



## Regional Stakeholders Conference

# Black Sea Synergy: the way forward

Thursday, 7 November 2019

Athens, Greece

## Working Group 3: Education

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### Concept paper

#### COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

##### A. Background information

The implementation report of the Black Sea Synergy (2015-2018)<sup>1</sup> shows that education is one of the less developed areas of cooperation in the Black Sea region, but it has a significant potential and receives interest from different organizations from the EU and non-EU Black Sea countries. One of the most successful EU flagship initiatives for cooperation in the field of education is Erasmus+ programme (with overall budget of 14,7 billion Euro). 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. In the period 2014-2017, Erasmus+ supported nearly 3400 academic mobility opportunities, specifically university exchanges between Black Sea countries (including Bulgaria, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine). Additionally, 2100 young people and youth workers participated in joint Erasmus+ youth projects in the Black Sea region (exchanges, policy debate, volunteering). Black

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<sup>1</sup> Black Sea Synergy: review of a regional cooperation initiative -period 2015-2018 URL: [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/swd\\_2019\\_100\\_f1\\_joint\\_staff\\_working\\_paper\\_en\\_v3\\_p1\\_1013788-1.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/swd_2019_100_f1_joint_staff_working_paper_en_v3_p1_1013788-1.pdf)



Sea partner countries benefited from capacity-building projects in higher education to support modernization, innovation and internationalization. Partner countries benefited as well from Jean Monnet actions (designed to promote teaching, learning and research in the field of European Union studies).

Areas related to research and innovation (especially marine), fisheries, environmental protection and blue growth are viewed as areas of cooperation with consolidated progress. However, there is much more potential of cooperation in this field. From a science, technology and innovation perspective, a number of bilateral and multilateral projects have been implemented in the Black Sea region, inter alia through the framework programme for research and innovation FP7 (2007-2013), Euratom Research and Training Programme (2014-2018) and the Horizon 2020 (2014-2020), which provide a wide array of funding opportunities in the research and innovation domain. Black Sea Horizon Project (2015-2018) was funded by the Horizon 2020 and implemented by a consortium of 19 institutions from EU and non-EU Black Sea countries to support the EU's external relations with the Black Sea region, stimulate bi-regional STI cooperation and strengthen the economic competitiveness. The Black Sea Horizon Coordination and Support Action facilitated information events on Horizon 2020 in the Black Sea region, in particular events for forming consortia to bid for research proposals and webinars to increase the understanding of cluster policies and cluster management.

The current EU funding mechanisms accessible for the Black Sea synergy countries support joint research training and doctoral programmes, for example the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA) that provide grants for all stages of researchers' careers and encourage transnational, intersectoral and interdisciplinary mobility. The MSCA enable research-focused organizations (universities, research centers, and companies) to host talented foreign researchers, to create strategic partnerships with leading institutions worldwide and aims to equip researchers with the necessary skills and international experience for a successful career in the public or private sector<sup>2</sup>.

The role of science and innovation as a basis for transnational cooperation in wide range of areas is increasing. Although cooperation in the field of science and innovation may be viewed separately from the area of education, rapid technological development and the increasing role of innovation in the modern economy requires a timely response for the global and local challenges (inter alia related to the changes of the labour market in the context of the Fourth industrial revolution and Digital economy), and necessitates the relevant modernization of education systems to enhance employability of graduates and improved career prospects. Recent surveys<sup>3</sup> show that people from the Black Sea region are worried that their jobs are going to disappear because of the rapid

<sup>2</sup> Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions URL: <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/marie-skłodowska-curie-actions>

<sup>3</sup> European tech insights (2019) URL: <https://docs.ie.edu/cgc/European-Tech-Insights-2019.pdf>



automation and profound changes of labour market in the next 10 years. In this regard, the governments should take strong policy measures to tackle negative effects of automation, inter alia through timely modernization of the education, providing life-long learning opportunities.

For the past few years the cooperation in the field of education and science in the Black Sea region has been acknowledged in ministerial declarations and other official international documents. In particular, the joint Moscow Declaration of the Ministers in Charge of Education of the Member States of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (2018)<sup>4</sup> recognized the importance of enhancing regional synergy between the relevant authorities, academic and research communities, harnessing potential of higher education and research institutions and further development of university collaborations for multilateral cooperation in the field of education and research in the region. Burgas Declaration (2018)<sup>5</sup> acknowledged the common maritime and marine challenges facing the countries in the Black Sea region and recognized marine science and maritime education as a basis for cooperation in the region and as a key factor in improving and developing new skills in the Blue Economy.

Education, science and innovation can be viewed as a tool to unlock the potential for blue growth in living resources, offshore renewable energy, tourism, culture, transport or seafloor hydrocarbons that underpin the blue economy of the region. Science and innovation support the development and implementation of coastal and maritime policies and strategies in the Black Sea, including better ecosystem assessments, forecasts and management; understanding of vulnerability, risks and possible mitigation measures, whereas knowledge support evidence-based and informed decision-making towards the sustainable growth of the Black Sea economies in response to the societal and environmental or climate-related challenges<sup>6</sup>.

## **B. Challenges & opportunities**

The Black Sea region is facing major challenges with respect to achieving the transformative changes toward a sustainable future. Global geopolitical turbulence and the specifics of the bilateral relations in the region impact multilateral cooperation between the Black Sea countries, however global and local challenges, related to the Fourth Industrial revolution and Sustainable development goals require joint efforts. Key transformations needed to achieve the Sustainable development goals

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<sup>4</sup> Joint Moscow declaration of the ministers in charge of education of the member states of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (2018) URL: <http://www.bsec-organization.org/UploadedDocuments/AreasOfCooperation/Education/StatDecl/Annex VI - Joint Declaration MINEDU final.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Ministerial Declaration: Towards a Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea (2018) URL: [https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/maritimeday/sites/mare-emd/files/burgas-ministerial-declaration\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/maritimeday/sites/mare-emd/files/burgas-ministerial-declaration_en.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Burgas Vision Paper: A Blue Growth Initiative for Research and Innovation in the Black Sea (2018) URL: [https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/maritimeday/sites/mare-emd/files/burgas-vision-paper\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/maritimeday/sites/mare-emd/files/burgas-vision-paper_en.pdf)



(based on the major drivers of societal change) include human capacity, consumption and production, decarbonisation, and the digital revolution<sup>7</sup>. Although the balance of social, economic and environmental dimensions is required to ensure sustainable development, achievement of the sustainable development is a societal rather than an environmental challenge, hence substantial advances in human capacity are needed, inter alia through the improvement of education.

Science, technology, and innovation support sustainable development, whereas digital revolution necessitates modernization of approaches to education, that becomes one of the basic elements of addressing global and regional challenges, related to the development of Green, Blue and Digital economy, as well as achieving SDGs in the Black Sea region. The societal risks related to the internationalization of education at global and regional levels include commodification and commercialization of education programmes and the “brain drain” issue<sup>8</sup>. Although, there has been an improvement in the internationalization of higher education in the Black Sea region, further development of academic and scientific mobility is still a priority, as well as the enhancement of exchange of information and best practices in the field of education. One of the main challenges for policymakers dealing with the Black Sea basin is the limited availability of accurate reliable and comparable data (related to education, research and innovation, inter alia marine and maritime data, which is one of the most developed areas of cooperation).

Further bi-regional and regional education, science, technology and innovation policy dialogues and project development are required, including initiatives on the exchange of best practices in education and popularization of science. In this regard, science diplomacy is a positive example of STI cooperation in the Black Sea region. Promotion of the business-education and business-science interaction and cooperation in the Black Sea region requires the development and implementation of the relevant instruments for multilateral cooperation. The Enhanced European Innovation Council | EIC pilot is one of such instruments in the field of science that supports top-class innovators, entrepreneurs, small companies and scientists with bright ideas and the ambition to scale up internationally (available for small and medium-size enterprises from Horizon 2020 associated countries). Further development of bilateral and multilateral projects within such initiatives will promote market-creating innovations that shape new markets and generate jobs, growth and higher standards of living in the region.

The Black Sea countries should harness the new opportunities for economic development, resilience and connectivity in the region and beyond<sup>9</sup>, fostering prosperity, stability, and resilience in the Black

<sup>7</sup> TWI2050 – The World in 2050 (2018). Transformations to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. URL: [https://www.iiasa.ac.at/web/home/research/twi/TWI2050\\_Report\\_web-small-071018.pdf](https://www.iiasa.ac.at/web/home/research/twi/TWI2050_Report_web-small-071018.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Internationalization of Higher Education: An Evolving Landscape, Locally and Globally (2019) URL: [https://iaa-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/iaa\\_5th\\_global\\_survey\\_executive\\_summary.pdf](https://iaa-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/iaa_5th_global_survey_executive_summary.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Council Conclusions on the EU's engagement to the Black Sea regional cooperation (2019) URL: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/39779/st10219-en19.pdf>



Sea area. In this regard, cooperation with local communities, academic and business representatives should be significantly extended, as well as strengthening synergies between various funding instruments for sustainable regional development and encouraging investment and blending of funds for projects in the Black Sea region. It is imperative to determine impeding policies, reverse or modify them, and scale up recent advances that promote the Blue Growth and the SDGs.

### C. Key objectives of the session

- a) identify challenges, drivers and opportunities for regional cooperation in the field of education.
- b) discuss national policy priorities of countries from the Black Sea region;
- c) develop project proposals that could receive funding by EU or other national, regional and international funding instruments.

### D. Questions:

- 1) What are the main challenges, obstacles to cooperation in the field of education in the region?
- 2) What are the national policy priorities on cooperation in the field of education in the region?
- 3) Are there any national or regional policies that impede cooperation in the field of education?
- 4) How to enhance bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the field of education?
- 5) How to increase the involvement of the academic community from EU and non-EU Black Sea countries in joint projects for the development of the Black Sea region?
- 6) Are there any national best practices or approaches for the development of skills required for blue and digital economies that can be scaled up and implemented in the Black Sea region?
- 7) How to increase information exchange in the field of education in the region?
- 8) How to enhance cooperation in vocational education (if necessary)?
- 9) How to increase student and academic mobility in the field of blue and digital economy?
- 10) What areas of cooperation in the field of education and science could be developed beyond ecology and marine research?
- 11) How to increase communication and collaboration of the universities in the region?
- 12) How to increase university-business cooperation in the region (ensure closer involvement of regional industry and employers' representatives to the activity of academia and training institutes, inter alia in the context of the development of educational programmes)?



- 13) How to create business opportunities and long-term investments in the education?
- 14) Are there any national practices in promotion of excellence in teaching and research that could be scaled up to the regional level?
- 15) How to increase involvement of youth in the development of the Black Sea region?
- 16) Are there any national internship and scholarships programmes in the field of green, blue or digital economy that could be scaled up to the regional level?
- 17) What national funding mechanisms could be used for supporting multilateral cooperation projects in the field of education in the Black Sea region?

The outcomes of this session will be shared with the other three working groups on **culture & tourism, transport and energy**. The results of each working group will be presented in a policy paper by ICBSS in cooperation with the moderators, to be sent to the EU as a key deliverable from the Conference.

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**Moderator:**

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*Deputy co-chair of the Russian side of the Turkish-Russian Civic Forum's Committee on Science and Education, State expert in the BSEC Working Group on cooperation in Science and Technology and Working Group on Education.*

**Organization:**

*Southern Federal University is the leading university in the South of Russia. Priority research areas include: Robotics, control systems, navigation and communications; Digital and information technologies; Nanotechnologies, smart materials; medicine of the future, biotechnologies; Innovation and marine ecosystems (Azov and Black Sea Basin); Design & architecture; Geopolitics, social and economic studies.*