



7th International Black Sea Symposium *“Perspectives on Tourism in the Black Sea area”*

The International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) launched the International Black Sea Symposium project in 2008 in the context of a need for transnational cooperation in the wider Black Sea region. Now, amidst financial transformations and new global challenges, the need for increased cooperation and innovative actions becomes ever more evident.

In its seventh year, the Symposium builds on the success and positive impact of its previous six editions to bring together the next generation of stakeholders with an interest in the Black Sea area, focusing on *tourism*, a cross-cutting sector of economy of the wider Black Sea region.

The Black Sea region, with its diverse and unique landscape, cultural wealth, historic heritage and wide variety of opportunities for leisure, stands among world’s most beautiful tourist destinations, attracting millions of tourists from around the world. **Tourism provides the Black Sea countries with an excellent opportunity for social development and economic growth** that should be further explored in order to reach its full potential in a sustainable manner.

Over the years the quality and quantity of tourism services in the Black Sea region have improved significantly, nonetheless, the **sustainable development of the sector** along with the **regional cooperation** allow room for improvement. Within the BSEC Organisation, Member States foster cooperation towards enhancing existing connections through the adoption of joint action plans for the region.

Within this framework, speakers and participants with acute interest in or involved with tourism will have the opportunity to **explore and discuss the perspectives of sustainable tourism** in relation to its **social and economic impact** on the Black Sea countries. Through the IBSS, the ICBSS is aiming at offering an **assessment on the sector’s potential** with respect to development and regional cooperation that will serve as working platform for BSEC Member States and regional and international stakeholders. Special emphasis will be put on **cooperation for common sustainable tourism strategies, policies and practices, social and cultural linkages, youth and inclusive employment in tourism.**

Special emphasis will be put on the following areas:

1. **Cooperation for common sustainable tourism - strategies, policies and practices**

Developing and supporting sustainable tourism require considerable efforts by regional and national stakeholders. In order to improve the accessibility to the natural, cultural

and historical heritage for tourism and to enhance a common identity of the Black Sea area, specific strategies, policies and practices should be developed and implemented in the region. Speakers and participants are expected, among other, to examine good practices on sustainable tourism that are already in place and look into best practices from other regions (e.g. Baltic Sea) that could be successfully replicated in the Black Sea Region.

2. Social & Cultural linkages / Special interest tourism types

- **Medical Tourism**

In the recent past, a trend known as medical tourism has emerged offering citizens of highly developed countries a possibility to travel to less developed areas of the world to receive a wide variety of medical services rather than to seek those at home. **Healthcare and medical tourism**, as special interest tourism type, is on the rise in the Black Sea region thanks to technological developments in transport and medical industry. Despite the Black Sea region's good quality medical infrastructure combined with its competitive tourism industry, realization of medical tourism potential in the area requires cooperation between researchers, policy makers and business people.

Cultural linkages between the Black Sea countries play a significant role in social cohesion of the region's peoples, its economic growth and provide base for sustainable development. **Cultural tourism** is one of the world's fastest growing sectors as visitors are increasingly interested in experiencing unique cultures and traditions, something that the Black Sea countries could offer in abundance.

- **Gastronomic Tourism**

Another example of a rapidly growing niche sectors in the Black Sea region is **Gastronomic Tourism**. As relatively new concept, the gastronomic tourism is growing in popularity across the globe and around the Black Sea destinations. Combining food, drink and culture, this type of travel & recreation offers an authentic experience, reflecting on unique tastes and flavors of a particular country or region.

- **Film Tourism**

The last decade has witnessed the creation of a number of **new film festivals** of international scale in the Black Sea countries. This movement provides a base for integrating the Black Sea region into the international film community which in turn, stipulates a greater exposure of the region worldwide and offers new opportunities for the region's tourism industry development.

3. Youth and inclusive employment in tourism

Through the strengthening of capacity in relevant institutions, the IBSS aims at contributing towards addressing a number of development challenges the Black Sea region facing, such as high levels of unemployment, particularly amongst the youth and disadvantaged social groups, as well as skills gaps in the tourism sector.

According to the **World Tourism Organization**, 94 million international tourists visited the Black Sea region and the number is expected to rise in the next years. The IBSS calls to address the areas of interest mentioned above in order to provide a platform for discussions and provision of possible solutions that would contribute to the development and implementation of practices of sustainable tourism development that would allow the Black Sea countries to live up to their full potential.