



GOVERNANCE IN THE BLACK SEA BASIN



Please note that this document is intended to present a snapshot of the current governance of EU Sea basins as of November 2024. However as highlighted by the sections that follow, this can be dynamic and is subject to change.

As a common good, for decades sea basins have been areas for cooperation between States. In the first instance, cooperation was driven by environmental aspects since marine ecosystems do not know legal borders, and their environmental status is dependent on the pressures/stressors from all around the sea basin. As a result, regional sea conventions (e.g., OSPAR, HELCOM, Barcelona Convention, Bucharest Convention) were set up in each sea basin with dedicated organisations to assess human impacts and to propose actions to recover a good environmental status for the marine ecosystems, notably under the policy framework of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

In parallel, and in line with EU integrated maritime policy (IMP), various maritime policy frameworks have been established and endorsed to support cooperation on maritime affairs in sea basins. Most of them have been engaging EU MSs and the non-EU neighbouring countries across whole sea basins (Mediterranean, Atlantic, Black Sea, Baltic, North Sea) or subsea basins (WestMED, Adriatic & Ionian Seas).

Considering the local, regional and sea basin specificities, this framework contributes to the Sustainable Blue Economy (SBE) in line with the European Commission's communication on "a new approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU" ([COM\(2021\)240 final](#)). Ministerial declarations, roadmaps and dedicated governance have been designed/anticipated to catalyse cooperation.

After a detailed review of the Black Sea basin strategies, marine conventions and macroregions, this study provides an overview of how SBE and Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) have been considered within the Black Sea basin by each initiative, and by recalling their objectives and governance, how each initiative can therefore be an enabler for SBE via MSP. It highlights the cooperation between EU MS and non-EU MS. This first edition will be published on the EU MSP Platform and updated accordingly following any related update.

In summary, it states that MSP has been a long-standing topic in certain Regional Sea Conventions (e.g., HELCOM) while in others, it is just emerging (e.g., Barcelona Convention) along with other concepts such as land-sea interactions and Integrated Coastal Zone Management. In addition, it highlights that the EU Mission "Restore our ocean and waters", the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership but also projects under regional programmes and funding instruments (i.e. EMFAF) have a strong regional dimension with MSP playing an important role. Even if it is not a "governance framework" in the strict sense, it can steer cooperation amongst member states and beyond.

All the frameworks and initiatives included have declared an interest or have been implementing concepts and tools related to MSP to meet their respective objectives. All of them should enable the implementation of the future EU Oceans Pact via the cooperation framework that they constitute in each sea basin.



Initiatives' geographical coverage

General note: the borders presented by the map are the ones agreed by the UN.

Existing and endorsed initiatives which are linked to the EU Sustainable Blue Economy or Integrated Maritime Policy (an extensive approach where MSP could be implemented/promoted)

- **Marine regional convention:** The Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution – Bucharest Convention (BSC)
- **Sea basin BE strategy or initiative:** Common Maritime Agenda (CMA) for the Black Sea
- Macroregion

International Conventions Black Sea Basin

- Common Maritime Agenda (CMA)
- Bucharest Convention (BSC)



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Bucharest Convention

PARTIES	EU Member States		Non-UE Member States			
	BULGARIA	ROMANIA	UKRAINE	TÜRKYIE	GEORGIA	RUSSIAN FEDERATION
						

Date of endorsement – legal framework: the [Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution](#) was signed in Bucharest in April 1992, and ratified by all six legislative assemblies of the Black Sea countries at the beginning of 1994.

MAIN GOALS AND TOPICS

The basic framework of the agreement and three specific Protocols are (1) the control of land-based sources of pollution; (2) dumping of waste; and (3) joint action in the case of accidents (such as oil spills).

GOVERNANCE

Contracting Parties have established a “Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution” which is attended by national representatives. The Commission is chaired on a yearly basis by one of the Contracting Parties.

The Commission is assisted in its activities by a permanent Secretariat.

With the endorsement of the Black Sea Action Plan in 1996, an Advisory Group on the Development of Common Methodologies for Integrated Coastal Zone ([AG ICZM](#)) was set up to give advice to the Black Sea Commission on how to properly manage the coastal zone. The AG ICZM was to advise on the definition and the implementation of regionally coordinated integrated coastal zone management strategies, methodologies and instruments.

INTERACTIONS AND SYNERGIES WITH OTHER FRAMEWORKS IN THE SEA BASIN OR BEYOND

Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea for environmental matters.

STATEMENT ON MSP PROMOTION, IMPLEMENTATION, COOPERATION UNDER THE INITIATIVE BETWEEN EU MS (MSPD) AND ICZM

MSP is for now not mentioned as a priority for BSC. Regarding ICZM, the 1996 Black Sea Action Plan stated that coordinated integrated coastal zone management strategies should have been developed for the Black Sea region. To attain this, the following actions were decided:

- A Regional Black Sea Strategy for integrated coastal zone management to be developed by the Istanbul Commission by 2005, upon the recommendations of its Advisory Group on the Development of Common Methodologies for Integrated Coastal Zone Management. The regional strategy should elaborate basic principles and methodologies for land- and water-use planning as well as for designing zoning systems. The methodologies and principles recommended in the regional strategy shall be taken into account when developing or reviewing national strategies and planning instruments for integrated coastal zone management.
- Each Black Sea coastal State should endeavour to adopt and implement, in accordance with its own legal system, no later than 1999, the legal and other instruments required to facilitate integrated coastal zone management.
- Inter-sectoral committees for integrated coastal zone management should be established at the national, regional and local levels of public administration no later than 1997. These committees should design and implement national plans for integrated coastal zone management through participatory approaches.








But despite their common decision and the first [report on 1996-2000 implementation of the Black Sea Convention](#), the [BLACK SEA STATE OF ENVIRONMENT REPORT 2009-2014/5](#) highlighted more issues than progress in the implementation of 1996 Black Sea Action Plan with only partial ICZM strategies being defined in Romania and Georgia.

REFERENCES

[The Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution](#)



Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea

PARTIES	EU Member States			Non-UE Member States			
	EUROPEAN UNION	BULGARIA	ROMANIA	UKRAINE	TÜRKYIE	GEORGIA	MOLDOVA
							

NB: the Russian Federation was party to the CMA but since the start of their war of aggression against Ukraine, on 22 February 2022, its participation has been suspended.

Date of endorsement – legal framework: The CMA was endorsed on 21 May 2019 by participating countries in a [Ministerial declaration](#).

MAIN GOALS AND TOPICS

The Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea (CMA) is the EU sea basin strategy aiming to support regional cooperation for a more sustainable blue economy in the Black Sea. It has been developed in the broader framework of the [Black Sea Synergy](#) as one of its fields of cooperation related to sustainable blue economy, marine research and innovation. The CMA sets 3 main goals - 1. Healthy marine ecosystems; 2. Innovative Blue Economy; 3. Investment – and 10 further priorities later reinstated as actions. It is complemented by its scientific pillar, the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for the Black Sea (SRIA), supported by the Directorate General for Research and Innovation of the European Commission.

GOVERNANCE

Political coordination is provided through ad hoc Ministerial meetings. These meetings are convened upon the initiative of the coordinator of the Common Maritime Agenda Steering Group (CMA SG). One formal Ministerial meeting took place in 2019 to endorse the CMA (cf. [declaration](#)). Operational coordination is ensured through a Steering Group, made up of the country representatives at senior official level, the European Commission (DG MARE) and observers, which coordinate the implementation of priorities and actions of the Agenda. The [Permanent Secretariat of the Bucharest convention](#) and the [Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation](#) (BSEC) are consultative bodies of the CMA SG, while the INTERREG NEXT Black Sea Programme, the GFCM and the World Bank are observers.

Technical groups involving experts and stakeholders can be established to ensure appropriate discussions and implementation at the operational level and to promote the definition and identification of projects. One was established in November 2023 for [sustainable aquaculture development \(SustAqua\)](#).

INTERACTIONS AND SYNERGIES WITH OTHER FRAMEWORKS IN THE SEA BASIN OR BEYOND

In the field of environment, the World Bank supported the CMA implementation particular with the [Blueing the Black Sea](#) GEF project to catalyse blue economy investments for the Black Sea. Under the management of BSEC, this project also supported the BSC.

In the field of marine research and innovation, work on a common vision among Black Sea riparian countries and the Republic of Moldova led to the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) being established in 2019, as the scientific pillar to the Common Maritime Agenda.

The Black Sea SRIA implementation plan launched in May 2023 was co-created with the Senior Officials Working Group for the implementation of the Black Sea SRIA and the Black Sea Operational Network of Funders. As a result, all Black Sea Member States and associated countries aligned their national research and innovation funding plans with the SRIA. The Plan includes future opportunities for cooperation through the EU Mission 'Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030', with its Danube-Black Sea lighthouse, and the European Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership (SBEP).

Blue and smart Region is one of the priorities of [Interreg's 'Next Black Sea Basin](#) Programme'. It aims at supporting regional cooperation projects in line with the CMA and SRIA, in particular on fisheries and aquaculture but also on research infrastructure.

Since European Maritime Day 2024, where a high-level panel on synergies took place, there has been a common interest to develop interactions with other sea basins by taking advantage of the fact that the CMA is supported by the same assistance mechanism (Sea Basin AM) to the Commission, which supports the implementation of the WestMED Initiative and the Atlantic Maritime Strategy.

STATEMENT ON MSP PROMOTION, IMPLEMENTATION, COOPERATION UNDER THE INITIATIVE BETWEEN EU MS (MSPD) AND ICZM

Due mainly to maritime space disputes, in particular between Ukraine and Russia with the invasion of Crimea in 2014, MSP has not been declared as a priority in the CMA. Nevertheless, there has been informal interest from the non-EU MS Black Sea countries, considering the national actions of Romania and Bulgaria to set their MSP in accordance with the MSPD with a focus on cross-border cooperation (cf. MARSPLAN I and II) but also as a third parties' consultation to be led by Romania and Bulgaria in accordance with MSPD.

REFERENCES

[Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea](#)
[Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea \(Implementation Process\)](#)

ANY BEST PRACTICES OR RELATED ACTIONS IN THE SEABASIN

[Cross-Border MARitime Spatial PLANning in the Black Sea \(MARSPLAN\)](#)
[Cross-border Maritime Spatial Planning for the Black Sea - Bulgaria and Romania \(MARSPLAN-BS II\)](#)



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Conclusions at sea basin level

The development of MSP in the Black Sea has been driven by Bulgaria and Romania in accordance with MSPD. The approval of MSP in Romania and Bulgaria took more time than expected due to political instability and a lack of administrative readiness.

The CMA for the Black Sea declaration does not mention MSP development among the CMA objectives due to marine space disputes resulting from the invasion of Crimea in 2014 and despite Goal 2 which is related to Blue Economy development.

As the governance of the CMA follows the same model as the one for the WestMED and the Atlantic Maritime Strategy, the support provided by the European Commission via a common assistance mechanism which is to develop synergies could be a catalyst for MSP cooperation between CMA parties. It would be in line with the outcomes of the EMD 2024 high level panel related to the sea basin strategies.

Nevertheless, if the CMA is a framework for cooperation on blue economy, nationally approved strategies on this topic are lacking. MSP development could be a way of filling this gap, taking advantage of the national past dynamics on ICZM on which 4 out of the 6 countries worked under the BSC. It will also be important to consider in the future dynamics of the EU Mission Ocean in the Black Sea taking advantage of the Black Sea SRIA which initiated cooperation on BE and MSP with EU funded project such as Bridges-BS or DOORS.

