

Consultations on the design of the Blueing the Black Sea Program (BBSEA): A Regional Initiative to Tackle Marine Pollution and Climate Change in Support of the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea

Consultation workshop in Bulgaria, 29 March 2021

Summary

I. What was discussed?

Co-hosted by the World Bank and the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat (PERMIS), and in cooperation with the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution, the workshop (held as a webinar) was the fifth in a series of 'National Consultations' organised in all six Black Sea littoral states and the Republic of Moldova to seek:

- ▶ input from respective stakeholder communities on marine pollution, pressing issues and priorities related to pollution prevention, reduction, and control in the Black Sea, and opportunities to inform the planned 'Blueing the Black Sea' (BBSEA) programme¹ architecture and implementation modalities;
- ▶ information to support a national and regional pollution diagnostic tool that will form the baseline for further action.

The webinar also offered an opportunity to present results and recommendations of the World Bank report:

- ▶ [Bulgaria Blue Economy Policy Note : Toward a Blue Economy Development.](#)

II. Who was present?

The webinar was opened by a panel of key speakers - *H.E. Amb. Michael B. CHRISTIDES, Secretary General, Permanent International Secretariat (PERMIS), Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), Ms. Iliana TODOROVA, Deputy Minister of Environment and Water of the Republic of Bulgaria, Mr. Steven SCHONBERGER, Director for Sustainable Development Europe and Central Asia, The World Bank, Mr. Fabrizio ZARCONI, Country Manager, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Czech Republic, The World Bank, Ms. Nadezhda BUHOVA, Director, Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technologies and national coordinator of the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea.* Brief outline of their remarks can be found in section IV below.

The attendance of the webinar reached 95 participants, representatives of the public and the private sector. The majority of participants were from the host country. Additionally, international experts active in the region and representatives of international organisations, such as representatives of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean and the Black Sea / FAO and the European Commission, took joined the event. Participants mainly represented national and regional authorities, academia and financial institutions active in the country. For a complete stakeholder list refer to Annex I: Participating Organisations.

III. How was the workshop structured?

¹ The Blueing the Black Sea (BBSEA) is a regional initiative, to be led by BSEC PERMIS, to address pollution and develop Blue Economy investments in the Black Sea region as part of the Common Maritime Agenda (CMA), agreed in 2019 by the six Black Sea littoral states plus the Republic of Moldova. BBSEA is funded by the World Bank with an ongoing preparatory investigative phase supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

As indicated in the [webinar agenda](#), the official opening by key speakers was followed by:

- ▶ the working session 1, where the report prepared by the World Bank in collaboration with the Government of Bulgaria was presented and backed by an interactive live survey.

The 1st working session was followed by two interactive sessions offering an overview of how the BBSEA Program will work especially its potential activities in Bulgaria. The two sessions have focused on:

- ▶ the analytical component of BBSEA – to build the analytical fundamentals of the intervention;
- ▶ the BBSEA Regional GEF-funded project – to identify avenues to incentivize investments in pollution reduction technology, innovation and finance.

A fourth working session was dedicated to the presentation of the outcomes of the MARSPLAN-BS II project, which brought together an outstanding partnership of eight key Bulgarian and Romanian institutions and organizations.

A key part of the workshop was spent gathering information from participants – who included experts, academics, government officials, municipalities and businesses – via a voting system to verify the findings of the World Bank report and to inform how the BBSEA program could be implemented across the wider Black Sea region and how it can benefit Bulgaria.

IV. What feedback was received?

In the **Welcoming Address** *BSEC PERMIS Secretary General, Ambassador Michael B Christides* emphasized the importance of issues such as regional cooperation, pollution and climate change in the Black Sea. He reminded: *“Regional cooperation is not new for Bulgaria. In the first century AD, 6 cities along the west coast of the Black Sea formed an alliance that has lasted several 100s of years. It was an alliance to promote trade and cooperation.”* Ambassador Christides confirmed that the cycle of national level consultations will actually inform the design of the future Blueing the Black Sea program.

Ms. Iliana TODOROVA, Deputy Minister of Environment and Water of the Republic of Bulgaria, underlined that regional cooperation for safeguarding the marine environment of the Black is a key. She sees the role of the World Bank as very important in funding the regional efforts to do so. In addition, Ms Todorova highlighted the ongoing work on the completion of the national maritime strategy of Bulgaria. In conclusion, the deputy minister stressed that *“strengthening synergies across all regional formats will have a positive impact on the development of the economy and for the sustainable economic growth in the whole region”*.

Mr. Steven SCHONBERGER, Director for Sustainable Development Europe and Central Asia, World Bank was delighted to see such a strong ownership by all participating countries in the BBSEA. He said that Blue economy is a concept growing around the world and underlined that the launching of the new Blue Economy Report for Bulgaria is a contribution to this global trend. The report will help to inform policy making and promote effective avenues for action in Bulgaria. Mr Schonberger reminded that the World Bank supports climate change as a matter of high priority because healthy oceans are needed for climate regulation. Mr Schonberger thanked BSEC for the efforts in the process and expressed admiration to the Bulgarian authorities for their commitments.

Mr. Fabrizio ZARCONE, Country Manager, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Czech Republic, flagged the socio-economic importance of the Blue economy in Bulgaria, which in terms of contribution to the national economy is comparable to that of Italy or France, despite the relatively smaller coastline of Bulgaria. The current risks for the Blue economy are pollution, the increased fragmentation, and fact that tourism has suffered from the COVID crisis. Mr Zarccone said: *“There is a need to build in a more sustainable manner. With the right reform and right investments, the Blue economy can contribute more to the economic recovery of Bulgaria”*.

Ms. Nadezhda BUHOVA, Director, Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technologies and national coordinator of the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea used a video message to address the audience. She reminded the steps leading to the endorsement of the Common Maritime Agenda in 2019 and the results of the 1st Bulgaria chairmanship in 2020. Ms. Buhova reaffirmed the commitment to work on the policy recommendations based on the Blue economy report prepared by the World Bank.

In the **Working Session 1**, the *Ms Paola Agostini, Lead Environmental Specialist, The World Bank* introduced the BBSEA Program and explained that it covers a combination of national level studies and investment and two regional initiatives, with the Turning the Tide of Pollution and the BBSEA GEF investment/technical assistance project. Back-to-back with this short introduction, *Ms Eolina Milova, Senior Environmental Specialist, World Bank* and *Ms Adriana Damianova, Lead Environmental Specialist, World Bank* presented the Policy Note Toward Blue Economy Development in Bulgaria. The session was followed by an interactive live survey, which confirmed the need to elaborate a synchronised national response to Blue economy (in a form of a national strategy / roadmap). In addition, the audience found it important to calculate the value of the blue natural capital (incl. ecosystem services), and to base a future national Blue economy strategy on a solid scientific fundament.

Prof. Marusya LYUBCHEVA, from the Black Sea Institute commented that “The institutions in Bulgaria have come a long way in recognizing the need to integrate the development efforts of the maritime economy into its comprehensive dimension. Already in 2009, the idea of a Framework Program for Development of the Black Sea Region at the European Parliament level was introduced with the adoption and approval of funding for the Pilot Project “Environmental Monitoring of the Black Sea and Framework Program for Development of the Black Sea Region”. Its first stage “MONINFO” was assigned to the Black Sea Commission. The subsequent successive efforts of many institutions led to today's important document “Policy note Toward Blue Economy Development in Bulgaria”. The efforts of the three Bulgarian maritime districts of Burgas, Varna and Dobrich, which in 2013 signed a special Memorandum for the development of a National Integrated Maritime Strategy, supported by the Ministry of Regional Development and the Ministry of Economy, should not be missed.”

A comment from the *Ms Ilze Atanassova, from the Marine cluster Bulgaria* highlighted the following: We highly appreciate the Bulgarian blue economy policy note underlining the need of holistic approach for sustainable blue economy! It ascertains that on national level have already been developed several sector strategies which are central to Bulgaria's transition to a blue economy. The questions about the standardization of the blue activities are of big importance as a tool for defining the blue process and the existing strategies and legal acts to be synchronized with these standards. References have been made to the Investments Promotion Act according to which any project which meets the requirements of this Act is certified and given financial and administrative incentives aiming to accelerate its realization. The blue standards must be compared with the requirements set by the Investments Promotion Act and the corresponding amendments to be performed. Also, the realization of the blue economy concept depends on the national funding opportunities and the financial support for the maritime industry actors”.

In **Working Session 2: Turning the tide of pollution in the Black Sea**, a World Bank-led effort to establish an up-to-date diagnostic of the state of play and issues at stake regarding marine pollution in the Black Sea was presented. With contributions from *Mr Owen MacIntyre, Director, LLM, University College Cork* and *Ms Lucia Capatina, Consultant, OIKUMENA Public Association* an attempt was made via discussion and some questions asked of the audience, to identify the sources, impacts and prevention efforts (information and institutional gaps) related to marine pollution in the region, as well the key pollution challenges in Bulgaria. The findings will feed into an in-country pollution diagnostic paper, which, in turn, will inform the BBSEA-GEF architecture and the creation of an effective national and regional diagnostic tool.

The Live voting tool applied for this session confirmed that the scope of the diagnostic activities reflects the main gaps that need to be addressed. Nutrient and oil spill are considered the top pollutants of the marine environment.

The **Working Session 3: Blueing the Black Sea Program: BBSEA-GEF regional project, focus on Bulgaria** was a highly interactive consultation exercise. It began with an overview of the of the 3-year BBSEA-GEF project, from *BSEC Executive Manager, Ms Rositsa Stoeva* who said it had “*the long-term objective of an improved environmental status of the Black Sea with increased economic and social benefits for the population*”. This was followed by the gathering of feedback and ideas on the key components of the project especially with regard to Bulgaria. Moderated by *Ms. Bérengère Prince, Lead Natural Resources Management Specialist, World Bank*, a series of votes was held for all participants to share their preferences on questions related to the priorities of the overall project, the key concerns related to Bulgaria, eco-sustainable business practices and innovation, how to develop awareness raising and funding avenues that could support pollution reduction.

Judging by the initial reactions of the live poll, priority regional activities are the development of sustainable business standards and guidelines in key sectors (agriculture, aquaculture, tourism, shipping and water management), as well as the awareness raising on the issue of pollution in the Black Sea. The audience boasted various examples of large infrastructures (mainly waste-water treatment facilities) along the Bulgarian coast worth showcasing to the neighbouring countries.

The **final session** was led by *Mr. Angel Gyorev, Coordinator of the MARSPLAN-BS II project*, who presented the outcomes of the project and highlighted the spectacular effort of bringing together an outstanding partnership of eight key Bulgarian and Romanian institutions and organizations. Funded by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, the project supported the development of Bulgaria’s first ever maritime spatial plan and helped ensure Romania’s coherence with the maritime spatial plan.

Ms Berengere Prince, Lead Natural Resources Specialist, World Bank, who **offered final words** thanked the audience for their contribution and highlighted that result of the live poll is consistent with that received in other countries. Ms Prince expressed her satisfaction with the expertise of the audience today, which was very much aware of the blue economy. She announced that it was expected that implementation of the BBSEA-GEF project would start in September 2021.

The webinar was **closed by** *Ms. Rositsa Stoeva, BSEC Executive Manager*, and *Ms. Patrizia Busolini, Policy Officer, European Commission (DG MARE)*, who ‘connected the dots’ between the role of the local, national and regional levels in the development of sustainable Blue economy.

Each of the main sessions presented a number of topics, which provoked active participation in the live voting, the results of which can be found in the presentation [here](#).

For interested stakeholders, who couldn’t join the webinar or simply like to give additional feedback a tailor-made [Survey in English](#) and [in Bulgarian](#) languages are available online and to gather opinions after the event.

Annex I: Participating Organisations

Ministry of Environment and Water of the Republic of Bulgaria	Port of Varna EAD
Ministry of Regional Development and Public works of the Republic of Bulgaria	Varna Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technologies of the Republic of Bulgaria	Bulgarian Chamber of Shipping
Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria	Marine Cluster Bulgaria
Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Bulgaria	Center for Coastal and Marine Studies (CCMS)
Municipality of Varna	Via Pontica Foundation
Bulgarian Maritime Administration - Varna Dectorate	Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation
Bulgarian Ports Infrastructure Company	"CHAR - Blacksea Association for Development - Burgas" Non-profit Association for the Public Benefit
Stara Zagora Regional Economic Development Agency	FLAG Shabla - Kavarna - Balchik
Institute of Oceanology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences	General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean and the Black Sea / FAO
Bulgarian Academy of Science, Economic Research Institute	Black Sea Assistance Mechanism
Nikola Vaptsarov Naval Academy	European Institute for Cultural Tourism EUREKA NPO
Prof. D-r Asen Zlatarov University of Burgas	Institute for Ecological Modernisation
Burgas Free University	Black Sea NGO Network
Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"	Association "Forum"
Black Sea Institute Association	Cosmos Shipping AD
Regional Cluster "North-East"	National Centre for Regional Development
Union of Bulgarian Black Sea Local Authorities	European Commission
District information point Burgas	Bon Marine Ltd.