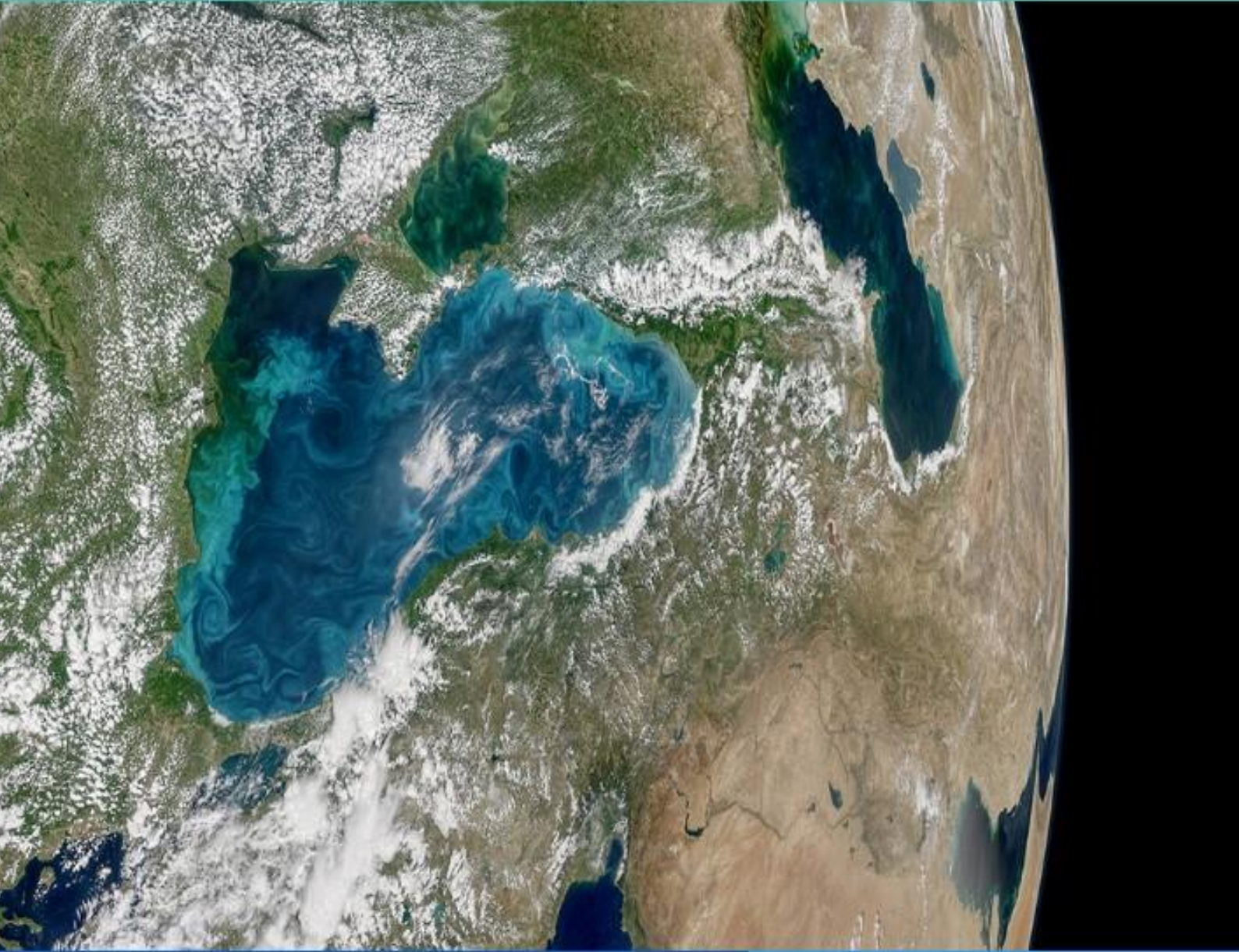


Black Sea CONNECT

Coordination of Marine and Maritime Research and Innovation in the
Black Sea



D4.5 REPORT ON BLACK SEA YOUNG AMBASSADORS' ACTIVITIES



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Black Sea CONNECT Consortium

No	Consortium Members	Type	Short name	Country
1	Middle East Technical University - Institute of Marine Sciences (Coord.)	University, Research Institute	METU	Turkey
2	Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation	Intergovernmental Organization	BSEC	Turkey
3	The National Institute for Research and Development of Marine Geology and Geoecology	Research Institute	GEOECOM AR	Romania
4	Institutul National de Cercetare-Dezvoltare Marina "Grigore Antipa"	Research Institute	INCDM	Romania
5	Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Institute of Oceanology	Research Institute	IO-BAS	Bulgaria
6	The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey	Governmental Research and Funding Agency	TUBITAK	Turkey
7	Institut Français de Recherche pour l'Exploitation de la Mer	Research Institute	IFREMER	France
8	Helmholtz-Zentrum Geesthacht Zentrum für Material- und Küstenforschung GmbH, also representing the German Marine Research Consortium KDM	A consortium of Research Institutes	HEREON	Germany
9	Ukrainian Scientific Centre of Ecology of Sea	Research Institute	UkrSCES	Ukraine
10	'Ion Creanga' State Pedagogical University	University, Research Institute	UPSC	Moldova
11	Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University	University, Research Institute	TSU	Georgia
12	Secretariat of the Black Sea University Network	Non-governmental Organization	BSUN	Romania

Country Abbreviations

ACRONYM	TITLE
Bulgaria	BU
Georgia	GE
Moldova	MO
Romania	RO
Turkey	TR
Ukraine	UA



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1. INTRODUCTION

The **Black Sea Young Ambassador Programme (BSYAP)** was developed to unite youth for the future of the Black Sea, for a healthy, resilient, and sustainable Black Sea, in September 2020, under the Black Sea CONNECT Coordination and Support Action (CSA) (<http://connect2blacksea.org/outreach-introduction-youth-ambassadors/>). Black Sea Young Ambassadors (BSYAs) are young early career ocean professionals (ECOPs) who support the CSA in enhancing the visibility and actions of the Black Sea Blue Economy Initiative, increasing the potential of Black Sea countries in disseminating CSA's outputs, as well as being bridge between science and societies in the Black Sea.

The programme has been integrated at the early stages of the CSA to be able to include youth at all stages of the project activities, increase their contribution to the Black Sea Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) and its implementation plan development processes as well as drive change in their communities. The BSYA journey started with 17 ECOPs from all Black Sea countries (September 2020-August 2022) (<http://connect2blacksea.org/outreach/youth-ambassadors/>). They received different trainings to be equipped for their future activities, represented the Black Sea in the different platforms at the Black Sea, EU and global levels, as well as conducted in-person and online awareness-raising campaigns.

Considering the success of the programme, the BSYA programme has been linked with the SRIA-implementing BRIDGE-BS project (Horizon 2020) not only to increase the impact and visibility of the programme but also to ensure its sustainability. Together with BRIDGE-BS, the foundations of the BSYAs' work and efforts and the bonds they have created between society and science will be getting stronger and broader in scope. The legacy of the Black Sea Young Ambassadors Programme will continue under the BRIDGE-BS project once the Black Sea CONNECT project comes to an end.

After creating this link, to provide opportunities for the new ECOPs and increase the youth network in the Black Sea, the new BSYA cohort joined the forces in September 2022. Now 15 promising young ambassadors from six Black Sea countries (BG, GE, MD, RO, TR, and UA) and 6 senior young ambassadors from the previous cohort as their mentors united for shaping the future of the Black Sea (September 2022 – November 2025) (<http://connect2blacksea.org/outreach-youth-ambassadors-2ndcohort/>) (Figure 1). Unlike the first cohort, in the second group, each ambassador was associated with a particular blue economy sector according to their background or area of interest. In addition to representing the Black Sea youth, they are all linked with one sector by their professional background and interests.

The BSYA has brought a novel dynamic to the CSA, especially in terms of visibility and dissemination efforts. In this report, the programme as general and BSYA activities are given in the following sessions. The programme has been coordinated by the Black Sea CONNECT coordination team and WP4 Task 4.3, with the METU as the lead.



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Figure 1 Black Sea Young Ambassadors Key Visuals (L: 1st Cohort, R: 2nd Cohort)

2. BLACK SEA YOUNG AMBASSADORS PROGRAMME AS GENERAL

For communication purposes, better alignment among all related parties involved, define roles and responsibilities at the beginning of the Black Sea Young Ambassadors Programme, a Terms of References (ToR) was created and it has been updated periodically. The next section contains general information such as goals, application/selection procedures, and activities, which were outlined in the ToR document.

2.1. Goals of the BSYAP

- Training and equipping a new generation of young Black Sea citizens with knowledge, practical skills, and the potential to address issues on marine science, science & policy integration, and sustainable blue sea economy in the region.
- Developing a network of young influencers willing to be actors for positive change in their communities, countries, and beyond.
- Contributing to, and promoting, a richer mutual understanding of, values, identity, history, and cultures through a collective learning experience.
- Empowering the Young Ambassadors to take an active role in their communities and provide them with tools for social transformation.
- Allowing Young Ambassadors to meet scientists from leading Marine Science Institutes in Europe and beyond, contributing to their academic and professional career development.

2.2. Roles of the Black Sea Young Ambassadors

- Actively advocating and promoting marine science, sustainable blue economy, and ocean literacy.
- Becoming a voice of the Black Sea and raising awareness of its challenges, marine ecosystem services, and Blue Economy activities, EU Mission Ocean, and UN Ocean Decade.
- Participating and contributing to the Black Sea CONNECT and BRIDGE-BS, along with the European Commission events and activities.
- Assisting in the organization of regional and Black Sea basin-scale events.
- Promoting and communicating specific and foresight activities related to the Blue Economy in the Black Sea, Black Sea CONNECT, and BRIDGE-BS.



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- Engaging in meetings, activities of education, outreach and advocacy, team-building exercises, and meetings with community leaders.
- Building knowledge and skills in working at the science-policy/industry/civil society/general public, interface.
- Campaigning and driving positive change in their own communities, countries, regionally, and beyond.
- Engaging with young people to contribute to building a generation that protects seas and oceans.
- Creating opportunities for further cooperation and collaboration and follow-up activities between the Black Sea and the EU sea basins.

2.3. Application and Selection Process

- The Black Sea Young Ambassadors Programme and application process were announced with an open call via the website, social media channels of Black Sea CONNECT, partners of CSA and the blue economy community. For the 2nd call, digital media channels of the BRIDGE-BS project were also used.
- Applicants were asked to submit the application form, a short motivation letter on how they believe their role could impact their career, and how they would contribute to promoting Blue Economy in the Black Sea with references.
- A panel of experts from the Black Sea CONNECT CSA reviewed all applications. A clear, open and transparent evaluation and selection was conducted in order to ensure successful and ambitious candidates meet the criteria are selected. From each Black Sea riparian country, at least two candidates were selected.
- After pre-selection, the opinions of national mentors (Steering Committee members) were consulted for the shortlisted candidates.
- The Black Sea CONNECT Coordination Team contacted the applicants after the selection process to bring them on board.
- *35 applications received in the first call, 19 applications in the second call.*

2.4. Selection Criteria of Black Sea Young Ambassadors

Candidates are selected according to the following criteria;

- Curious about the world, and the ocean. Interested in community building, science diplomacy, public engagement, education and training, and youth issues
- Good communicators, and willing to use their creativity, imagination and communication skills to help promote Blue Economy in the region (via blogs/videos/social media posts/performances and writing articles)
- Fluent English speakers
- Comfortable with public speaking
- Between the ages of 20-35 years
- Able to travel within their country and to the Black Sea riparian countries for attending the CSA and Blue Economy-related events, trainings and more



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- One of the following: I) MSc, PhD student or post-doc researcher who can demonstrate marine and maritime research, policy-relevant science and /or industry, II) science communicator, III) environmental NGO, IV) activist, V) science diplomat from the Black Sea countries.
- Volunteer to work as an ambassador until the end of the related term's duration
- Committed to working in this program during the related term's duration
- *In line with the selection criteria specified above, for 1st call 17, and 2nd call 15 ambassadors were selected, considering diversity, country representative distribution and more.*

2.5. General Activities of the Black Sea Young Ambassadors

- **Orientation Programme:** With an orientation programme, the objectives are to foster connections among Black Sea Young Ambassadors, allowing them to share “what connects them to the Black Sea” and start to develop their vision and goals based on this connection as well as the needs and opportunities of the Black Sea. This very first meeting serves the purpose of informing on the fundamentals of the Blue Economy in the Black Sea, providing an overview of the objectives, and activities of EU H2020 Black Sea CONNECT, BRIDGE-BS, and how BSYA can contribute to them. Moreover, it aimed to introduce the Black Sea SRIA and its implementation, and last but not least science communication, and ocean literacy principles.
- **Training Programmes:** BSYAs receive different training and participate in workshops designed to equip these ECOPs with both theoretical and practical expertise in scientific and communication skills that help them in their awareness-raising activities such as summer/winter schools, and awareness-raising campaign development workshops.
- **Black Tea Time with Youth Meetings:** Online meeting series, where experts come together with young ambassadors (Figure 2), aims to inspire young ambassadors for their activities. At each meeting, BSYAs have a chance to hear about a particular topic related to marine science, the blue economy, important initiatives/programmes, or awareness-raising activities such as EU Beach Clean Up, EU Mission Ocean, UN Ocean Decade ECOP programme, Black Sea SRIA Implementation Plan and more. The meeting series aims to take further action with the positive effect and support of those programmes (organising/participating in an event, contributing to the implementation of the programme, and so on).
- **Participating in Black Sea project events:** Participation in events and organisations organised under Black Sea CONNECT, BRIDGE-BS and DOORS. Such as Black Sea SRIA & Implementation Plan National Consultations (as a representative of youth), General Assembly meeting(s), and/or other external events or workshops such as Black Sea SRIA Implementation Plan Launch Event, Marine Litter Action Forum.
- **Contributing to EU H2020 Black Sea CONNECT, BRIDGE-BS projects activities:** Contributing to the scientific outputs and educational/capacity building activities of the Black Sea CONNECT and BRIDGE-BS projects in line with their background and expertise such as Black Sea CONNECT Joint Actions on Marine Litter and Education.



- **Representing Black Sea Youth in different platforms:** They become young voices of the Black Sea and represent our sea basin in different platforms (i.e. EU events such as Research and Innovation Days, EU Mission Ocean events), activities of other sea & ocean basin blue economy initiatives (i.e. BlueMed Final Conference), ocean literacy and youth-related activities (i.e. Ocean Literacy Festival in the Black Sea) and more.
- **Organising Awareness Raising Campaigns:** Development of online or local awareness-raising campaigns and actions to address the challenges in the Black Sea and opportunities for a sustainable blue economy such as clean-up days, photo contests, plastic-free weeks, Black Sea Action Day campaigns and more.
- **Regular Internal Meetings:** Working with fellow young ambassadors in online and face-to-face meetings to finalize campaigns and actions, meeting regularly with mentors in the relevant countries around the Black Sea and Europe.

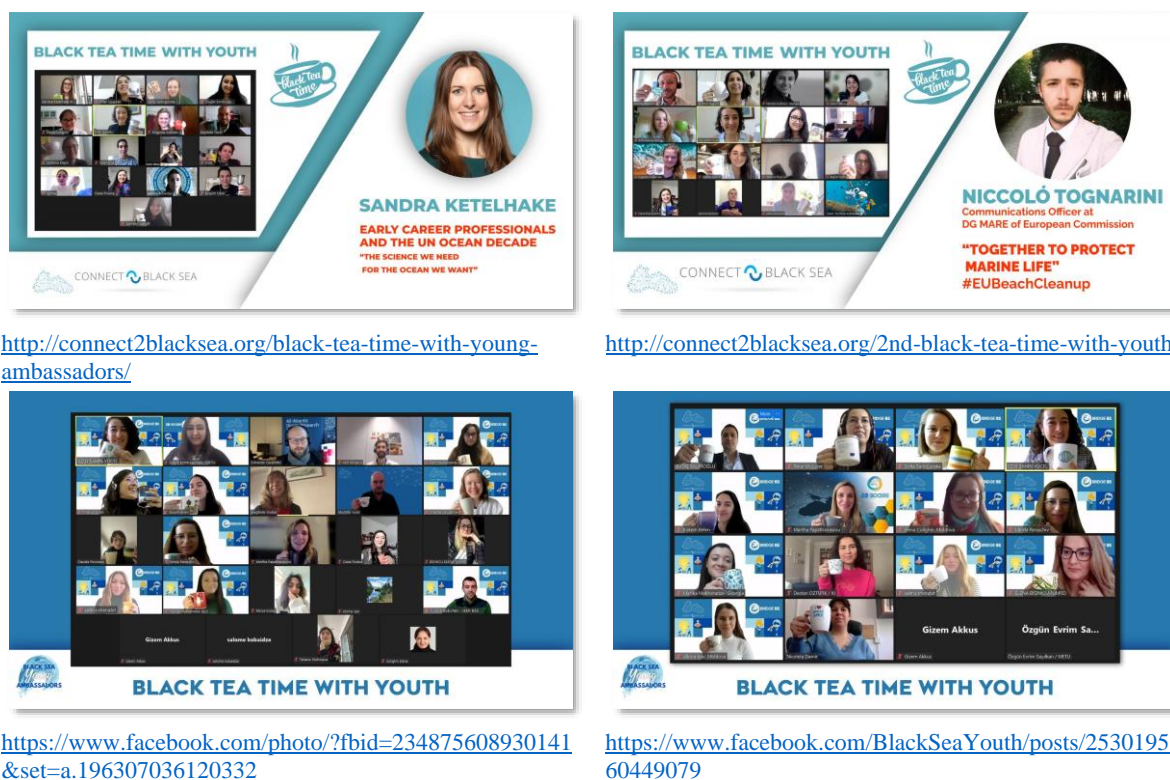


Figure 2 Different Black Tea Time with Youth Meetings

2.6. Black Sea Young Ambassadors Webpages and Social Media Channels

General information on the programme, a showcase of young ambassadors and their activities can be found on Black Sea Young Ambassadors' dedicated webpages on Black Sea CONNECT (Figure 3) and BRIDGE-BS websites. Moreover, there are BSYA dedicated social media channels that have been actively used since March 2021 where all their campaigns and activities along with Black Sea CONNECT and BRIDGE-BS-related updates can be followed. The purpose of BSYA's social media channels extends beyond promoting the programme and CSA. They also serve as vehicles for raising awareness through online campaigns, spotlighting their



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own programme and also contributing to broader youth initiatives, fostering a greater understanding of issues related to the Black Sea region.

Table 1 Black Sea Young Ambassadors Webpages and Social Media Channels

Channel	Name
Black Sea Connect	http://connect2blacksea.org/outreach/youth-ambassadors/
BRIDGE-BS	http://bridgeblacksea.org/index.php/young-ambassadors/
Twitter (Currently transforming to 'X')	https://twitter.com/BlackSeaYouth
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/BlackSeaYouth
Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/blackseayouth/

2.6.1. The BSYA Webpage under the Black Sea CONNECT Website

BSYA webpage has been actively running since 2020 (Figure 3). The total number of page visits has reached a notable figure of 2.2K between March 2020 to June 2023 (Figure 4). This quantitative insight underscores the level of engagement and interest that the webpage has managed to garner within this timeframe. It is observed that there is an increase in the number of page visits during and after events in which the ambassadors take an active role such as the SRIA IP Launch Event or Marine Litter Action Forum along with application periods. Besides, it is within the top 3 pages visited under the Black Sea CONNECT website. This data-driven insight serves to highlight the relevance and significance accorded to the BSYA and its activities within the larger context of the Black Sea CONNECT.



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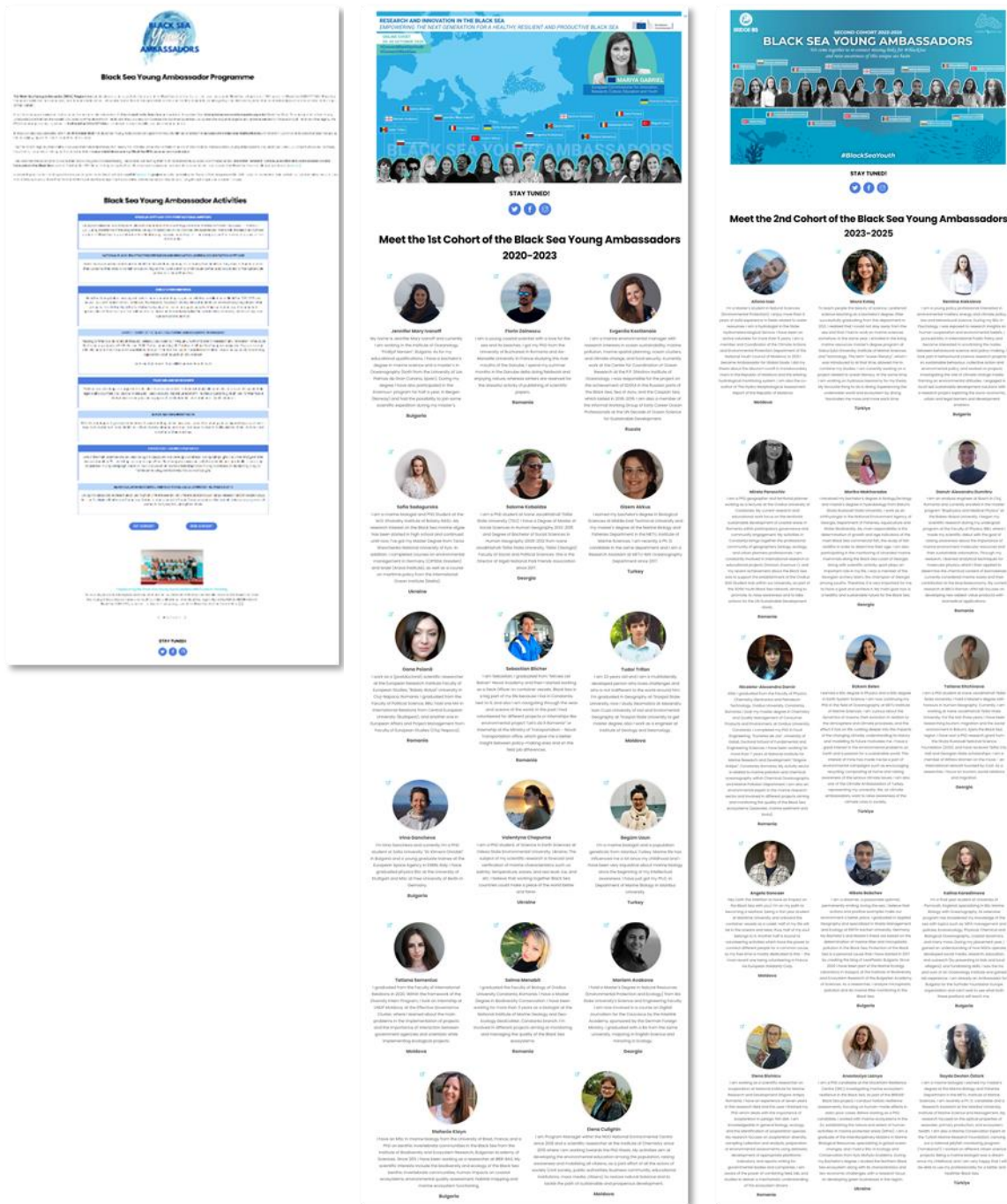


Figure 3 The Black Sea Young Ambassadors Webpage, (L: General Info, M: 1st Cohort, R: 2nd Cohort (Black Sea CONNECT website, 2023)

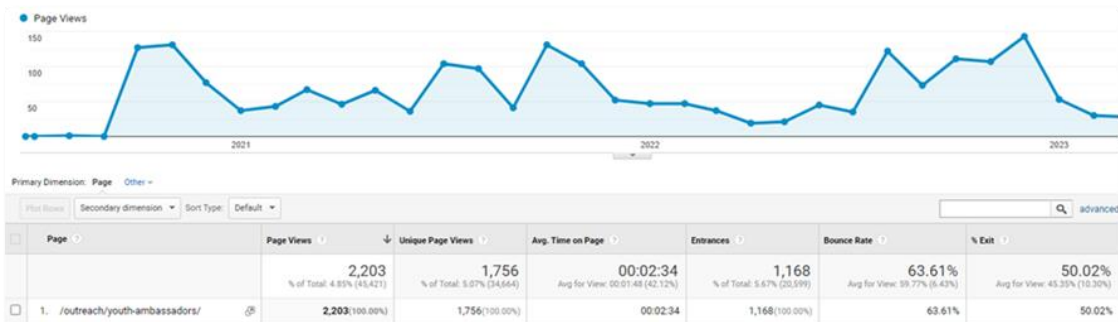


Figure 4 BSYA Webpage Visit Google Statistics between 2021 and 2023 (Google Analytics, 2023)



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2.6.2. Social Media Channels

Social media accounts of Young Ambassadors were established to support each other for a better impact. As of March 2021, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts were suggested by the Young Ambassadors. These accounts are populated by the content created by the Young Ambassadors themselves. The Coordination Team assists the Young Ambassadors in maintenance of their social media accounts with a range of mechanisms including textual, visual and contextual support. So far, the Black Sea CONNECT Communications Officer has been provided visuals and templates to be used on the Young Ambassador social media accounts. After Black Sea CONNECT, the BRIDGE-BS communication team will continue to support them. As of June 2023, BSYA Twitter has 269, Facebook has 282, Instagram has 183 followers. More than 1000 posts shared in total from their accounts disseminate Black Sea Young Ambassadors and their activities (Figure 5).

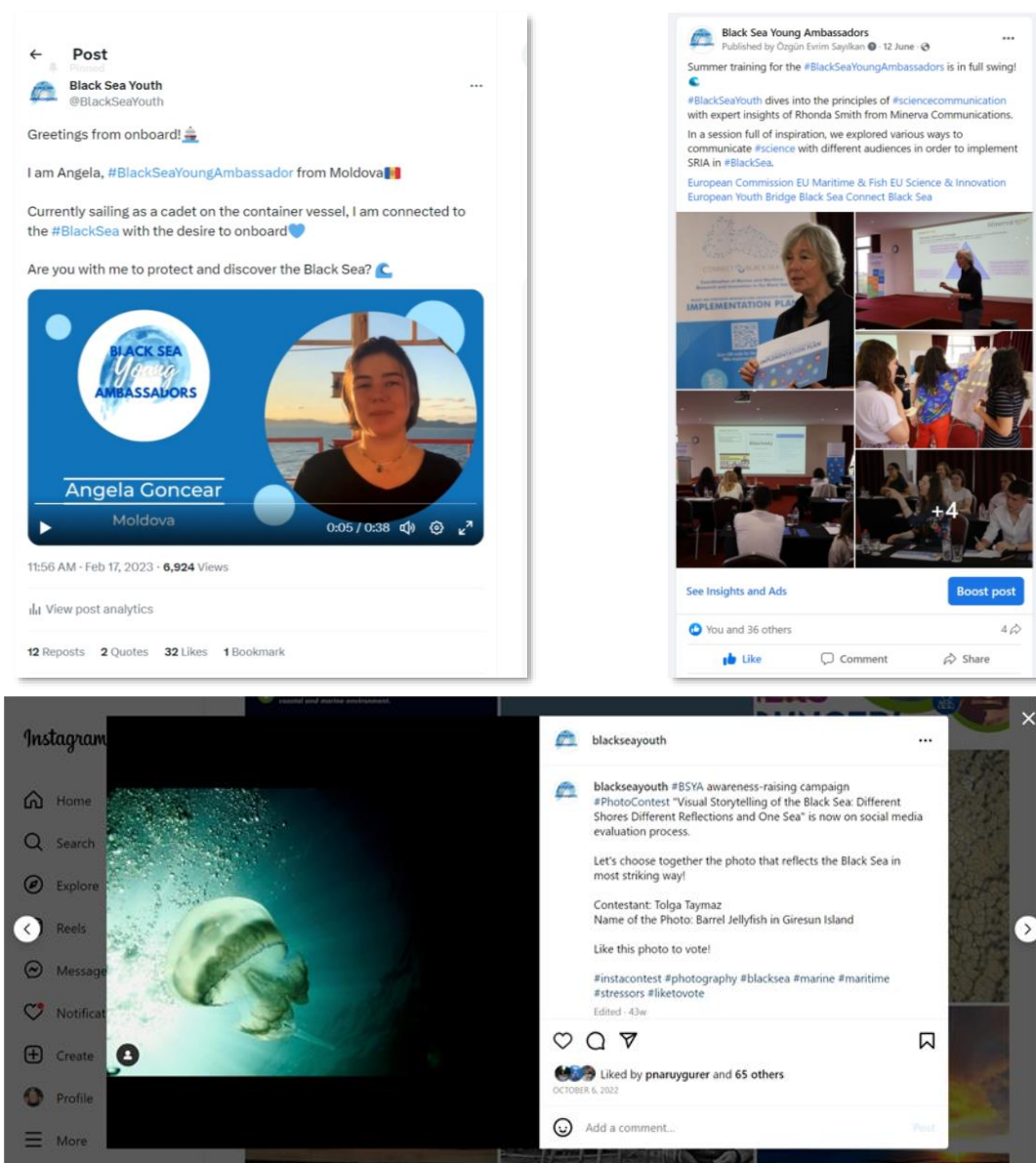


Figure 5 Examples of different Social Media shares such as Introductory Videos, Summer Training Event, Photo Contest SoMe Category



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3. ACTIVITIES OF THE BLACK SEA YOUNG AMBASSADORS

3.1. Activities of the 1st Cohort

The 1st cohort of the BSYAs has faced many difficulties due to limited traveling during the COVID-19 pandemic and then due the unjustified war on Ukraine. Nevertheless, they managed to hold their meetings and events online, creating their impact in new forms.

The list of activities (Table 2) and the highlights of the trainings they received, the activities they carried out and the events they represented the Black Sea youth are given below.

Table 2 Highlights from the activities of BSYA 1st Cohort (2020-2022)

Event / Activity	Date	Place
Orientation Meeting	12 October 2020	Online
SRIA National Consultation Meetings	September-October 2020	Online, Hybrid (BG, GE, MD, RO, TR and UA)
Research and Innovation in the Black Sea: Empowering the next generation for a healthy, resilient and productive Black Sea http://connect2blacksea.org/research-and-innovation-in-the-black-sea-empowering-the-next-generation-for-a-healthy-resilient-and-productive-black-sea/	29-30 October 2020	Online
UN Ocean Decade Virtual Early Career Ocean Professionals Day 2021: The Black Sea Wind in our sails, to the ocean we want! http://connect2blacksea.org/vecop-day-2021-the-black-sea-wind-in-our-sails-to-the-ocean-we-want/	01 June 2021	Online
Autumn School http://connect2blacksea.org/black-sea-young-ambassadors-autumn-school-2021/	02-03 November 2021	Online
Black Tea Time Meetings with Youth (i.e. EU Clean Up Day, ECOP) http://connect2blacksea.org/2nd-black-tea-time-with-youth/	Regular Basis	Online
Social Media Campaigns (i.e. Black Sea Action Day, Plastic Free Black Sea)	Regular Basis	Online
Awareness Raising Campaign Development Workshop http://connect2blacksea.org/black-sea-young-ambassadors-awareness-raising-campaign-development-workshop/	01 February 2022	Online
Awareness Raising Campaigns http://connect2blacksea.org/the-black-sea-youth-acts-for-the-future/	Spring-Summer 2022	Physical / Online (GE, RO, MD, TR)
Black Sea SRIA Implementation Plan Launch Event http://connect2blacksea.org/press-release-on-the-launch-of-the-black-sea-sria-implementation-plan/	04 May 2023	European Parliament, Brussels

The Orientation Meeting 12 October 2020, Online): The first cohort launched their activities by breaking the ice and meeting with their fellow Black Sea young ambassadors (Figure 6). This very first meeting organised by the Black Sea CONNECT coordination team aimed to inform on the fundamentals of the Blue Economy in the Black Sea, share general info about aims and activities of EU H2020 Black Sea CONNECT CSA and how BSYA's can contribute to its visibility and implementation. At the orientation, BSYAs heard about how to



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communicate science to different audiences then they made their very first practice on how to make the Black Sea more visible where they laid the groundwork for their vision and goals as well as the activities they would conduct. Besides, the EC representatives shared the All-Atlantic Youth Programme experience and created a cross-basin connection between youth forces. Alongside with Atlantic basin, a representative of the FP7 project PERSEUS project young ambassador shared their Mediterranean Sea experiences.

News: <https://connect2blacksea.org/4108-2/>



Figure 6 BSYA 1st Cohort Orientation Meeting

SRIA National Consultation Meetings (September-October 2020, Online/Hybrid): Black Sea Young Ambassadors have begun to contribute to the Black Sea SRIA at the very beginning of their 2-year term. They attended the national SRIA consultations in their countries, reflected on the discussions, put forward their ideas. They were the voice of youth and contributed to defining national priorities, especially in Pillar 4: Education and Capacity Building related goals and actions. Moreover, some of the BSYAs took part in the SRIA drafting team: for instance, Selma Menabit (Romania) assisted in tasks such as collecting and refining national inputs.

Research and Innovation in the Black Sea: Empowering the next generation for a healthy, resilient and productive Black Sea (30 October 2020, Online): Black Sea Day dedicated event organised by Black Sea CONNECT. On the second day of the event, the Black Sea Young Ambassadors Programme was officially launched by European Commissioner Mariya Gabriel (Figure 7). At the event, Commissioner Gabriel shared new plans towards increasing support of youth, education, and science ([Commissioner Gabriel launches the Black Sea Young Ambassadors Programme and projects results pack \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip20_1923)). 17 Young Ambassadors from 7 Black Sea riparian countries shared their plan for making the Black Sea more visible. They made an emphasis on the missing links in the Black Sea and how to re-connect and create those links for Blue Economy in the Black Sea implementing the SRIA and but not least, they mentioned the importance of being CONNECTed for sustainable futures. Last but not least, at



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the interactive panel, young ambassadors from different sea and ocean basins came together to discuss how to act together towards more visible sea basins.

News: <http://connect2blacksea.org/research-and-innovation-in-the-black-sea-empowering-the-next-generation-for-a-healthy-resilient-and-productive-black-sea/>

Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/connect2blacksea/posts/220615406079112>



Figure 7 Launch of Black Sea Young Ambassadors Programme (30 October 2020, Online)

BSYA Autumn School (02-03 November 2021, Online): A two-day Autumn School was held as part of the Black Sea Young Ambassadors Programme on 02-03 November 2021 (Figure 8). The Autumn School aimed to equip Black Sea Young Ambassadors with theoretical and practical skills that assist them in establishing awareness-raising activities and campaigns to drive change in their communities. The training started with informative and inspiring speeches given by experts from the Black Sea and Europe. Different science communication, ocean literacy projects, and activities are shared with BSYAs such as the EU H2020 ResponSEable project, UNDP EU4EMBLAS project, Youth4Ocean and more). The day continued with the contributions of two fellow young ambassadors from different Ambassador programs, which allowed interaction and cohesion among youth across the different sea basins (such as BlueMED, and European Marine Board Ambassadors). At the end of the first day, the ambassadors had the opportunity to listen to Campaign Planning Principles to drive awareness, engagement & action by trainers from Minerva for the European Science Communication Institute (ESCI).



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On the second day of the programme, professional communication trainers from ESCI conducted a workshop with the Young Ambassadors in which they provided the necessary tools and methods for campaign planning. Hear BSYAs plant the seeds of further awareness-raising actions in the Black Sea.

News: <http://connect2blacksea.org/black-sea-young-ambassadors-autumn-school-2021/>



Figure 8 BSYA Autumn School, 02 November 2021, Online

Awareness Raising Campaign Development Workshop (01 February 2021, Online):

Awareness Raising Campaign Development Workshop organised with the aim of equipping BSYAs with the fundamentals of the development of awareness raising campaign, creating a Logical Framework (including catch motto, aim and actions, timeline to risk management components) for target oriented, impactful campaigns that drive behaviour change for the future of the Black Sea (Figure 9). In the second half of the training, BSYAs conducted different activities on the online tool Mural for defining their awareness raising campaign activities (including stakeholders, key message, KPIs, expected results and more) with the support of experts from Minerva and Black Sea CONNECT coordination team. At the end of the workshop, they made an elevator pitch and received feedback from both trainers and coordination team members. The logical frameworks provided information that could contribute not only to their campaign development but also to them when carrying out different activities or writing projects in the future. Following the workshop, with the feedback they received, BSYAs kept continued working on their awareness raising campaign logical frameworks. In the following months BSYAs conducted different in-person or online campaigns to empower communities with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to actively contribute to the protection and preservation of marine ecosystems as well as supporting a sustainable blue economy.

News: <http://connect2blacksea.org/black-sea-young-ambassadors-awareness-raising-campaign-development-workshop/>



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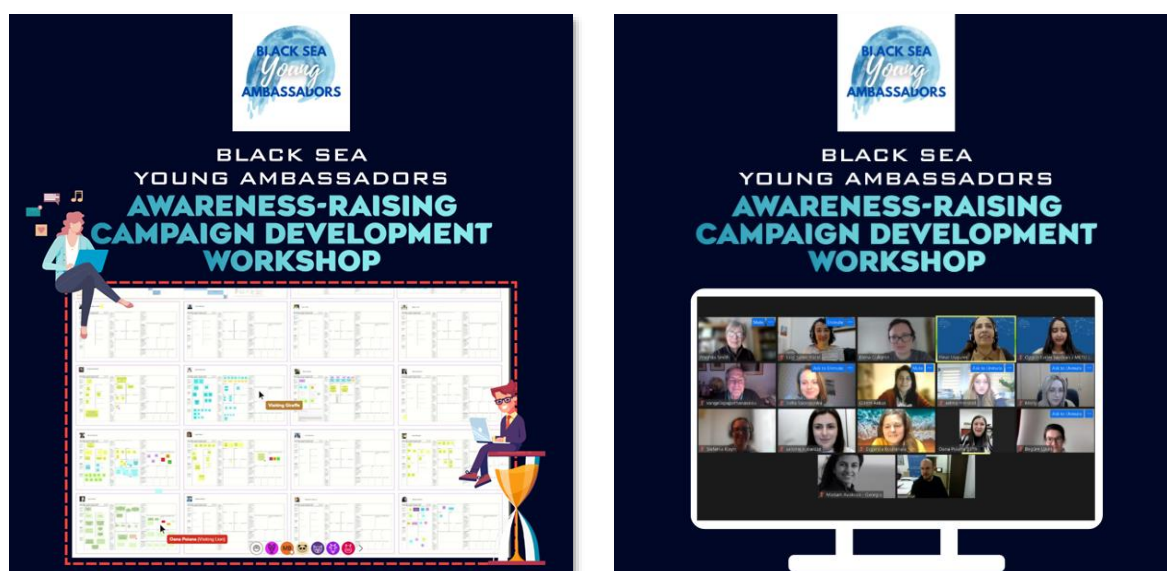


Figure 9 Awareness Raising Campaign Development Workshop, L: Mural Interactive Exercise, R: Group Photo

Awareness Raising Campaigns (ARC) (Physical/Online): Based on the rounds of training they received, first Black Sea Young Ambassadors developed structured Logical Frameworks and then conducted bottom-up outreach activities in their local communities. The aim of these campaigns was both drive positive behaviour change in Black Sea Societies as well as supporting the implementation of Black Sea SRIA Implementation Plan¹ Strategic Joint actions. Particularly, Theme 12: Blue Skills and Capacity Building, Theme 7: Marine Litter and Theme 2: Effect of Multiple Stressors on the Black Sea Ecosystem. In the process of developing and organizing the ARC ideas, the national mentors (Steering Committee Members) and Black Sea CONNECT coordination team and for the visibility activities well as Black Sea CONNECT communication team supported the ambassadors.

News: <http://connect2blacksea.org/the-black-sea-youth-acts-for-the-future/>

Black Sea Awareness Raising in Romania: [Selma Menabit](#) of Geocomar organized a campaign including two distinct events; Event 1: “**Youth Power – Towards a healthy Black Sea**”, Event 2: “**Exploring the Black Sea’s beauties together**” (Figure 10). The first event was designed as a workshop at “Decebal” Theoretical High School Constanta, Romania targeting High school students. With the aim of raising awareness of Black Sea issues and helping the young generation to understand the importance of protecting our seas and oceans, she reached 50 students at this workshop. The main objectives of this event were to raise awareness regarding the Black Sea's unique features, biodiversity, cultural heritage and major environmental problems the region is facing with a focus on marine litter; to help children understand why it is important to protect the Black Sea region, to ensure a sustainable future; to encourage young generation to adopt an environmentally responsible behaviour; to create a new generation that helps us promote and protect the Black Sea. In the second event, she

¹ <http://connect2blacksea.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/23062023-Black-Sea-SRIA-Implementation-Plan.pdf>



conducted a beach activity at “Reyna” Beach Constanta, Romania with secondary school children. To improve students’ awareness regarding the native and invasive alien mollusc species populating the Black and their ecological role in the marine ecosystem; encourage children to adopt environmentally responsible behaviour; to actively involve children in the scientific process, she reached 30 students. Her fellow Romanian ambassador [Sebastian Blicher](#), desk officer at MAERSK, supported her in conducting this beach activity.



Figure 10 Youth Power: Towards a healthy Black Sea, Exploring the Black Sea’s beauties together ARCs, Romania

Black Sea Awareness Raising in Georgia: Georgian ambassador [Salome Kobaidze](#) of TSU, also organized a series of activities under her awareness-raising campaign called “**Educated and sensitized Georgian youth for the sustainable development of the Black Sea**” (Figure 11). In her first activity as a part of the "Black Sea Blue Policy" held at Batumi Shota Rustaveli University in Batumi. At the "Black Sea Blue Policy" event that aims to raise public awareness, promote scientific research and innovation and disseminate relevant information on achievements to the general public, she reached different target groups such as scientists, university students and K12 students. Here in this Blue Policy event, Georgian ambassador [Mariam Avakova](#) also organised the “Ocean is your part of life” event under EMD in my Country 2022 with the support of Black Sea CONNECT partners Tbilisi State University and her fellow ambassador, and won a Best Event Organiser award given by the Welcome to Georgia Award (WtGA) (https://wtgawards.com/?page_id=45582). BSYAs conducted different activities under this event as presentations on Black Sea CONNECT and blue economy, a scientific cognitive quiz and a contest of thematic paintings related to the Black Sea for the wide range of event attendees. As her second activity S. Kobaidze conducted a physical workshop/meeting with "young rangers" on 9 July 2022 in Georgian that was attended by 15 local public school students, teachers and the representatives of the Kolkheti National Park (the head of the administration and the rangers of the park). The workshop had an interactive



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character and featured informative and experience-sharing practices and competition-based tasks. The workshop has been completed with the special event of cleaning the area near the Poti Black Sea coast and the nearby beach located in Maltakva. As her last activity; she conducted a meeting with the students from Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University in Kobuleti on 11 July 2022. The meeting was in the Georgian language, there was general information about the blue economy in the Black Sea presented at the workshop and the discussion about current stressors existing in the Black Sea was prevalent as well. The students were presented with the research and its preliminary consequences done by me on the Blue Economy Development in Georgia.

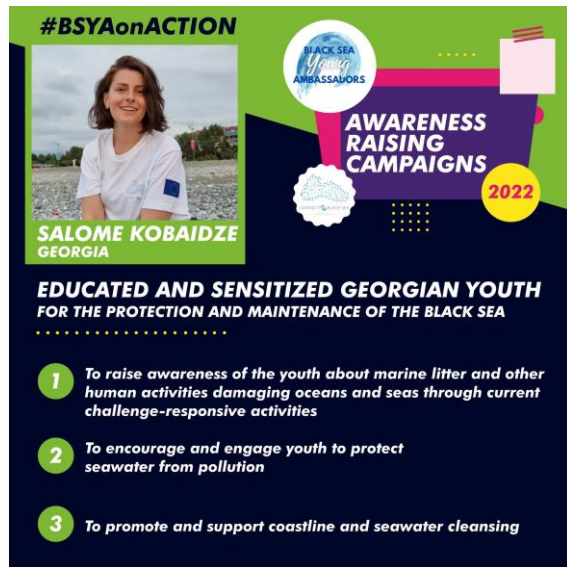


Figure 11 Educated and sensitized Georgian youth for the sustainable development of the Black Sea ARC, Georgia

Black Sea Awareness Raising in Moldova: [Elena Culighin](#) conducted her campaign called “**Love your rivers to protect Black Sea**” including 3 field trips (Field trip on the Raut riverbank and Oxentea village, Dubasari district, Dniester river and Slobozia and Văleni villages, Cahul district, Prutul de Jos (Lower Prut) Natural Reserve) on important rivers days as Dniester day and Danube Day, Moldova as well as social media campaign (<https://www.facebook.com/CentrulNationaldeMediu>) (Figure 12). With these events, the



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campaign aims to bring the necessary information to the young people of Moldova regarding the intense pollution of the rivers. The Republic of Moldova does not have direct access to the sea, but through its 2 big rivers and several small rivers, it makes the connection to the water of the Black Sea. It is extremely important to understand that water pollution created here, has an immense impact on the water ecosystem of the Black Sea. Activities implemented within the awareness campaign have contributed to a better understanding of what is the state of the environment close to the rivers, water quality and quantity that influences biodiversity and human well-being. As a result of the information campaign, a logical chain of messages related to the Dniester and Danube rivers was produced.



Figure 12 Love your rivers to protect Black Sea ARC, Moldova

Black Sea basin-wide awareness-raising activity: One basin-wide photo contest is conducted by [Oana Poiana](#) from Romania (Figure 13). The contest named “**Visual Storytelling of the Black Sea: Different Shores, Different Reflections, and One Sea**” received photographs from a great number of professional and non-professional photographers of all ages from all over the world, who aim to reflect the different perceptions of the coastal and marine



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environment of the Black Sea. The entries were evaluated under five categories including Black Sea Identity and Connection, Sustainable Blue Economy, Marine, and Maritime Professions, and Stressors on the Black Sea categories as well as social media. The winners were announced as of 24 October and received symbolic awards including Black Sea CONNECT promotional materials and WWF Symbolic Species Adoptions (Dolphin as one of the crucial species in the Black Sea ecosystem) <http://connect2blacksea.org/photo-contest-visual-storytelling-of-the-black-sea-different-shores-different-reflections-and-one-sea-winners-announcement/> The winner's photographs exhibited at Black Sea CONNECT Marine Litter Action Forum took place in Istanbul. Young Ambassadors and one of the winners, Tolga Taymaz, came together in this remarkable event. A certificate was presented to him by the coordination team.



Figure 13 Visual Storytelling of The Black Sea, Basin-wide ARC, online

Black Sea Awareness Raising in Turkiye: Gizem Akkus of METU IMS conducted an interview series with selected young professionals, scientists, and senior researchers working in different fields of the marine and maritime sectors such as fisheries, management, policy, ecosystem, and biodiversity. With this series of communications, she raised awareness of the marine science research and blue economy sectors in the Black Sea as well as connect scientists and experts to the general public for communicating science.



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Black Sea Action Day Social Media Campaign: Black Sea Young Ambassadors with the support of the Black Sea CONNECT communication team conducted a series of social media campaigns including “**International Black Sea Action Day**” to draw attention to the stressors on the Black Sea, the importance of the Black Sea ecosystem and what can be done to protect this unique sea basin (Figure 14). Here with the suggestion of the Romanian ambassador Oana Poana, they created a Black Sea appreciation gesture and invited everyone to share their appreciation for the Black Sea and the ecosystem services it provided for us. Ambassadors have used this sign for different occasions such as V.ECOP Day dedicated video.

SoMe Shares:

Twitter (X):

<https://x.com/blackseayouth/status/1453065001531551744?s=48&t=CNKaga333aNTripAf5QBbg>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=247161644129333&set=pb.100072231109603.-2207520000>.

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CVgJMG6sC2O/>



The activities of the Black Sea CONNECT Coordination and Support Action are funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 860055.



Figure 14 International Black Sea Action Day Social Media ARC

Plastic Free Black Sea Social Media Campaign: Inspired by different clean sea campaigns and actions, BSYAs organized a “Plastic Free Black Sea” social media campaign (Figure 15). Marine litter including plastic pollution are one of the biggest challenges in not only the Black Sea but also other sea and ocean basins. Hence, to draw attention to this problem, BSYA conducted a SoMe campaign explaining what is the problem itself, the research they conducted to understand the dimension of the problem and suggested possible solutions and alternatives to plastic. Most importantly invite everyone to take action against this problem altogether. This campaign was conducted after hearing more about the “EU Beach Clean Up” campaign from the EU DG Mare representative, Niccoló Tognarini at one of the Black Tea Time with Youth Meetings. This campaign was also a living example of implementing Black Sea SRIA IP Strategic Joint Action on Marine Litter by young ambassadors.

SoMe Shares:

Twitter (X): <https://x.com/blackseayouth/status/1439249460425539589?s=48&t=CNKaga333aNTripAf5QBbg>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=234022252109939&set=pb.100072231109603.-2207520000>.

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CT-ANgtM2cL/>



The activities of the Black Sea CONNECT Coordination and Support Action are funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 860055.

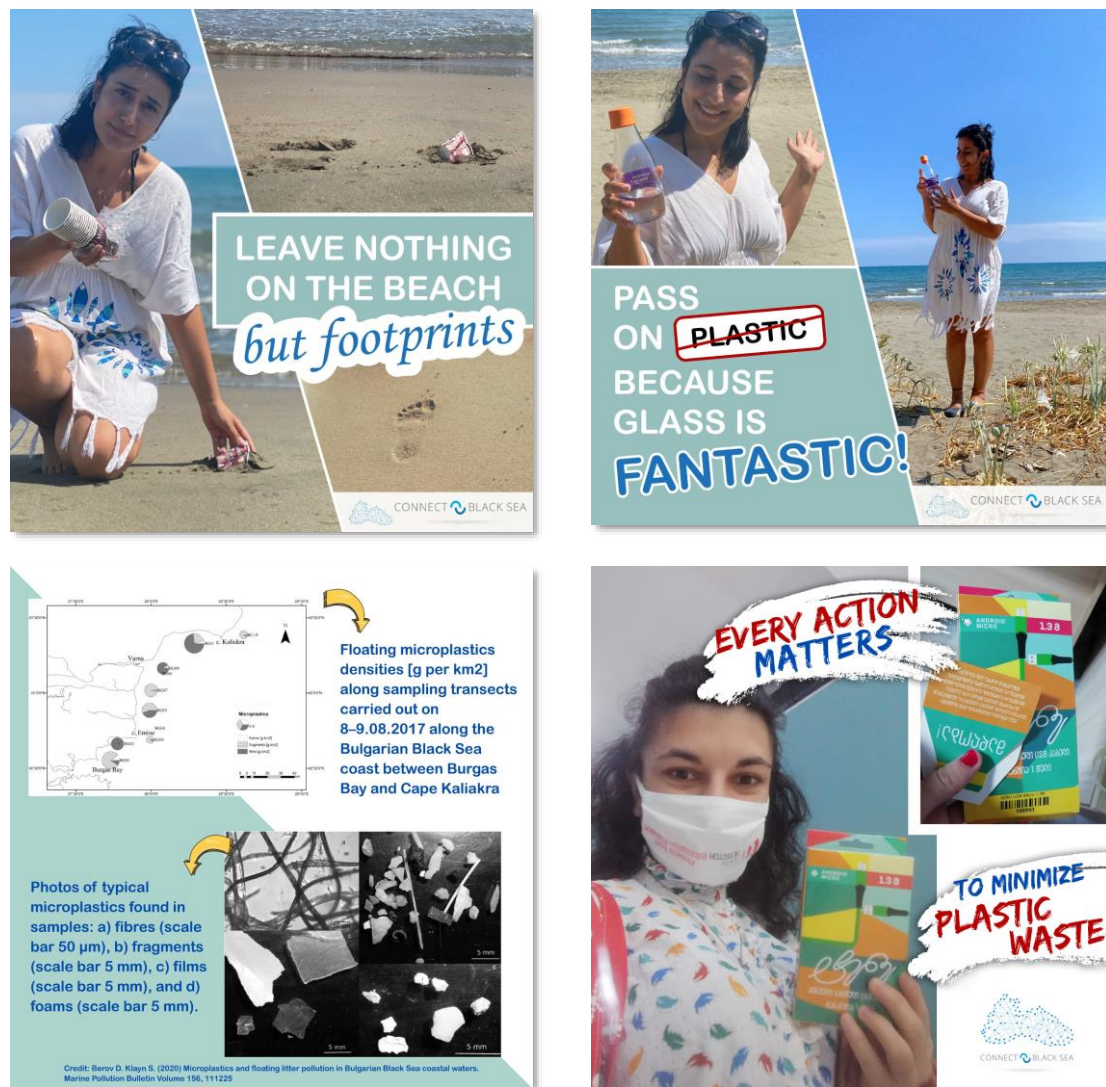


Figure 15 Plastic Free Black Sea Social Media Campaign

3.2. Activities of the 2nd Cohort

2nd cohort started their term in September 2022 and they already made a swift start by sharing their stories as the young voices of the Black Sea at the Launch event of the SRIA Implementation Plan, promising to draw inspiration from the region's rich history under the umbrella of this comprehensive plan. They received different trainings that will guide them for their future activities and started work on realising them. The Black Tea Time Series continues with an increased interest in youth and speeches on diverse topics. As well as conducting awareness-raising campaigns, they will continue to represent Black Sea youth in different events and activities at national, regional, and international levels (Table 3). Some highlights of the activities of the second cohort conducted so far are shared below.

News: <http://connect2blacksea.org/black-sea-young-ambassadors-spark-a-flourishing-positive-influence/>



The activities of the Black Sea CONNECT Coordination and Support Action are funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 860055.

Table 3 Highlights from the activities of BSYA 2nd Cohort (2020-2022)

Event / Activity	Date	Place
Orientation Meeting http://connect2blacksea.org/the-black-sea-young-ambassadors-orientation-meeting-was-successfully-held/	19 January 2023	Online
Social Media Intros https://twitter.com/blackseyouth/status/1626505882069499904?s=48&t=CNKaga333aNTripAf5QBbg	Winter-Spring 2023	Online
Education and Outreach Activities - http://connect2blacksea.org/black-sea-connect-partner-nimrd-grigore-antipa-opens-its-doors-for-engaging-marine-research-open-day-during-european-maritime-day/ - http://connect2blacksea.org/black-sea-connect-partner-nimrd-grigore-antipa-collaborates-with-local-school-for-science-outreach-during-green-week/	Spring 2023	Romania
Black Sea SRIA Implementation Plan Launch Event http://connect2blacksea.org/press-release-on-the-launch-of-the-black-sea-sria-implementation-plan/	04 May 2023	European Parliament, Brussels
Summer Training http://connect2blacksea.org/empowering-the-black-sea-young-ambassadors-with-summer-training/	12-13 June 2023	Istanbul, Turkiye
Awareness Raising Campaign Development	Ongoing process	Online
Black Tea Time Meetings with Youth (i.e. EU Mission Ocean, SRIA IP)	Regular Basis	Online

Orientation Meeting (19 January 2023, Online): They follow a similar path as having orientation on fundamentals of blue economy, science communication, activities of the Black Sea CONNECT and BRIDGE-BS projects linked with youth, education, and capacity building to better shape their future activities (Figure 16). They met with their fellow ambassadors and heard about the fundamentals of the Blue Economy. Different Black Sea CONNECT and BRIDGE-BS Work Package leads shared the aim and the activities of related WPs as well as how Black Sea youth can contribute to them. The discussions on how to create Black Sea literate societies together as well as increase visibility and dissemination were conducted. They had a chance to hear about the experiences and recommendations of the previous cohort. A preliminary discussion on their future activities and the programme's next steps were conducted.

News: <http://connect2blacksea.org/the-black-sea-young-ambassadors-orientation-meeting-was-successfully-held/>



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Figure 16 BSYA 2nd Cohort Orientation Meeting

Meet with the Black Sea Youth on Social Media: For each cohort, after they joined the programme a series of introductions was conducted on social media to get to know them better and receive the support of a wider audience for their future actions (Figure 17). In these short intro videos with creative and fun elements, they share their professional interests, how they are connected to the Black Sea, and how they will support driving change in our sea basin.

SoMe Shares:

Twitter (X): <https://x.com/blackseayouth/status/1626505882069499904?s=48&t=CNKaga333aNTripAf5QBbg>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BlackSeaYouth/videos/5934661889981539>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CpRvimEshDj/>

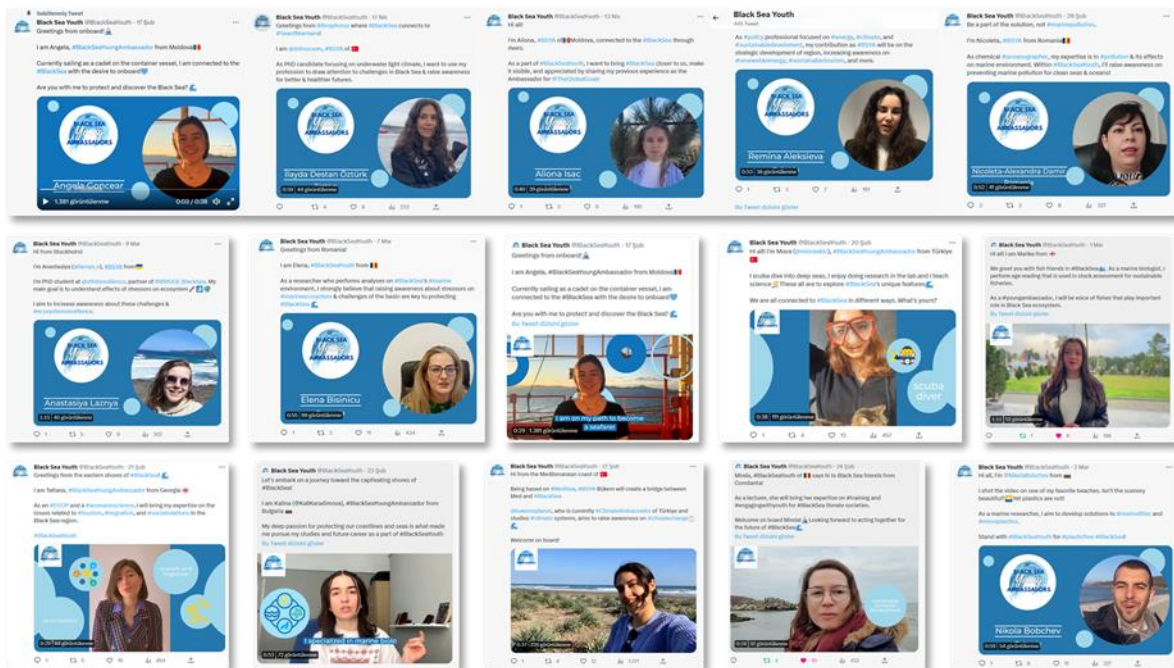


Figure 17 BSYA 2nd Cohort Intro Videos screenshots



The activities of the Black Sea CONNECT Coordination and Support Action are funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 860055.

BSYA Summer Training (12-13 June 2023): They received their first training on ocean literacy and science communication in Istanbul, Turkiye on 12-13 June 2023 (Figure 18). Here they also carried out group work and discussions as the first steps of subsequent awareness-raising efforts (<http://connect2blacksea.org/empowering-the-black-sea-young-ambassadors-with-summer-training/>).

The training kicked off with an illuminating session led by the communication expert Rhonda Smith from Minerva Communications, focusing on the fundamental principles of science communication. Participants dived into a variety of strategies aimed at effectively conveying scientific concepts to diverse audiences, with the ultimate goal of implementing the Black Sea Science and Innovation Agenda (SRIA).

Effectively engaging with policymakers is essential for driving positive change in the Black Sea region's sustainability. Rositsa Stoeva from BSEC PERMIS shared invaluable insights into effective science-policy communication practices. This equipped the participants with the necessary skills to bridge the gap between scientific insights and policy decisions, thereby ensuring a prosperous future for the Black Sea.

The second day of the training welcomed participants to the fascinating realm of marine science communication and ocean literacy, hosted by Baris Salihoglu, the coordinator of Black Sea CONNECT and BRIDGE-BS. The primary aim was to establish a stronger link between science, society, and the Black Sea environment. This emphasized the significance of involving the public and fostering engagement.

With the foundational knowledge in place, the Black Sea Youth as ECOPs swiftly transitioned into action mode. They put their creativity to work, generating campaign ideas and formulating strategies for bridging the knowledge gap between scientific concepts and the general public. Through collaboration with scientists and science communicators, their objective is to effectively convey scientific information and evidence to a broader community.

With the foundations they received in this training and the group work they carried out, the first steps of their future campaigns were taken. Based on the first training received, they created preliminary ideas for their future awareness-raising activities/campaigns. Regular meetings will be conducted with their national mentors and coordination team to finalize these preliminary ideas and realise their campaigns in light of the SRIA Implementation Plan.

News: <http://connect2blacksea.org/empowering-the-black-sea-young-ambassadors-with-summer-training/>

Event Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4eLpJ7wBnGI>



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Figure 18 BSYA 2nd Cohort Summer Training

Open Day at NIMRD “Grigore Antipa” under EMD in My Country (06 April 2023, Romania): In addition to the awareness-raising campaigns they carry out, young ambassadors also associate education and outreach activities related to their research fields with the BSYAP. As such, Black Sea CONNECT partner NIMRD, opened its doors to allow visitors to participate in the Marine Research Open Day event, as a part of European Maritime Day in My Country 2023 (Figure 19). The activity was coordinated by [Nicoleta Damir](#) and supported by her fellow ambassador [Elena Bisinicu](#) under the Black Sea Young Ambassadors Programme. The event programme consisted of:

- Laboratory experiments
- Visualization of phytoplankton and zooplankton species under the inverted microscope
- Visiting the aquaculture laboratory, the institute's ichthyologic collection
- Presentation of oceanographic equipment/application

News: <http://connect2blacksea.org/black-sea-connect-partner-nimrd-grigore-antipa-opens-its-doors-for-engaging-marine-research-open-day-during-european-maritime-day/>



The activities of the Black Sea CONNECT Coordination and Support Action are funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 860055.



Figure 19 Open Day at NIMRD, Romania, April 2023

Science at NIMRD under Green Week (28 March 2023, Romania): As part of the educational program “Green Week”, Black Sea CONNECT partner NIMRD Grigore Antipa, carried out outreach activity together with the students of “Tudor Arghezi” Năvodari Gymnasium School (Figure 20). The event programme consisted of:

- laboratory experiments;
- presenting the work equipment used within the Department of Oceanography and Coastal Engineering.

The activity was organised to increase awareness of the influence of stressors on the Black Sea marine ecosystem by Romanian Black Sea Young Ambassadors Dr Nicoleta Damir and Dr Elena Bişinicu.

News: <http://connect2blacksea.org/black-sea-connect-partner-nimrd-grigore-antipa-collaborates-with-local-school-for-science-outreach-during-green-week/>



Figure 20 Science at NIMRD under Green Week, March 2023, Romania



The activities of the Black Sea CONNECT Coordination and Support Action are funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 860055.

3.3. Representing Black Sea Youth on the Different Platforms

They transform into youthful advocates for the Black Sea, serving as its ambassadors across various platforms (Table 4). These platforms include mainly Black Sea CONNECT and BRIDGE-BS events, as well as other national, regional and EU-level events related to health seas and oceans like the Research and Innovation Days and EU Mission Ocean organisations. They also engage in initiatives related to the blue economy in various sea and ocean basins, such as the BlueMed Final Conference, and CulTourE4Youth project workshops. Additionally, they participate in activities centred around ocean literacy and youth involvement, such as the Ocean Literacy Festival in the Black Sea, among others. Highlights from these events are shared below.

Table 4 Representing Black Sea Youth on Different Platforms

Event	Date/Place	Link
Goldschmidt International Conference 2023	09-14 July 2023, Lyon/France	https://conf.goldschmidt.info/goldschmidt/2023/meetingapp.cgi/Session/5383
Black Sea SRIA Implementation Plan Launch Event	04 May 2023, Brussels	http://connect2blacksea.org/press-release-on-the-marine-litter-action-forum/
Black Sea CONNECT Marine Litter Action Forum	14-15 November 2022, Istanbul/Turkiye	http://connect2blacksea.org/press-release-on-the-marine-litter-action-forum/
MARBLUE 2022 Blue Growth Challenges and Opportunities for the Black Sea	26-28 October 2022	http://www.marblue.ro/Book_of_Abstracts_MARBLUE_site.pdf
EU DG Near funded CulTourE4Youth Project Workshop	25-28 October 2022, Crete/Greece	https://cpmr-balkan-blacksea.org/event/cultoure4youth-project-seminar-supporting-youth-entrepreneurship-in-cultural-tourism-for-coastal-communities-in-the-black-sea-regions/
EU Research and Innovation Days	28-29 September 2022, Brussels/Belgium	https://eic.ec.europa.eu/events/european-research-and-innovation-days-2022-2022-09-28_en
BRIDGE-BS Summer School	23-25 August 2022, Istanbul/Turkiye	https://bridgeblacksea.org/index.php/2022/08/31/the-first-bridge-bs-summer-school-was-successfully-held-in-istanbul/
How to engage with the Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030	14 June 2022, Marseille/ France	https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/events/upcoming-events/how-engage-mission-restore-our-ocean-and-waters-2030-2022-06-14_en
EU DG Near funded CulTourE4Youth Project Workshop	16-17 February 2022, Ajara/Georgia	https://cpmr-balkan-blacksea.org/event/cultoure4youth-project-international-workshop-in-batumi-supporting-youth-entrepreneurship-in-cultural-tourism-for-coastal-communities/
Let’s make the Black Sea Blue	2.10-05.11.2021, Online	https://maritime-forum.ec.europa.eu/en/node/6610



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UN Ocean Decade Virtual Early Career Ocean Professionals Day 2021	01 June 2021, Online	https://vecop.vfairs.com/en/#agenda
H2020 BlueMed Final Conference: "One Mediterranean: practices, results, and strategies for a common Sea"	22-24 February 2021	https://www.blumed-initiative.eu/blumed-final-conference/
SEArICA Conference on the Black Sea: How can regional frameworks foster sustainable blue growth in the Black Sea basin?	03 December 2020	https://www.searica.eu/2020-2024/events-2019-2024/searica-conference-on-the-black-sea-how-can-regional-frameworks-foster-sustainable-blue-growth-in-the-black-sea-basin

Black Sea SRIA Implementation Plan Launch Event (04 May 2023, Brussels): Black Sea SRIA Implementation Plan was launched in the European Parliament, Brussels on 04 May 2023. At the launch event as one of the main outputs of the project, more than 110 stakeholders from EU and Black Sea research to policymaking communities attended. The event stood as a platform, wherein stakeholders made their commitment to advancing cooperation in priority R&I areas defined in IP, which will pave the way for a resilient and sustainable Black Sea.

Chaired by MEP Marian-Jean MARINESCU in the framework of the SEArICA Intergroup, the launch event hosted many distinguished speakers including Delilah Al Khudhairy – Director of the DG for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Elisabetta Balzi – Head of Unit, Healthy Seas and Ocean, DG of Research and Innovation of European Commission and Black Sea Young Ambassadors. At the “Black Sea Young Ambassadors as future change-makers for the Black Sea” session moderated by Vangelis Papathanassiou, six young ambassadors from six Black Sea countries took part as representatives of their programme (Figure 21).

They became voices of the Black Sea to share its story and made their pledge for drawing inspiration from the rich history of this sea basin, where ancient cultures thrived under the umbrella of this comprehensive plan. On this significant day for the Black Sea, 1st cohort gave the torch to their fellow ambassadors to be the next voices of the Black Sea and make their pledge to support them in their Black Sea journey.

News: <http://connect2blacksea.org/press-release-on-the-launch-of-the-black-sea-sria-implementation-plan/>

Agenda: http://connect2blacksea.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/SEArICA_Agenda_Black-Sea-SRIA_Implementation-Plan_04-May-2023-1.pdf

Event Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q7aqIAzkF7g>



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Figure 21 Black Sea SRIA Implementation Plan Launch Event

Black Sea CONNECT Marine Litter Action Forum (14-15 November 2022): Marine Litter Action Forum took place on 14-15 November 2022 in Istanbul, Türkiye. More than 200 stakeholders from the EU and Black Sea academia, ministries, funding agencies, private sector, and NGO communities participated in the MLAF event where they had a chance to exchange best practices and planted seeds for future collaborations. Here at this forum that served as a platform for existing actions to be presented as well as emerging initiatives and ongoing projects to coordinate all efforts more holistically towards a litter-free Black Sea, Black Sea Young Ambassadors became the voice of the ECOPs and youth. At the “Marine Litter Pollution in the Black Sea” session moderated by Vangelis Papathanassiou, Salome Kobaidze, Elena Culighin, and Selma Menabit as a representative of their programme pitched their actions and campaigns to prevent marine litter and raise awareness on this problem. Not only this but also, at the event, an exhibition featuring the winning works of the photography contest organized by young ambassadors was held (Figure 22).

News: <http://connect2blacksea.org/press-release-on-the-marine-litter-action-forum/>

Event Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zfdn0w_xZVs&t=129s



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Figure 22 Marine Litter Action Forum

Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030” Conference (13-14 June 2022, Marseille, France): At the event where the co-creation process of the Mission Charter was discussed with stakeholders and youth made their pledges to support the implementation of Mission Ocean, Romanian Young Ambassador Selma Menabit represented the Black Sea youth and Black Sea CONNECT, and shared their experiences as BSYA on how to be the voice of the seas and how they can contribute to Mission Ocean's goals (Figure 23).

Agenda: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-06/programme_mission_restore_our_ocean_and_waters_conference2022.pdf

News: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/events/upcoming-events/how-engagemission-restore-our-ocean-and-waters-2030-2022-06-14_en
<http://connect2blacksea.org/4632-2/>



Figure 23 Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030” Conference

EU Research and Innovation Days (29 September 2022, Online): European Research and Innovation Days is the European Commission’s annual flagship Research and Innovation event, bringing together policymakers, researchers, entrepreneurs and the public to debate and shape the future of research and innovation in Europe and beyond. The event took place online on 28 and 29 September 2022, allowing everyone to get involved from anywhere. At the “Youth for a Healthy Ocean” session moderated by John Bell, EC Director Healthy Planet, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, young ambassadors from different basins came together



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to share their vision, experience and achievements for protecting and restoring our ocean. Romanian BSYA [Oana Poiană](#) represented Black Sea Youth and shared their Black Sea experiences in this event (Figure 24).

News: <https://ec.europa.eu/research-and-innovation/en/events/upcoming-events/research-innovation-days>

Agenda: <https://research-innovation-community.ec.europa.eu/events/5rBGp9IUhJt2lmxYEk45Qf/programme>

Event Record: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y8BWcncs4WU>

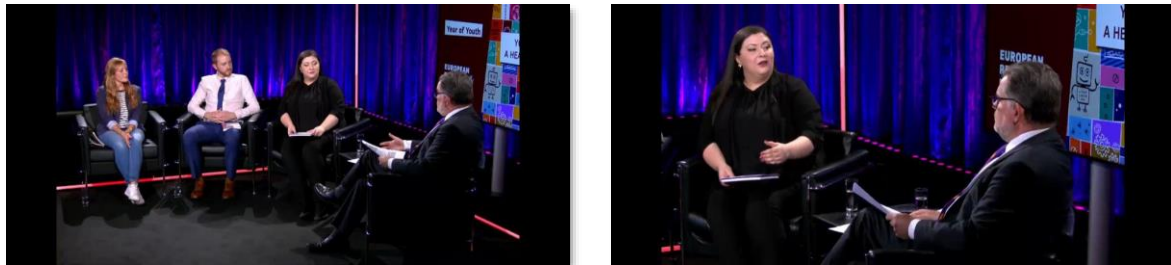


Figure 24 EU Research and Innovation Days 2022

UN Ocean Decade Virtual Early Career Ocean Professionals Day 2021 (01 June 2021, Online): The Virtual Early Career Ocean Professional (V.ECOP) Day was held on June 1, 2021, as a 24-hour livestream event following the sun around the world. It was hosted by and for early career ocean professionals from around the world and from a variety of ocean disciplines to showcase their work, activities, and contributions to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. Black Sea Young Ambassadors took place in Slot 6 under Ocean and Society session and shared inspiring research and activities they conducted for the future of the Black Sea (Figure 25). With their motto; “The Black Sea Wind in our sails, to the ocean we want!” The Black Sea Young Ambassadors have succeeded in enhancing the visibility of the Black Sea by giving points to the uniqueness, importance, and multiple stressors threatening the Black Sea’s resilience and health. The participation in the V.ECOP Day event was linked with one of the Black Tea Time with Youth Meetings where the speech on the ECOP programme and V.ECOP day shared by Sandra Ketelhake from ECOP Programme (<http://connect2blacksea.org/black-tea-time-with-young-ambassadors/>). Former BSYA, current ECOP programme coordinator [Evgeniia Kostianaia](#), and EU representatives made this connection. Their video is available on the Black Sea CONNECT YouTube channel and the V.ECOP Day website.

News: <http://connect2blacksea.org/vecop-day-2021-the-black-sea-wind-in-our-sails-to-the-ocean-we-want/>

Event: <https://vecop.vfairs.com/en/#agenda>

Agenda: <https://vecop.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/VECOP-Program.pdf>

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvXcoZ8ZL04>



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Figure 25 UN Ocean Decade V.ECOP Day (Up: Intro, Down: Appreciation sign BSYAs created)

5. CONCLUSION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROGRAMME

Although the Black Sea is a relatively small sea among the European seas, it is unique with its features as a semi-enclosed sea and a vital bridge between Asia and Europe. Hence, protecting it and ensuring sustainable utilization of its resources sustainably is the most prominent concern for its future. Therefore, it is of great importance to make its challenges visible, to shed light on its importance, and to create Black Sea literate societies.

At this juncture, the Black Sea Young Ambassador Programme has assumed a pivotal role in re-connecting missing links between science and society. This programme emerged as a youth initiative aligned with the Black Sea Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda and its Implementation Plan, allowing youth to contribute to forthcoming frameworks in this context. In this way, they could become a part of decision-making processes and share their opinions on what should be prioritised in their countries for a healthy and resilient Black Sea.

The programme extends beyond only contributing to future roadmaps of the Black Sea and empowers youth to emerge as the voices of their generation on national, regional, and international levels. They have a chance to raise their concerns and call everyone to be part of a solution through diverse platforms and mediums, such as the European Parliament where scientists, policymakers, and the public came together for the Black Sea to EU Mission Ocean Conference where youth from different seas and oceans made their pledges to support the implementation of this important framework programme. The BSYA programme allows these



The activities of the Black Sea CONNECT Coordination and Support Action are funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 860055.

young advocates to equip themselves with the necessary skills for communicating effectively and developing target-oriented actions specific to distinct stakeholders.

The sustainability of the programme will be ensured under the EU H2020 BRIDGE-BS as the Black Sea SRIA implementing project until the project's completion in November 2025. During this time, BSYAs will continue to be actors of change in their communities, represent Black Sea youth at different levels, and maintain to conduct their regular activities. Yet the legacy of the programme will proceed in various ways.

The program has already set an example for creating positive change and inspiring youth programmes in different regions. For example, a 'Climate Ambassadors' program was developed under the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change of Türkiye. One of the BSYAs, [Bukem Belen](#) create a link between these two programmes and increase the visibility and impact of the programmes. Similarly, other ambassadors successfully bridged BSYAP with other youth programmes (i.e. Youth4GlobalGoals [Aliona Isac](#)), extending the youth network for information exchange and acting collaboratively.

Moreover, SRIA IP has a strong commitment to building momentum for the existing BSYA programme and giving another direction to its activities under Theme 12. Blue Skills and Capacity Building on Marine Science. Besides, ocean literacy and human capacity are key enablers of the [Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership](#) (SBEP) which brings all basin strategies under one roof and can be another room for supporting youth advocacy. Last but not least different EU programmes such as [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions](#), [Erasmus +](#), [Twinning](#) can further support young ambassadors and ECOPS in the Black Sea as a continuation of the European Year of Youth and the BSYA legacy.





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