



## PRESS RELEASE

Athens, 3 December 2020

### SEArica online Conference on the Black Sea:

#### How can regional frameworks foster sustainable blue growth in the Black Sea basin?

Thursday, 3 December 2020



The Seas, Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas ([SEArica](#)) Intergroup together with the International Centre for Black Sea Studies ([ICBSS](#)) and the Balkan and Black Sea Commission of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions ([BBSC CPMR](#)), co-organised the **1<sup>st</sup> SEArica Conference on the Black Sea**, entitled “*How can regional frameworks foster sustainable blue growth in the Black Sea basin?*”, on Thursday **3 December 2020**.

The event aimed to present the political and scientific framework for the Black Sea and discuss with key stakeholders how the EU can answer the needs of the main sectors contributing to the **blue economy** in the Black Sea region. The conference's **objective** was to provide a dialogue platform amongst EU and national policy-makers, and key regional stakeholders to encourage a debate that will allow for better understanding of the purpose of the main EU strategies focusing on the blue economy in the region. It also motivated regional stakeholders to become actively involved in the successful implementation of these frameworks' objectives, and more importantly, bring forward their perspective concerning the Black Sea region.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Searica Conference was chaired and moderated by **Ms Carmen AVRAM**, Member of the European Parliament and Vice-Chair of the SEArica Intergroup, responsible for the Danube and the Black Sea, who opened the event with a welcome address, by emphasizing the cross-cutting character of the topic discussed.

Following, the prominent speakers of the event, **Mr Christos ECONOMOU**, Acting Director for Maritime Policy and Blue Economy, Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE), European Commission, **Ms Anna KARDJEVA**, Bulgarian Coordination Team of the Steering Group of the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea, Ministry of Transport, Information Technology and Communications of the Republic of Bulgaria, **Ms Sieglinde GRUBER**, Head of Healthy Oceans & Seas (RTD.C.4) Unit, Healthy Planet, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD), European Commission, expressed their views on how can regional frameworks foster sustainable blue growth in the Black Sea basin from their perspective. In addition, Professor **Dr Baris SALIHOGLU**, Black Sea CONNECT Coordinator, analyzed the Black Sea Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA), whilst **Mr Tornike RIJVADZE**, Chairman of Government, Ajara Autonomous Republic (Georgia), CPMR BBSC Member, CPMR Vice-President responsible for Neighbourhood Policy, described the regional perspective.

At the second part of the Conference, a debate with key regional stakeholders on blue economy priorities encouraged the open discussion on the events' topic. More specifically, Associate Professor **Dr Taner ALBAYRAK**, Piri Reis University (Turkey), Black Sea Association of Maritime Institutions (BSAMI), talked about *Education*, **Mr Viktor DOVHAN**, Expert, "Assistance to the Ukrainian authorities for establishment of national transport model and master plan" (EU-funded project) about *Transport*, **Ms Florentina CARAMITRU**, Constanta County Council (Romania) about *Tourism*, **Ms Emma GILEVA**, Black Sea NGO Network (BSNN) about *Civil Society*, and last but not least, **Ms Evgeniia KOSTIANAIA**, Black Sea Young Ambassador from Russia about *Youth*.

During Q&A, participants and organisers highlighted important issues for future discussions and next steps. In total, more than 100 participants from the wider region joined the webinar.

The event will complement and support the preparation of the [Regional Stakeholders' Conference of the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea](#) that will take place on 10 December 2020. During the upcoming Common Maritime Agenda conference concrete ideas for the identification of flagship projects as part of the sustainable and resilient recovery response will be discussed with the stakeholders through specifically dedicated thematic sessions.

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**About the ICBSS:** The International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) was founded in 1998 as a non-profit organisation. It has since fulfilled a dual function. On the one hand, it is an independent research and training institution focusing on the wider Black Sea region. On the other hand, it is a related body of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and serves as its acknowledged think-tank. Thus, the ICBSS pursues applied, policy-oriented research, promotes knowledge on the Black Sea region both within and outside its boundaries, and offers policy advice with the aim to foster multilateral cooperation among the BSEC member states as well as with their international partners.