

BLACK SEA STAKEHOLDER CONFERENCE 2024

Chişinău, Moldova
11-12 September

SUMMARY REPORT

Common Maritime Agenda
for the Black Sea



MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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CONTENT

- Concept & Objectives
- Numeric Insights
- Opening Session
- Plenary Sessions
- Navigating opportunities with CMA support
- Poster Exhibition
- Co-Creation workshops
- Black Sea Project Awards



CONCEPT & OBJECTIVES



The Black Sea Common Maritime Agenda (CMA) Stakeholder Conference took place on 11 September 2024, in Chişinău, Moldova. The event was hosted by Moldova, the country coordinating the CMA in 2024, specifically through the Moldovan Ministry of the Environment.

The conference has become an annual event of reference for the community of stakeholders of the CMA, providing a platform for stakeholders to exchange best practices, discuss issues at stake, and develop future initiatives towards a sustainable blue economy in the Black Sea. Being an in-person event, it facilitates direct communication and active participation through various sessions, offering opportunities for dialogue, exchange, networking and co-creation.

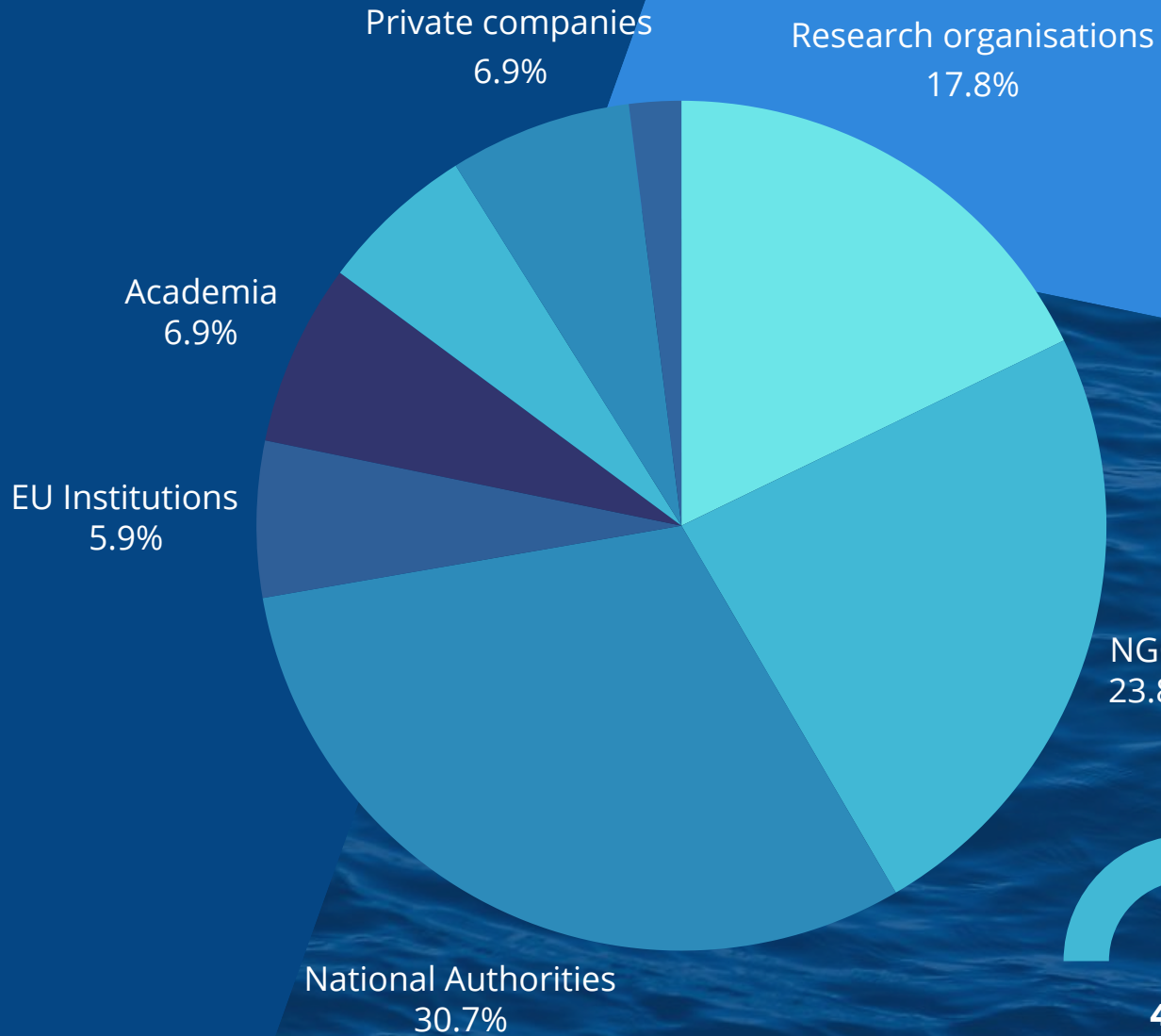
Focusing on linking past achievements with future ambitions, the Black Sea CMA Stakeholder Conference addresses topics aligned with the three main goals of the CMA for the Black Sea blue economy, concerning healthy marine and coastal ecosystems, a competitive, innovative and sustainable blue economy, and investment. Three thematic sessions were held, with expert speakers from the Black Sea region: 1. Marine scientific knowledge for the Black Sea blue economy, 2. Challenges and opportunities on the Black Sea's path to sustainability and zero pollution, 3. Innovation perspectives for the Black Sea's blue economy community. Each session included audience-focused question and answers (Q&A).

The conference's primary aim of fostering collaboration and encouraging stakeholder engagement was further supported by an interactive poster exhibition and three parallel co-creation workshops. Two side meetings took place the next day, on 12 September 2024, a Steering Group meeting of the CMA and the fourth meeting of the Technical Group on Sustainable Aquaculture ([SustAqua](#)).

NUMERIC INSIGHTS

100
Participants

16
Countries
represented



NGOs
23.8%



OPENING SESSION



The Black Sea region is emerging as an example of resilience, unity, and progress amid a challenging geopolitical landscape. The session focused on the European prospects of the Black Sea and the dynamic relations that drive EU policy in the region. Security and stability need to be factored in when discussing priorities of the cooperative ecosystem in the region. The CMA ensures continuity on several fronts, from stakeholder dialogue to funding and implementation of EU policies towards a sustainable blue economy in the sea basin at national, regional and local levels.



Sergiu Lazarencu

Minister of the Environment, Moldova

Christos Economou

Head of Unit, DG MARE, European Commission

Raluca NECULAESCU

Division for Regional Eastern Partnership, Regional Cooperation & OSCE, EEAS

“Improving access to natural resources, funding opportunities and promoting sustainable investment in the blue economy are crucial for unlocking the potential of our ocean and fostering economic growth while safeguarding marine ecosystems.”

“The CMA facilitates ongoing dialogue between countries and stakeholders, providing opportunities for cooperation. [...] Since the CMA was launch in 2019, we have held five regional events and 25 national events, engaging local stakeholders, thanks to the dedicated work of national coordinators and national hubs.”

“The region needs security and stability, and resilience should be strengthened, together with connectivity, in all its forms, and of course reducing critical dependencies. These needs will inform and guide our future policy action.”

PLENARY SESSIONS



Marine scientific knowledge for the Black Sea blue economy

The Black Sea, with its unique ecosystems, rich cultural heritage, and economic importance, is suffering severe damage from pollution, overfishing, and invasive species. Researchers are focused on understanding its current state and implementing the Black Sea *Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda* (SRIA) to promote blue growth while ensuring a healthy, resilient sea. To improve knowledge of the Black Sea ecosystem's status, data is being collected using advanced technologies such as robotic gliders and satellite analysis, with continuous engagement from stakeholders. Ocean literacy and social acceptance of these innovative solutions are key objectives, emphasising both environmental and economic benefits. The initiatives discussed aim to promote a "safe operating space" that balances ecosystem health with sustainable economic development, recognising the pressures affecting the sea and predicting future changes.

Our speakers:

Irina Stanciu (DOORS project, Horizon-2020 EU funded project)

Bariş Salihođlu (BRIDGE project, Horizon-2020 EU funded project)

Florin Timofte (EX-AQUA project, Horizon Europe EU Funded project – WIDERA Twinning Green Deal)



PLENARY SESSIONS



Challenges and opportunities on the Black Sea's path to sustainability and zero pollution

Key representatives from projects in the region dealing with severely hazardous materials highlighted several issues faced in achieving zero pollution by 2050. Identifying emerging pollutants, specifically related to war and armed conflicts, pose a significant threat. Methodological approaches have been set, involving water sampling, analysis, in-situ measurements and the use of appropriate technology, equipment and procedures. Other hazardous substances, such as forever chemicals, have also been present in society for years, but their harmful effects were not widely recognised until recently. Achieving a toxic-free environment goes beyond chemical analysis and research. It requires proper recognition of the essential and non-essential uses of such chemicals, as well as raising public awareness to minimise use and improve disposal practices. The introduction of new regulations is also important, setting thresholds and "safety pins" to protect public health and the environment.

Our speakers:

[Ioana Chiulan](#) (BLACK SEA SIERRA project, EMFAF funded project)

[Aleksandar Shivarov](#) (SOSZEROPOL2030 project, Horizon Europe Funded project)



PLENARY SESSIONS



Innovation perspectives for the Black Sea's blue economy community

Following their pitching session at last year's CMA stakeholder conference, in cooperation with [BlueInvest](#) and the [Black Sea Accelerator](#), three SMEs/Startups active in the region were invited to update on their activities. Despite being at a different level of advancement, these companies showcased substantial achievements when it comes to technological and innovative solutions under development. There is high potential for innovation in the Black Sea and the Danube ecosystems, whether it involves tackling plastic pollution, converting plastic waste into energy, or producing raw materials from macro-algae. The emerging technologies are abundant, with increasing market demand for solutions. Innovations such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, digital twins and production of commercial chemicals from algae are entering the market, offering cost-efficient and profitable solutions. Stakeholders involved in these initiatives recognise the potential not only for technological breakthroughs but also for significant environmental, societal, and economic impact, including job preservation in fishing and tourism, the creation of new business opportunities, and future market expansion.

Our speakers:

Roger Preston, [Tresoil](#)

Sorina Uleia, [Recycllux](#)

Kubilay Yildirim, [QBIOTECH Chemicals](#)

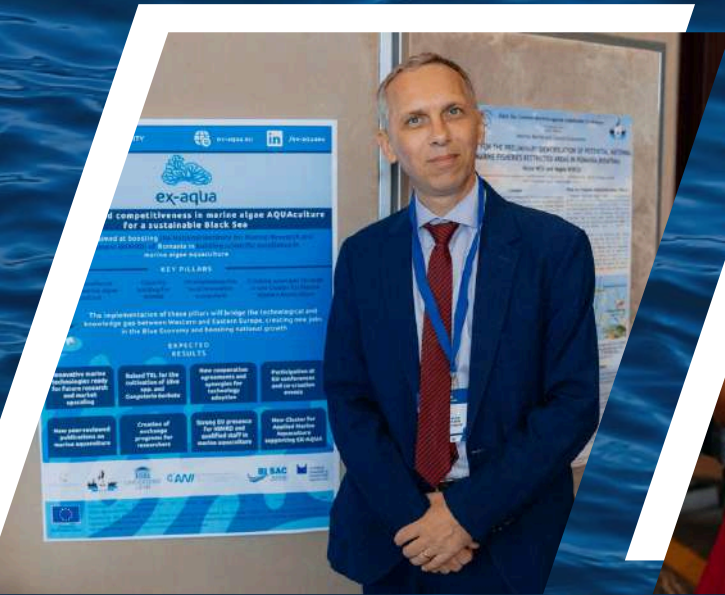


NAVIGATING OPPORTUNITIES WITH CMA SUPPORT

The CMA is viewed as a vital platform for connecting stakeholders across the Black Sea region and sparking discussions that lead to collaborative initiatives. It is expected to maintain this role, ensuring that diverse groups with various areas of expertise come together to create value for society and uphold the environmental quality of the Black Sea. The Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) is the scientific pillar of the CMA, and its implementation is supported through ongoing community engagement and project support, directing stakeholders to funding opportunities. Since the CMA itself is not a funding mechanism, its project support efforts and proper dissemination of funding opportunities should be strengthened through increased synergies with available funding instruments (at the EU, national, international and regional level). This would ultimately help Black Sea stakeholders acquire the necessary resources and skills to continue develop, deploy, and scale up their innovations. The CMA is also tasked with supporting SMEs and start-ups by raising their profiles, assisting them in securing funding and financing, and promoting cooperation and possible partnership opportunities. Additionally, the CMA is expected to continue gathering valuable feedback from networking activities, events, project support and directing it towards EU institutions and national authorities, to inform policy decisions.



POSTER EXHIBITION



As a side activity, a poster exhibition was held where project representatives displayed posters showcasing Black Sea-relevant initiatives. The project exhibition showcased 12 posters of various projects and initiatives, such as the EU supported REINFORSEA, RESPONSE and EXAQUA projects, which address a wide range of topics, including advancing research, tackling pollution and promoting excellence and competitiveness in the Black Sea blue economy.



CO-CREATION WORKSHOPS

Blue economy skills and ocean literacy for existing and emerging Black Sea jobs

Participants in this workshop topic came from a diverse background, but with relevant experience to blue skills. They highlighted limited awareness among stakeholders about market opportunities and available funding, making it difficult to promote and develop blue skills, a concept that remains unclear to many. Interest in maritime activities is limited, and many young people leave the countries of origin to take up job opportunities elsewhere, showing little interest for the sector. Cultural differences also hinder possible cross-border cooperation on this topic. Key growth areas discussed include biotechnology, renewable energy, energy transition, and tackling pollution, with require skills especially in technology, natural sciences, and engineering. Suggestions for future steps include using gamification to engage youth and replicating successful models for blue economy jobs.



CO-CREATION WORKSHOPS

Decarbonisation and energy transition of the Black Sea maritime and riverine transport and ports

Limited access to finance in the Black Sea region calls for cross-country cooperation to secure funding from international financial institutions like the [European Investment Bank](#), the [European Bank for Reconstruction and Development](#) and the [Asian Development Bank](#). A pilot project using a single type of green fuel is recommended, requiring collaboration between vessel operators and ports to address both fleet and infrastructure needs. Participants also suggested a project idea establishing a Network of Ports in the Black Sea, initially focusing on leisure vessels (small ferries or cruises). All suggestions came from discussions on opportunities, challenges and needs regarding decarbonisation, and the participants' expertise contributed to elaborate discussions.



CO-CREATION WORKSHOPS

Black Sea ecosystem conservation, plastic pollution management and circularity opportunities in a land-sea perspective

Drawing from a diverse set of expertise pertinent to the Black Sea ecosystem, participants placed the immediate focus on exchanging knowledge and implementing existing solutions. Over the medium term, emerging technologies like AI and nanotechnology can be leveraged to accelerate the deployment of solutions and build capacity. Effective data management is essential, with an emphasis on digitalisation, systematisation, and compiling comprehensive knowledge. Participants found that addressing resource and capacity gaps is crucial including by channelling more funding towards conservation activities and improving communication between governmental institutions and stakeholders. Cross-border collaboration should be strengthened to enhance international efforts, while decision-making processes must ensure that all relevant stakeholders are actively involved in planning and promoting sustainable and circular initiatives.



BLACK SEA PROJECT AWARDS



The Common Maritime Agenda stakeholder conference concluded once again with the Black Sea Project Awards, celebrating innovative projects in the region.

Inspired by successful initiatives in the region, this ceremony sought to highlight outstanding achievements across the Black Sea blue economy, recognising past and current projects in three key categories. The audience decided that the 'winner of the winners' prize of the Black Sea CMA Stakeholder Conference 2024 go to... Black Sea CONNECT!



Healthy marine and coastal ecosystems



Ballast Water Treatment Service (BWTS)



A competitive, innovative and sustainable blue economy for the Black Sea



Winner of the winners



CONNECT BLACK SEA



BLACK SEA STAKEHOLDER CONFERENCE 2024

“We need to remember that our work does not end here and today. We have to continue our efforts, we need to start new agreements and new commitments for our future, which requires dialogue, dedication and collaboration”

Grigore Stratulat, Secretary of State, Ministry of Environment

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