and donors from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine.</p> <p>Funding: EUR 400 000 for 2015-2018 editions – European Neighbourhood Instrument</p> <p>EUR 400 000 – Direct Grant to NGDO platform FOND to support the Black Sea NGO Forum – European Neighbourhood Instrument</p> <p>Additional funds from the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Black Sea Trust</p>	<p>The Romanian non-governmental development organisation (NGDO) platform FOND continued to organise the annual Black Sea NGO Forum (Tbilisi, November 2015; Varna, November 2016; Chisinau, December 2017; Brussels, November 2018) and the work leading up to the annual meetings. The 10-year anniversary of the Black Sea NGO Forum was celebrated in Bucharest in September 2017, where an evaluation of its activities was discussed. An evaluation report of the activity of the Black Sea NGO Forum for 2012-2016 was produced and presented by an independent consultant. The main aspects of the evaluation can be summarised as follows: the forum is a success story of Black Sea Synergy, having contributed to creating a regional identity using an NGO-led networked approach. The forum has also helped nurture collaboration and regional coalitions among NGOs in important areas and policies. Finally, it has provided a platform for building regional confidence and dialogue during difficult times.</p> <p>Following the evaluation report, the 2017 and 2018 editions of the Black Sea NGO Forum improved this interactive and networking approach. Plenary sessions were fewer and shorter, to the benefit and appreciation of participants. The 2018 Black Sea NGO Forum was held outside the region for the first time, in Brussels. A special interactive session was dedicated to Black Sea Synergy. A paper with civil society's suggestions for the review of Black Sea Synergy was produced.</p> <p>In 2018, the European Commission awarded a direct grand of EUR 400 000 for 3 years for FOND to support the Black Sea NGO Forum and its follow-up activities.</p> <p>The Black Sea NGO Forum emerged in 2008 in the framework of Black Sea Synergy. Its purpose is to increase dialogue and knowledge sharing among NGOs in the wider Black Sea region. The forum was launched by the NGDO platform FOND with</p>

(A) Field of cooperation #5: Civil society engagement, democracy and human rights

			<p>support from the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the EU and the Black Sea Trust. Since then, the forum has brought together over 1000 participants from civil society organisations, international organisations, donors, experts and government representatives from all countries of the wider Black Sea region.</p> <p>So far the forum has: 1) facilitated the sharing of expertise and best practices on themes of regional interest (democracy and human rights, local development, youth, children’s rights, the environment, citizen participation, etc.); 2) encouraged multi-stakeholder dialogue and helped establish partnerships; 3) supported fellowships in the region; 4) organised study visits for civil society organisations; and 5) offered awards to civil society organisations for excellence in promoting regional cooperation. Concrete projects have been developed. Examples of these include the ChildPact initiative, joint projects between several NGOs and cross-border cooperation between NGOs.</p> <p>The Black Sea NGO Forum’s added value includes: 1) highlighting ownership by tailoring donor support to the needs of recipients; 2) promoting an enabling environment for civil society and boosting its recognition as an equal development partner; 3) coordinating with similar European and global initiatives such as CONCORD, the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness-CPDE and CIVICUS; and 4) maintaining and further enhancing dialogue and cooperation between NGOs by building confidence in the Black Sea region and strengthening the resilience of society.</p>
<p>5.2</p>	<p>Partnership for Good Governance</p> <p><i>Phase 1 2015-2017, extended one year to 2018</i></p>	<p>Funding: EUR 36 000 000 (2015-2018) – European Neighbourhood Instrument</p> <p>The Partnership for Good Governance is funded 85 % by the European Union and 15 % by the Council of Europe. It is implemented by the Council of Europe.</p>	<p>Until the end of 2018, the EU and Council of Europe cooperation activities with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus – the EU’s Eastern Partnership countries – were implemented under the Partnership for Good Governance (PGG). These activities strengthen the capacity of the countries in question (all of which are member States of the Council of Europe, except Belarus). The aim is to bring them closer to the standards of the Council of Europe and the EU in the fields of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.</p> <p>Five priority areas of cooperation were identified with the EU:</p> <p>1) protection and promotion of human rights: strengthening the implementation of European human rights standards at regional and national level; protecting national and ethnic minorities’ rights; promoting equality and human dignity; promoting human</p>

(A) Field of cooperation #5: Civil society engagement, democracy and human rights

			<p>rights education and democratic citizenship;</p> <p>2) strengthening the independence and efficiency of (constitutional) justice; promoting penitentiary reforms (towards a more rehabilitative approach);</p> <p>3) combating threats to the rule of law; combating corruption and fostering good governance/combating money-laundering; criminal justice action on cybercrime;</p> <p>4) addressing challenges linked to the information society to improve freedom, independence, pluralism and diversity of the media; internet governance; enhancing the right to data protection; and</p> <p>5) promoting democratic governance, electoral assistance; reforming electoral legislation and practice; strengthening local governance institutions.</p>
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(A) Field of cooperation #6: Education, research and innovation (beyond marine), culture and tourism

No 6	Flagship project Period	Main actors The level of interaction (regional, national, local or civil society) Funding sources	Main activities and results
<p>Education, research and innovation (beyond marine), culture and tourism for enhanced transnational cooperation and people-to-people contacts</p>			
6.1	Erasmus+ 2014-2020	Erasmus+ Overall budget: EUR 14 700 000 000	<p>Erasmus+ is the EU's programme for education, training, youth and sport for the period 2014-2020. Erasmus+ funds academic and youth mobility and cooperation projects that involve partners from 'programme countries' and 'partner countries' throughout the world.</p> <p>The Black Sea is not a specific region under Erasmus+. Nevertheless, all countries from the region participate in the programme, either as programme countries having full access to all opportunities and measures of the programme (EU Member States and Turkey) or as partner countries (Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine) subject to specific conditions of participation in a limited number of measures mainly relating to higher education and youth.</p> <p>In the period 2014-2017, Erasmus+ supported nearly 3 400 academic mobility opportunities between countries covered by the Black Sea initiative: Bulgaria, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine. Additionally, 2 100 young people and youth workers participated in joint Erasmus+ youth projects in the Black Sea region (exchanges, policy debate, volunteering). Black Sea partner countries benefited from capacity-building projects in higher education to support modernisation, innovation and internationalisation. Partner countries benefited as well from Jean Monnet actions supporting excellence in EU studies: teaching, learning and research.</p> <p>Detailed statistics are available at: https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about/factsheets_en</p>
6.2	Black Sea	Cooperation between the EU	The action facilitates bi-regional and regional science, technology and innovation

(A) Field of cooperation #6: Education, research and innovation (beyond marine), culture and tourism

	Horizon, Coordination and Support Action <i>2015-2018</i>	Member States and international partner countries in the Black Sea region: Austria, Bulgaria, France, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine Funding: EUR 1 500 000 – Horizon 2020	(STI) policy dialogues and project development. It also facilitates information events on Horizon 2020 in the Black Sea region, events for forming consortia to bid for research proposals and webinars to provide information to a wider stakeholder base. The science, technology and innovation (STI) dialogue improves knowledge in the current framework for STI cooperation. It helps eliminate the remaining obstacles and further intensifies bi-regional STI cooperation, based on a jointly developed EU-Black Sea science technology and innovation cooperation programme. The project increases the understanding of cluster policies and cluster management. It also supports the establishment of direct business contacts between cluster managers from the EU and target countries.
6.3	Small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) instrument <i>2014-2017</i>	Available for small and medium-size enterprises from Horizon 2020 associated countries: Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Turkey and Ukraine Funding: A total of EUR 3 billion – Horizon 2020	The SME instrument is part of the European Innovation Council (EIC) pilot project that supports top class innovators, entrepreneurs and small companies with funding opportunities and acceleration services. The focus of the SME instrument is on market-creating innovations that shape new markets and generate jobs, growth and higher standards of living. Support involves three phases: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. feasibility study 2. from concept to market actions: trials, prototyping, validation, demonstration and testing in real-world conditions, and market replication – duration 12 to 24 months. 3. business acceleration services and coaching: free coaching, business acceleration services and mentoring to help businesses scale up and grow.
6.4	Black Sea Silk Road Corridor <i>2013-2020</i>	Regional cooperation Armenia, Georgia, Greece, and Turkey EU Joint Operational Programme Black Sea basin EUR 680 000	The Black Sea Silk Road Corridor project brings together four countries – Armenia, Georgia, Greece, and Turkey – in a joint initiative to promote tourism, travel and shared culture. As a result, 192 historic cultural sites have been marked with information panels. Support was also given and expertise shared with local tourist operators. A web portal and five smartphone apps were also created to highlight sites on the trail. These include GPS navigation and interactive maps, and multilingual, multimedia presentations of each site, all fully integrated into the most popular social networks. The project also supported the creation of a business directory, which includes a comprehensive listing of tourism service providers at each site.
6.5	Limen Project Cultural ports	Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Romania, Turkey, and Ukraine	The project contributed to the development of cultural tourism in the wider region of the Black Sea. A ‘Cultural Port of the Black Sea’ institution was set up. This

(A) Field of cooperation #6: Education, research and innovation (beyond marine), culture and tourism

	from the Aegean to the Black Sea <i>2013-2015</i>	EU Joint Operational Programme Black Sea basin 2007-2013	<p>establishes institutionalised and permanent cooperation between the city-ports. The aim is to develop a cultural-tourist-economic-social network, improve management capacity at the local level and promote and support small and medium-size enterprises that are involved in the tourism and cultural sector.</p> <p>Results: 1) acquired and promoted detailed knowledge of the main cultural resources of the ports in their economic and territorial contexts; 2) developed a common strategy aimed at promoting common cultural heritage; 3) shared good practices for managing and promoting cultural heritage shared – monuments, handicrafts, case studies, etc.; 4) identified new opportunities for socio-economic growth and diversification of the cultural offer; and 5) established integrated cross-sector connections and tourism service systems, including information and cultural services in the Black Sea region.</p>
6.6	Creative Europe <i>2014-2020</i>	<p>Support to the cultural and audiovisual sectors</p> <p>Overall budget: EUR 1.46 billion</p>	<p>Creative Europe is the EU programme supporting the culture and audiovisual sectors. Five countries in the Black Sea region (Bulgaria, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine) have access to the opportunities offered by the programme. During the period 2015-2018, Creative Europe has been funding 174 trans-national cooperation projects involving also cultural and audiovisual organisations from the five mentioned countries.</p>
6.7	Black Sea Network for Sustainable Tourism Development <i>2014-2016</i>	<p>Cooperation between public and private stakeholders from Bulgaria, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Turkey and Ukraine</p> <p>Funding: EUR 629 665 – EU Joint Operational Programme Black Sea Basin 2007-2013</p>	<p>The project improved regional capacities for planning, coordinating and implementing joint strategic documents.</p> <p>Results included: 1) an effective network infrastructure for promoting and implementing market-oriented tourist products; 2) improved knowledge/skills and development of tourism products in partner regions to meet the current needs of international markets; 3) a cooperative environment for drawing up a common agenda for sustainable tourism development in the Black Sea basin, respecting regional characteristics; 4) intensified cross-border economic cooperation through tourism; and 5) stronger regional partnership and cooperation among the regions of the Black Sea basin for sustainable tourism management and a joint marketing strategy focus on public-private partnerships.</p>

(A) Field of cooperation #7: Energy and Transport

No 7	Flagship project Period	Main actors Level of interaction (regional, national, local or civil society) Funding sources	Main activities and results
<p>Energy and Transport for building an energy efficient and better-connected Black Sea</p>			
7.1	<p>Southern Gas Corridor</p>	<p>Project of regional importance Funding: multiple funding from public banks and investors</p>	<p>The Southern Gas Corridor is a priority project for the EU. It offers significant potential for increasing energy security and supply diversification by linking Caspian gas resources with EU and the Black Sea states' markets.</p> <p>Since the last review of Black Sea Synergy in 2015, the Southern Gas Corridor became a functional project, with delivery of the first Caspian gas to Turkey taking place in 2018. The EU is confident that the remaining part of the trans-Adriatic pipeline (TAP) to Italy will be finalised quickly, so that gas can flow to Europe as of 2020. The Southern Gas Corridor is key for Europe's energy diversification, illustrating that multilateral cooperation can be successful.</p> <p>The project brings together numerous countries, companies and financial institutions under a single vision. This requires trust and sound neighbourly relations, including between countries bordering the Black Sea. One example is the BRUA pipeline, supported with a financial grant of EUR 179 million from the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), which will connect Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary to Austria.</p>
7.2	<p>Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF)</p>	<p>Overall budget of NIF Funding: EUR 200 000 000</p>	<p>The Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF) is the mechanism aimed at mobilising additional funding to finance capital-intensive infrastructure projects in EU partner countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).</p> <p>The NIF is the main EU tool for providing financial assistance for key energy infrastructure projects in the Black Sea aimed at increasing interconnectivity in the region. These cover sectors such as transport, energy, the environment and social development. The facility pools grant resources from the EU budget and the EU Member States and uses them to leverage loans from European financial institutions and contributions from the ENP partner countries themselves.</p>

(A) Field of cooperation #7: Energy and Transport

		<p>The NIF is supporting the development of gas and electricity interconnections between Romania and the Republic of Moldova. The electricity interconnection between Isaccea (RO) and Vulcănești (MD) is a EUR 250 000 000 investment likely to be financed through loans from the EBRD, the EIB and the World Bank. The NIF grant is worth EUR 40 000 000. The Republic of Moldova’s internal pipeline from Ungheni to Chisinau is crucial to make full use of the Iasi-Ungheni gas interconnector, operational since March 2015. Both projects are supported by EU funds.</p> <p>In the South Caucasus, the Black Sea Regional Transmission Network (BSTN), launched in 2015, connects Georgia to the Turkish network and strengthens the Georgian transmission grid. The BSTN project cost around EUR 290 000 000. The NIF supported the project with EUR 8 000 000.</p> <p>In addition, the extension the Georgian Transmission Network between the EU and Georgia, signed in 2017, will extend the transmission network in order to connect new generation capacities from hydropower plants. Moreover, an additional electricity interconnection with Turkey will be developed. The NIF will support the project with EUR 106 000 000.</p> <p>Lastly, the Caucasus Transmission Network will connect the Armenian and the Georgian power grids. The total cost of the investment is estimated at between EUR 340 000 000 and 350 000 000. The NIF contributes to the project with EUR 10 000 000. The first phase of the project was launched in 2014.</p>
7.3	<p>Projects of Common Interest (PCI) and Projects of Energy Community Interest (PECI)</p>	<p>PCI and PEGI support the development of energy infrastructure projects in the Black Sea.</p> <p>The TEN-E Regulation on guidelines for trans-European energy infrastructure and the PCI list are the key components of our EU-wide energy infrastructure policy. The TEN-E Regulation establishes the nine strategic geographical infrastructure priority corridors in the area of electricity, gas and oil. It also sets out the three EU-wide infrastructure priority areas for smart grids, electricity highways and carbon dioxide transportation networks.</p> <p>Projects of common interest (PCIs) are essential for completing the European internal energy market. The current, third, PCI list, adopted in November 2017, includes 173 key energy infrastructure projects throughout Europe, which will benefit from improved regulatory conditions, increased visibility and the right to apply for funding from the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). It includes key projects in the wider Black Sea region for the diversification of gas supplies in the region such as: trans-Anatolian and trans-Adriatic pipelines (TANAP and</p>

(A) Field of cooperation #7: Energy and Transport

			<p>TAP); the Bulgaria-Romania-Hungary-Austria corridor (BRUA); the Greece-Bulgaria interconnection (IGB); internal reinforcements in Bulgaria; the new LNG terminal in Northern Greece; the gas interconnection Bulgaria-Serbia (IBS); and several underground gas storage facilities adding to the flexibility of gas supplies in the region.</p> <p>These projects ensure the diversification of supply routes and sources in one of the most vulnerable regions of Europe and create the conditions for new gas exploration and production in the Black Sea.</p> <p>The third PCI list also includes 36 electricity projects in central eastern and southern Europe. These projects address the need to reinforce the electricity grid and establish an appropriate balancing system for the integration of renewables. They also contribute to the better integration of internal electricity.</p>
7.4	South-Eastern Europe Gas Connectivity (CESEC group)		<p>The CESEC group supports the development of energy infrastructure projects in the Black Sea. CESEC has concentrated on improving cooperation and infrastructure development for natural gas between the countries of central and south-eastern Europe, including the countries involved in the different Black Sea regional cooperation initiatives.</p> <p>CESEC covers electricity, renewables and energy efficiency. By further interconnecting and integrating physical energy networks and ensuring that the EU's energy market <i>acquis</i> is fully implemented in the region's EU Member States and contracting parties of the Energy Community, the energy security of the region and the EU will be enhanced.</p> <p>The CESEC High-Level Working Group was set up by Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia and the EU in February 2015. They were later joined by eight contracting parties of the Energy Community (organisation bringing EU and its neighbours together to create an integrated pan-European energy market): Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of North Macedonia, Kosovo³⁷, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia and Ukraine.</p>
7.5	Regional technical assistance to	Implemented by the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA)	<p>The overall objectives of the project are: 1) improved maritime safety; 2) improved security of ships and port facilities; 3) reduced pollution of the marine environment; 4) improved level of maritime training and qualification of seafarers; and 5) improved living and working conditions</p>

³⁷This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

(A) Field of cooperation #7: Energy and Transport

	<p>enhance maritime safety, security and marine environmental protection in the Black Sea 2017-2021</p>	<p>Beneficiaries: public authorities from Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Turkey and Ukraine</p> <p>Funding: EUR 4 000 000 – European Neighbourhood Instrument</p>	<p>on-board ships. This will be achieved by addressing shortcomings, gaps and grey areas that may hamper the fulfilment of the relevant international obligations.</p> <p>The project expects to achieve the following outcomes: 1) improved capacity of national maritime administrations to ensure that they discharge their obligations effectively and consistently as flag states; 2) beneficiary countries to put in place national laws transposing the mandatory instruments, including approximation with the <i>acquis</i> in areas where EU legislation exists; 3) enhanced national capacity for implementing international legislation; 4) increased approximation with EU practices in these fields; 5) improved cooperation among beneficiary countries' competent authorities and with the EU Member States and EU institutions; 6) enhanced harmonisation between MoUs and harmonisation of Port State Control (PSC) inspections in the Black Sea region; 7) enhanced cooperation on PSC issues between Caspian Sea beneficiary countries; 8) improved capacity of competent authorities of the beneficiary countries to monitor and control maritime traffic in the region; 9) improved traffic-monitoring image of beneficiaries' waters, i.e. by enhancing their T-AIS national networks and that of the region; 10) improved sharing of traffic information; 11) improved capacity to prevent, detect and respond to marine pollution; 12) improved monitoring of, and response to, marine environmental pollution; 13) beneficiaries are incentivised to ratify the 2006 Marine Labour Convention requirements and implement them fully; 14) enhanced implementation of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW Convention) requirements and the International Safety Management (ISM) Code; and 15) improved institutional capacity to implement the International Ship and Port Facility (ISPS) Code requirements.</p>
<p>7.6</p>	<p>Neighbourhood Investment Platform (NIP)/European Fund for Sustainable Development</p>	<p>National authorities and private logistic operators/ports</p> <p>Loans under external mandate of the European Investment Bank</p>	<p>The EU blending mechanism, the Neighbourhood Investment Platform, under the new External Investment Plan (EIP), provides grants to blend with International Financial Institutions loans to construct or rehabilitate coastal infrastructure in the Black Sea countries under the European Neighbourhood Instrument. Projects on the extended core TEN-T network are prioritised. At the Eastern Partnership summit (24 November 2017), high-level Memoranda of Understanding were signed between the EU and Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, thus defining the indicative maps on the core TEN-T networks.</p> <p>EU guarantees are available under the European Fund for Sustainable Development – Guarantee Fund (investment window) for private investments in logistics and/or port infrastructure. A TEN-T investment action plan has been finalised, in line with the extension of the TEN-T maps to the Eastern Partnership countries. The TEN-T extension will contribute to</p>

(A) Field of cooperation #7: Energy and Transport

			increased connectivity within the Black Sea region, including with EU Member States. Priority investment projects in the transport sector, which can be channelled through the Neighbourhood Investment Platform, also include the Black Sea countries.
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(B) Black Sea Synergy links with other European Union strategies and policies relevant for the Black Sea region

No.	EU strategy or policy	Presentation, activities and results
1	<p>European Union Strategy for the Danube Region 2010</p>	<p>The European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) is a macro-regional strategy launched in 2010. The strategy addresses a wide range of issues divided into 4 pillars and 12 priority areas. Each priority area is managed by two countries as priority area coordinators. The EUSDR is open to other partners in the region. The common challenges identified among the 14 participating countries are: 1) connectivity (transport and energy infrastructures, tourism and people-to-people contacts); 2) environment (water quality and management, environmental risks, biodiversity); 3) socio and economic aspects (knowledge society, competitiveness, education and skills); and 4) institutional capacity and security.</p> <p>One of the objectives of the EUSDR is to open the Danube region up to the Black Sea region. Some of the priority areas of the EUSDR, such as navigability, are particularly important for the Black Sea region. Cargo transport on the river is to be increased by 20 % by 2020 compared to 2010. This requires the development and coordination of ports – including those in the Black Sea region. Competitive railway passenger connections between major cities in the Danube region are to be finalised by 2030. It is also planned to remove existing bottlenecks in energy to fulfil the goals of the Energy Union and better interconnect regions through joint activities with relevant initiatives and institutions. Environmental joint actions and initiatives on security are of high relevance for the Black Sea region. The water quality of the Black Sea depends significantly on the quality of river discharge.</p> <p>Between 2015 and 2018, a large number of projects were launched under the EUSDR. Examples of projects and initiatives relevant for the Black Sea include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - several projects have been implemented or developed in the area of water management and environmental risks, particularly those relating to floods, which are being aggravated by climate change. Others are in the areas of river navigation and land transport; - the JOINTISZA project is working towards the first integrated management plan for the Tisza river basin; - the <i>DanubeSediment</i> project aims at ensuring sediment balance in the river system. <i>SIMONA</i> aims at delivering ready-to-deploy sediment-quality information; - the <i>DAREFFORT</i> project will deliver an overview of the present status of national forecasting capabilities; - a <i>civil protection mechanism</i> was activated to tackle pollution of the Tisza river from the abandoned Solotvyno salt mine in Ukraine, with transboundary effects in Romania and Hungary; - upgrading of infrastructure and environmental protection in <i>Constanța Port</i> started in 2016. The action involves upgrading basic port infrastructure, constructing a new state-of-the-art on-shore waste collection and treatment

(B) Black Sea Synergy links with other European Union strategies and policies relevant for the Black Sea region

		<p>facility, upgrading the signalling system in the port basin and the fairway, and purchasing one technical vessel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the <i>FAIRway project</i> – co-financed by the Connecting Europe Facility, five new surveying vessels and three more to come in 2018-2019 have been put in operation. A transnational waterway monitoring system (WAMOS) for consistent FAIRway data is being set up and additional fairway marking vessels are in the pipeline. - <i>dredging activities</i> – started in the summer of 2018 on the Bulgarian-Romanian common section of the Danube river. Ensuring a minimum depth there is crucial for allowing navigation when water debit is low. - for the first time a <i>Transport Analysis for the Danube Region</i> was carried out in 2017 with the support of the European Investment Bank. This provides an overview of short-term strategic transport projects in the Danube region. The study is the first step towards developing a transport masterplan for the Danube region. <p>A full list of projects is available at: https://www.eusdr.eu/</p>
2	<p>Joint Communication on Connecting Europe and Asia – Building Blocks for an EU Strategy 2018</p>	<p>This Joint Communication sets out the EU’s vision for a new and comprehensive strategy to better connect Europe and Asia. With sustainable, comprehensive and rules-based connectivity at its core, the Communication will help to guide the EU’s external action in this field and is a part of the implementation of the EU Global Strategy. The document builds on the EU’s experience of enhancing connections between its Member States, with and in other regions. It draws upon the EU’s existing efforts to enhance connectivity, from bilateral dialogues to region-to-region action plans, to engagement with and in international organisations. All regions and all sectors are important in their own ways. The world is increasingly interlinked, and the Joint Communication seeks to help create conditions where connectivity is increasingly sustainable. The EU’s interests in connectivity are best served when countries adopt good regulatory frameworks, create better business conditions, follow sensible economic policies, and tend towards open markets.</p> <p>The Communication includes four areas of main interest: 1) transport connectivity (focused on air, sea and land transport; interoperability; multimodality; decarbonisation); 2) energy connectivity (including renewable, clean decentralised energy and efficiency); 3) digital connectivity (digital infrastructure, rights, policies and cybersecurity); and 4) people-to-people links (through education, research, innovation, culture and tourism). The concrete engagements should be developed following three main avenues: 1) developing networks (development and extension of TEN-T, and possible links with other networks); 2) partnerships for sustainable connectivity (bilateral, regional and international connectivity through agreements, dialogue and other platforms); and 3) comprehensive financial framework (innovative blending and investment instruments; partnerships with international financial partners).</p> <p>In the chapter presenting the four areas of main interest, the Communication includes <i>particular references to the</i></p>

(B) Black Sea Synergy links with other European Union strategies and policies relevant for the Black Sea region

		<p><i>Black Sea</i> in the area of sea transport. It emphasises the fact that ‘<i>the EU should continue to develop the bridging role of the Black Sea basin</i>’. The key actions identified for this chapter also refer to the promotion of ‘the digitalisation and administrative simplification of maritime transport in (Asia and) the <i>Black Sea countries</i>’, as well as the adoption of the Rotterdam rules. As regards the chapter on international cooperation, the references to <i>ocean governance</i>, the freedom of navigation, the sustainable governance of oceans and seas, plus references to the blue economy, are also intrinsically applicable to the Black Sea basin. In addition, a number of other aspects set out in the Communication, such as energy, digital backbones and decarbonisation of sea transport, are also relevant for the Black Sea region.</p> <p>Other important references for the countries in the Black Sea region that are included in the Joint Communication are: 1) the extension of the TEN-T to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine; 2) negotiating aviation agreements with countries in the EU neighbourhood; and 3) stepping up cooperation in the area of the digital economy. It is stated that both North-South rail connections and the East-West rail connections could play an important role in the future.</p> <p>On 15 October 2018, the Council of the EU adopted conclusions on the Joint Communication calling for <i>strengthened cooperation at the regional level</i> between the EU and Asia, noting that the EU should consider developing regional approaches for sustainable connectivity, identifying opportunities for cooperation.</p>
3	<p>European Union Maritime Security Strategy <i>Revised Action Plan 2018</i></p>	<p>The European Union Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS), adopted in June 2014, is an overarching strategy to tackle all challenges from the global maritime domain that may affect people, activities or infrastructures in the EU. The EUMSS, revised in 2018, is complemented by an Action Plan designed to drive the implementation of the EUMSS forward. Both documents reassert the critical role of navies and coastguards and seek to embed them in an integrated, cross-sectoral approach (both civil and military). From the perspective of external action, this comprises measures such as: 1) engaging with third parties on maritime security matters; 2) further promoting the existing international legal framework, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea; and 3) contributing to maritime capacity building in third countries. It builds on best practices, such as the critical maritime routes programme.</p> <p>The EU has adopted legislation through which the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) and the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) cooperate to support national authorities carrying out coast guard functions. This means that, for example, joint aircraft surveillance missions could sustain maritime surveillance for several purposes, including border and fisheries control and the detection of pollution at sea.</p> <p>The 2018 revised EUMSS action plan features, for the first time, a section devoted entirely to regions and sea basins, and four actions dedicated to the Black Sea. These provided for the following: 1) promotion of regional</p>

(B) Black Sea Synergy links with other European Union strategies and policies relevant for the Black Sea region

		cooperation initiatives (B.3.1); 2) support for the synergies promoted by the Facility for Blue Growth (B.3.2); 3) support for the work done to tackle crime in the Black Sea basin (B.3.3); and 4) efforts to foster multi-stakeholder dialogue in the region (B.3.4). Several factsheets presenting individual regions and seabasins were published, the first one being on the Black Sea, issued in June 2018. Provision is made for further efforts in these four areas.
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(C) elements regarding cooperation with regional and international organisations

No.	Main actors	Areas of cooperation, main activities and results
1.	<p>Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)</p> <p><i>Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine</i></p>	<p>BSEC is the oldest intergovernmental organisation in the wider Black Sea region. It is a representative and institutionally mature regional organisation recognised as such by Black Sea Synergy and its subsequent reviews. The European Union has had permanent observer status in the BSEC since 2007.</p> <p>BSEC's main bodies are the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (principal decision-making body) and the Committee of Senior Officials – CSO (follow-up body). The BSEC Chairmanships-in-Office (CiO) run from 1 January to the end of June and from 1 July to the end of December. The BSEC Permanent International Secretariat (PERMIS) is based in Istanbul.</p> <p>During the 2015-2018 period, EU-BSEC interaction remained high on the BSEC agenda. Cooperation during this period moved into a more dynamic and project-oriented phase. BSEC celebrated its 25th anniversary with a summit meeting in Istanbul in June 2017. The adopted summit declaration highlighted the importance of enhancing cooperation with the EU, as well as the renewed commitment of BSEC Member States to fostering pragmatic, project-oriented and mutually beneficial cooperation. The EU was invited and participated in BSEC ministerial and senior official meetings and working groups. At these meetings, a specific agenda point referring to EU-BSEC interaction is included. A special BSEC Ad-hoc working group of experts on BSEC-EU interaction is held twice per year.</p> <p>BSEC participated in all annual stakeholder high-level conferences on blue economy that have taken place so far: Bucharest (2014), Sofia (2015), Odessa (2016) and Batumi (2017). BSEC is also actively involved and its secretariat is following the drafting of a <i>Common Maritime Agenda</i> for the Black Sea (see field of cooperation 1). In this regard, BSEC participated in the Burgas ministerial meeting for the endorsement of the Burgas Ministerial Declaration towards the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea that took place on European Maritime Day on 31 May 2018. BSEC is also part of the group of experts from all Black Sea riparian countries plus the Republic of Moldova, developing the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for the Black Sea basin. The BSEC Permanent Secretariat in Istanbul hosted one of the meetings of the group in March 2018.</p> <p>The tradition of informal meetings between the members of the COEST working party and the BSEC open Troika continued. These meetings take place annually in Brussels in November/December. During the 2015-2018, a number of further bilateral meetings and consultations between the BSEC Permanent Secretariat and the EU took place in Brussels and Istanbul.</p>
2.	<p>General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)</p>	<p>The GFCM is a regional fisheries management organisation established by Article XIV of the FAO Constitution. The GFCM initially started its activities as a council in 1952 when the agreement for its establishment came into force. It became a commission in 1997. The main objective of the GFCM is to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of living marine resources at the biological, social, economic and environmental level. It also aims to ensure the</p>

(C) elements regarding cooperation with regional and international organisations

		<p>sustainable development of aquaculture in the Mediterranean and in the Black Sea (GFCM area of application). The GFCM currently has 24 members (23 member countries and the European Union) which contribute to its autonomous budget in order to finance its functioning. It also has three cooperating non-contracting parties (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and Ukraine). The GFCM has the authority to adopt resolutions and binding recommendations for fisheries conservation and management in its area of application (the Mediterranean and the Black Sea). Its mandate also covers aquaculture. The GFCM plays a crucial role in multilateral fisheries governance in the region. In particular, the measures adopted cover the management of fisheries and technical measures. These include: the regulation of fishing methods, fishing gear and minimum landing sizes, spatio-temporal closure of fishing activities, fishing effort control and a total allowable catch regime. They also include monitoring, control and surveillance measures, joint control and inspection projects and operations, and measures against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.</p> <p>The Working Group on the Black Sea is a GFCM subsidiary body established in 2012. It aims to address the specific scientific needs of the Black Sea and to advance the work of the GFCM in this sea basin. Meetings take place annually and its recommendations/proposals are directly transmitted to the annual session of the GFCM for formal adoption. It is widely acknowledged that over the past years, this specific group has created a stable framework for experts and scientists to collaborate on the goal of advancing fisheries management in the Black Sea.</p> <p>EU cooperation with GFCM was very active between 2015 and 2018 in the context of the Black Sea Working Group. The Black Sea riparian countries came together in October 2016 under the leadership of the EU. In the context of the GFCM they agreed on the Bucharest Declaration on the issues that should be improved in fisheries governance in the Black Sea (see field of cooperation 2). This was followed in June 2018 by the Sofia Ministerial Declaration. In this context, the European Union actively supported the GFCM in adopting a set of concrete multilateral actions in the Black Sea. Specifically, these are the following: the multilateral multi-annual management plan for turbot fisheries, the regional plan of action to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, the pilot project on joint control and an inspection scheme for turbot fisheries, the BlackSea4Fish scientific project and the Black Sea aquaculture demonstrative centres.</p>
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(C) elements regarding cooperation with regional and international organisations

<p>3.</p>	<p>The Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution <i>Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, the Russian Federation, Turkey, Ukraine</i></p>	<p>The <i>Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution</i> was signed in Bucharest in April 1992, and ratified by all Black Sea coastal countries in 1994. Its basic objective is to substantiate the general obligation of the contracting parties to prevent, reduce and control pollution in the Black Sea in order to protect and preserve the marine environment and provide a legal framework for cooperation and concerted action to fulfil this obligation. The <i>Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution</i> (the Black Sea Commission or BSC) is the intergovernmental body established by the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (Bucharest Convention). The Convention has subsequent protocols and a strategic action plan for the environmental protection and rehabilitation of the Black Sea was developed (latest version adopted in 2009). The EU has had observer status in the BSC since 2001 and periodically participates in its meetings. The EU continues its efforts to become a member of the Black Sea Commission.</p>
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BLACK SEA MAP



Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © UN-FAO © INSTAT © Turkstat, Cartography: European Commission, JRC, 2019



"The designations employed and the presentation of material on the map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the European Union concerning the legal status of any country, territory or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries."