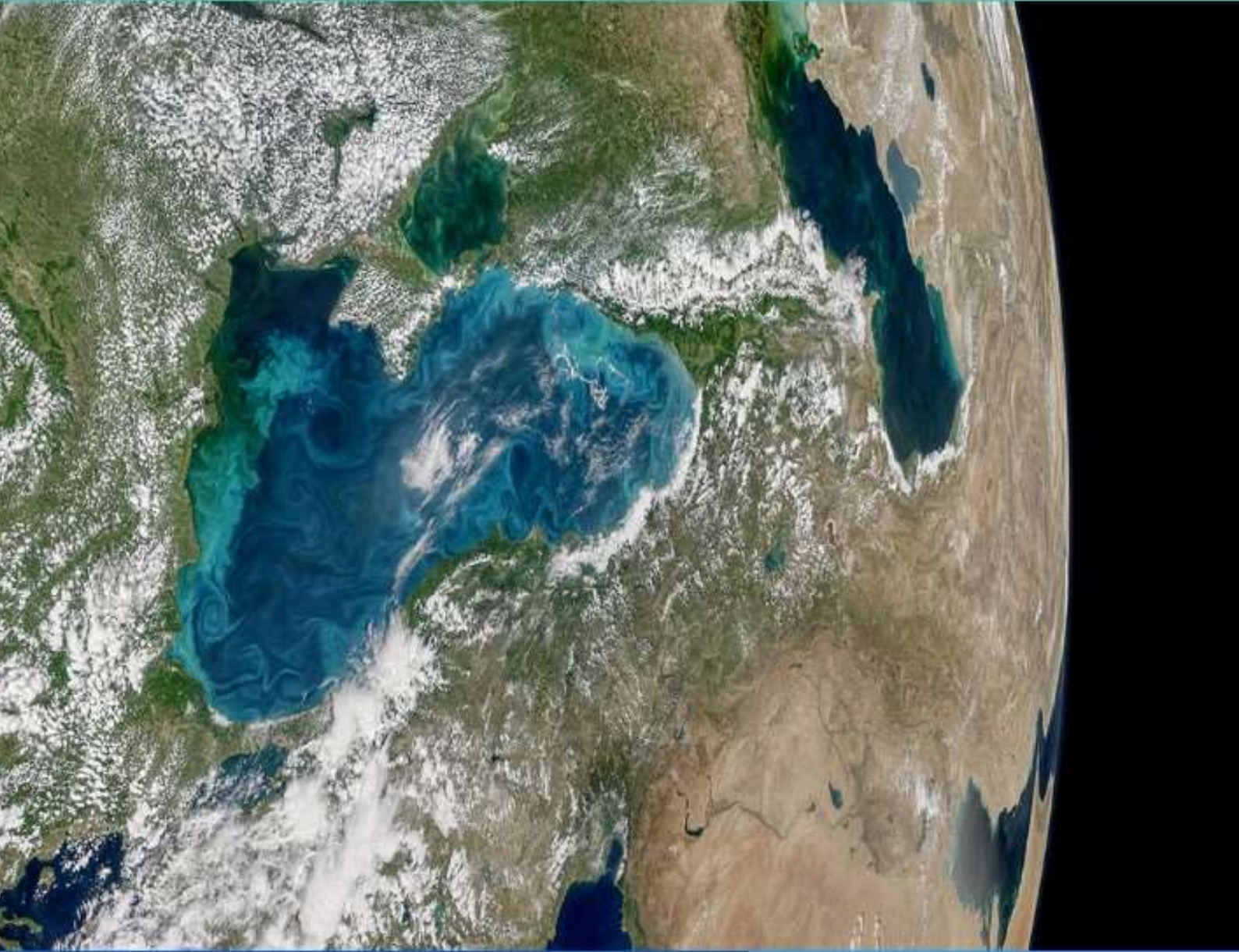


Black Sea CONNECT

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



D3.2 Report on the establishment of
operational network, including a list of
relevant funding agencies



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Contents

Executive Summary	4
1. Introduction	5
2. Black Sea WG-GSO	5
2. Operational Network of Funders (ONF)	7
Annex I. Black Sea WG-GSO	9
Annex II. Operational Network of Funders	12



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Executive Summary

Black Sea CONNECT CSA is tasked to scientifically, technically and logistically support the development of the Black Sea SRIA and its Implementation Plan both at the national and regional levels with a view on boosting the Blue Economy in the region. A strategic body called "Black Sea Senior Officials Working Group for the implementation of the Black Sea Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda" (also referred as 'Black Sea WG-GSO' hereinafter) has the mandate to ensure that the political decisions are properly transferred, understood and incorporated through the implementation of the CSA.

Black Sea WG-GSO recognized the need for a network of funders to ensure the involvement of the Black Sea country funding agencies/ministries to strengthen the cooperation among public research funders at the regional level and facilitate the alignment of national priorities (i.e., research and innovation strategies and programmes) and prepare the ground for the focused funding of joint actions to address the key challenges and goals of the SRIA. The Black Sea WG-GSO will be at the core of the Operational Network of Funders (ONF), and the WG-GSO members will nominate their own representatives to the meetings of the ONF, which does not aim to be another structure by itself, but complementary working on specific content with representatives of the Black Sea WG-GSO.

This deliverable defines the objectives, roles, and mandate of the Black Sea WG-GSO and ONF.

This deliverable reflects the situation as of the end of 2021 and it was submitted in early February 2022. Due to the unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine on 24 February 2022, Black Sea WG-GSO, having Russian members, did not hold further meetings. Appointed by the Black Sea WG-GSO members (a process that started before the war), the ONF meetings took place in the 2022-2023 period and they actively provided input to the Black Sea SRIA Implementation Plan. The detailed information on the ONF objectives, composition, meetings and more are covered in D3.5 and this deliverable which had to be rejected and re-submitted during the amendment is kept as it is to avoid duplication with D3.5.



1. Introduction

Black Sea CONNECT is a coordination and support action which scientifically, technically, and logistically supports the Black Sea Blue Growth Initiative towards the implementation of the Burgas Vision Paper, with a view on boosting the blue economy in the region. The overall objective is to coordinate the development of the Black Sea SRIA and its implementation plan both at the national and regional levels. The Black Sea SRIA and its implementation plan will guide stakeholders to address together with the fundamental Black Sea challenges, to promote blue growth and economic prosperity of the Black Sea region, to build critical support systems and innovative research infrastructure, and improve education and capacity building.

In 2017, an Initiative was launched and supported by the European Commission (EC) to develop a joint research and innovation agenda and guide national and EU-level policymakers named as 'The Blue Growth Initiative for Research and Innovation in the Black Sea'. As highlighted in the Burgas Vision Paper, this expert working group consisting of experts from Black Sea coastal countries (Republic of Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and Ukraine, as well as the Republic of Moldova), in cooperation with marine experts from leading European marine institutes and organisations, with the support of the European Commission¹. They produced the Burgas Vision Paper, the key framework document for a shared vision of a productive, healthy, resilient, sustainable, and better-valued Black Sea by 2030. The paper was launched during the European Maritime Day 2018 in Burgas, Bulgaria (May 2018). It addresses the key pillars on which a new Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) can be built on. This process was further supported by the Ministerial Declaration towards a Common Maritime Agenda (2018) for the Black Sea, endorsed by the same Black Sea countries.

In 2021, Black Sea CONNECT Coordination and Support Action is funded under Horizon 2020 Programme to scientifically, technically and logistically support the Black Sea Blue Growth Initiative towards the implementation of the Burgas Vision Paper, with a view on boosting the Blue Economy in the region. Black Sea CONNECT will develop and promote a shared vision for a productive, healthy, resilient, sustainable, and better valued Black Sea.

2. Black Sea WG-GSO

Black Sea Senior Officials Working Group for the implementation of the Black Sea Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (also referred to as 'Black Sea WG-GSO' hereinafter) is the main body that approves what is delivered by the Black Sea Blue Growth Initiative and Black Sea CONNECT CSA and provide specific and targeted advice to the EU and national policymakers for future actions on the Blue Growth in the Black Sea. It is established with appointed chairs from each Black Sea country nominated by the countries' legal bodies and facilitated by the European Commission (EC), which will be the strategic body in charge of the steering of the Black Sea Blue Growth Initiative. The work of Black Sea WG-GSO is steered



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by rotating co-chairmanship of the Black Sea countries and the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, which will also be a member of the Black Sea WG-GSO ensuring that the political decisions are adequately transferred, understood, and incorporated through the implementation of the CSA.

Facilitated by the EC, the Black Sea WG-GSO is established in April 2020 with country representatives from the relevant ministries from the Republic of Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova; and Representatives of the BSEC PERMIS, the Black Sea Commission Permanent Secretariat, CPMR Balkan & Black Sea Commission (joined as of October 2021), Coordinators of the Horizon 2020 Black Sea CONNECT Coordination and Support Action (Black Sea CONNECT CSA); researchers of research projects that are to be funded by the EU or its Member-States or WG-GSO Members.

The members of the Black Sea WG-GSO have agreed on a term of reference (Annex I) to constitute the mandate of the group. In this document, the following objectives are laid out for the Black Sea WG-GSO:

- a) Identify key policy priorities that need to be addressed in order to ensure sustainable exploitation of the Black Sea. Review and update the Black Sea SRIA accordingly.
- b) Advise and develop a consensus on opportunities to align priorities and activities that are in line with the shared national, regional and/or European policy goals as well as R&D Strategies and Programmes in this area.
- c) Recommend national and regional governments as well as European Commission leverage funding strategies, develop research infrastructures sharing mechanisms at all levels (national, regional, European), and prevent duplication and fragmentation of research and innovation efforts and resources in this area.

The Black Sea WG-GSO will approve and promote the implementation of the Black Sea Blue Growth SRIA that will be developed by the action and its continuous revision in order to develop a cohesive SRIA for the Black Sea at national, European, and Black Sea level by nurturing a real partnership, social inclusion and resourcing access to research infrastructures and collaboration. The main activities of the Black Sea WG-GSO are to:

- Identify how the parties are to encourage and facilitate marine and maritime cooperation on and for the Black Sea (government, research, industry, authorities), leading to the exchange, accessibility, and use of existing data, as well to projects, initiatives, and other deliverables useful for achieving the objectives as outlined above.
- Function as an open platform, which allows for structured dialogue and cooperation with other networks operating in the areas as outlined in the introduction to allow for the development of a vibrant marine and maritime research and innovation community for the Black Sea, in line with the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea.



2. Operational Network of Funders (ONF)

The Black Sea WG-GSO, which has the mandate to steer the Black Sea Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) Implementation, recognized the need for a network, called Operational Network of Funders (ONF) to ensure the involvement of the Black Sea country funding agencies/ministries to strengthen the cooperation among public research funders at the regional level and facilitate the alignment of national priorities (i.e., research and innovation strategies and programmes) and prepare the ground for the focused funding of joint actions to address the key challenges and goals of the SRIA. A concept note (Annex 2) has been prepared and shared with the Black Sea WG-GSO members for their comments.

In this concept note, it is underlined that the core group of this network and its joint preparation of dedicated calls are essential for the successful definition and practical development of the prioritized actions to be included in the Implementation Plan. A common target has to be attained within the duration of the Black Sea CONNECT. In addition to the public funding of the core group of the Black Sea Operational Network of Funders, institutional funding and private funding sources and streams will also be considered for the full exploitation of the funding potential.

It is important to note that the Black Sea WG-GSO will be at the core of the ONF, and the WG-GSO members will nominate their representatives to the meetings of the ONF, which does not aim to be another structure by itself, but complementary working on specific content with representatives of the Black Sea WG-GSO. Up to two Black Sea WG-GSO members from public funding agencies/ministries from each country will be appointed by the countries to join the ONF, ensuring avoiding conflict of interest in the ONF. The Black Sea CONNECT CSA Coordinator will support the ONF to inform the group on the joint actions and the SRIA Implementation Plan. When necessary, the Black Sea WG-GSO members of the ONF will invite other key actors relevant to the funding of a specific joint action or co-funding call to take part in meetings.

Objectives of the ONF is:

- Ensuring cooperation among public research funders at the regional level and facilitate the alignment of national priorities;
- Focused funding of joint actions as part of the Implementation Plan to address the key challenges and goals of the SRIA;
- Working multilaterally (as a member state, associated country, or third country) in relation to Horizon Europe for Horizon Europe calls, like Pillar II Societal Challenges WP 2021-2022/WP 2023-2024 and for the **European Partnership for a climate-neutral, sustainable, and productive Blue Economy (Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership)** as co-fund approach between MS/AC and EU;
- Joint preparation of dedicated calls, multilateral through parallel funding at the same time in different countries for new projects outside Horizon Europe;



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ONF will meet regularly on a quarterly basis. The meetings will be arranged back-to-back with the Black Sea WG-GSO meetings. More meetings can be organized if deemed necessary, and the meeting can take place physically or virtually. ONF will be chaired by the same country chair of the WG-GSO. The working language will be English, and outputs of the ONF meetings should be reported to the Black Sea WG-GSO.

Black Sea CONNECT CSA will feed the ONF with the output of CSA activities such as that of National SRIA Consultations, questionnaire of Blue Economy in the Black Sea Workshop, and relevant project reports such as handbook of relevant initiatives, entities, projects and state of the art Black Sea projects.

The role of the ONF will be defined and decided at the Black Sea WG-GSO level. Potential overlaps between the ONF and other similar entities that include funding agencies will be avoided.

As of February 2022, Black Sea WG-GSO members are in the process of nominating members for the ONF among the core Black Sea WG-GSO group. Upon the completion of the members, the ONF will hold regular meetings organized back to back with the Black Sea WG-GSO meetings to take place in 2022. The members of the group with the funding agencies involved will be provided in de D3.5 Report on the activities on the operational network, its sustainability beyond the CSA, and recommendations.



Annex I. Black Sea WG-GSO

BLACK SEA SENIOR OFFICIALS WORKING GROUP for the implementation of the Black Sea Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda TERMS OF REFERENCE AND RULES OF PROCEDURE

1. Introduction

On the 30th of May 2018, experts from the Black Sea riparian countries, namely the Republic of Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and Ukraine, as well as the Republic of Moldova, in cooperation with marine experts from leading European marine institutes and organisations, and with the support of the European Commission, launched a shared vision for a productive, healthy, resilient, sustainable and better valued Black Sea by 2030 – The Burgas Vision paper.

The Burgas Vision Paper identified four main research related priorities: 1) Addressing fundamental Black Sea research challenges, 2) Developing products, solutions and clusters underpinning Black Sea blue growth, 3) Building of critical support systems and innovative research infrastructures, 4) Education and capacity building.

The experts further developed the priority areas identified in the Burgas Vision Paper into a fully-fledged *Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) for the Black Sea*.

The Black Sea SRIA (BS SRIA) was launched during the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU, in the framework of the Conference "Sustainable Development at Black Sea" (SUST-Black Conference)¹ organised in Bucharest on 8-9 May 2019. One overall aim of the BS SRIA is to guide the research programmes at national and EU level beyond 2019.

¹ <http://www.sust-black.ro/>

In the Bucharest [conference] Declaration on the Black Sea Research and Innovation Agenda the participants,

*Encourage the regular update of this Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda, to permanently keep pace with the latest scientific developments and challenges affecting the Black Sea basin, which are key to best preserve and promote the efficient use of the Black Sea resources,
Ask governments and the European Commission to facilitate the process of implementing the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda by setting up and support a technical Group of experts that will continue working on these aspects.*

The Black Sea SRIA is the main science pillar of the Common Maritime Agenda (CMA) for the Black Sea. The CMA was endorsed on 21 May 2019, in Bucharest, during the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU, at a ministerial conference of the Black Sea riparian countries as well as the Republic of Moldova and in the presence of the European Commission.

In the Ministerial Declaration of the Common Maritime Agenda, the Ministers responsible for maritime affairs welcome "*the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for the Black Sea launched on 8 May 2019 in Bucharest, Romania, in support of the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea*" (CMA).

In the CMA the seven countries recognise the importance of the Black Sea SRIA as one of the regional important tools for generating scientific knowledge: "*One of the objectives of the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for the Black Sea (SRIA) is generating scientific*



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knowledge. This includes better ecosystem assessments, forecasts and management, as well as understanding of the vulnerability of the ecosystem. Knowledge is the key element towards science-based and well-informed decision-making. Such policy making paves the way to a sustainable blue economy."

The Black Sea SRIA also represents a good example of science diplomacy and a contribution to confidence building, resilience and positive regional dialogue. All reference documents may be found in Annexes.

2. Mandate

The Black Sea Working Group of Senior Officials (Black Sea WG-GSO) will steer the update and the implementation of the Black Sea SRIA and as such provide support to the dissemination of the common vision for a healthy, resilient and productive Black Sea.

This will include:

- continuous reviewing of the SRIA updates and the SRIA Implementation Plan;
- offering guidance and revision in order to develop a cohesive strategic research and innovation agenda for the Black Sea, at national, regional and European level based on real partnership, social inclusion and collaboration;
- monitoring and sharing information about the participation of each country from the Black Sea basin in relation to the activities performed in support of SRIA implementation.

Collaboration between SRIA and other scientific and innovation initiatives (EU, BSEC and others) should go in line with CMA general strategy, agreed by participating riparian countries, and in this context seek ways how to connect this basin with other European regional seas and ocean.

3. Objectives

- a) Identify key policy priorities that need to be addressed in order to ensure a sustainable exploitation of the Black Sea. Review and update the Black Sea SRIA accordingly.
- b) Advise and develop a consensus on opportunities to align priorities and activities that are in line with the shared national, regional and/or European policy goals as well as R&D Strategies and Programmes in this area.
- c) Recommend national and regional governments as well as European Commission leverage funding strategies, develop research infrastructures sharing mechanisms at all levels (national, regional, European), and prevent duplication and fragmentation of research and innovation efforts and resources in this area.

4. Reporting

The Black Sea WG-GSO will report about their activities during the group's meetings. These activity reports could be disseminated on a regular basis.

5. Activities

The Black Sea WG-GSO is to:

- Identify how the parties are to encourage and facilitate marine and maritime cooperation on and for the Black Sea (government, research, industry, authorities) leading to the exchange, accessibility and use of existing data, as well to projects, initiatives, and other deliverables useful for achieving the objectives as outlined above.
- Function as an open platform, which allows for structured dialogue and cooperation with other networks operating in the areas as outlined in the introduction to allow for the development of a



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vibrant marine and maritime research and innovation community for the Black Sea, in line with the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea.

6. Composition and Governance

Composition:

The Black Sea WG-GSO shall be comprised of:

A. Members:

- Country Representatives from the Republic of Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova;

B. Observers:

- Representatives of the BSEC PERMIS, the Black Sea Commission Permanent Secretariat, as observers if they are willing to be part of this group;
- Other countries or parties may join the group as observers when appropriate and agreed by all Members;
- Coordinators of the Horizon 2020 Black Sea CONNECT Coordination and Support Action (Black Sea CONNECT CSA); researchers of research projects that are to be funded by the EU or its Member-States or WG-GSO Members.

The work of the Black Sea WG-GSO will be coordinated by one of the Members agreed by the Black Sea WG-GSO Members on a twelve-month rotation basis chairing in alphabetical order together with the representative of the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation of the European Commission.

7. Procedures

- a) The Black Sea WG-GSO should work primarily by written procedure.
- b) The Black Sea WG-GSO should attempt to meet bi-annually in person and/or online, where feasible. Wherever possible, meetings are to be organised back-to-back to other events where Black Sea questions are discussed, in particular, those organised and supported by the Horizon 2020 Black Sea CONNECT CSA or other projects/initiatives supported by the CMA countries together and/or European Commission.
- c) Meetings will be announced normally one calendar month before the meeting date. Members shall inform the Chairs in advance of their intention to attend meetings or notify in good time that they will be represented by a nominated replacement.
- d) The Horizon 2020 Black Sea CONNECT CSA project and other projects/initiatives will support as much as possible the work of this Working Group.
- e) Decisions should be made by consensus; the working language will be English.



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Annex II. Operational Network of Funders

Black Sea Operational Network of Funders

of marine and maritime research funding agencies and other key players influential in the possible funding of the implementation of the SRIA
Core-group of representatives of Senior Officials working group for the implementation of the Black Sea Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (Black Sea WG-GSO)

The core-group of the Operational Network of Funders (ONF) will aim to ensure involvement of the Black Sea country funding agencies/ministries to strengthen the cooperation among public research funders at the regional level and facilitate the alignment of national priorities (i.e., research and innovation strategies and programmes) and prepare the ground for the focused funding of joint actions to address the key challenges and goals of the SRIA. The core-group of this network and its joint preparation of dedicated calls are essential for the successful definition and practical development of the prioritized actions to be included in the Implementation Plan. A common target has to be attained within the duration of the Black Sea CONNECT. In addition to the public funding of the core-group of the Black Sea Operational Network of Funders, institutional funding and private funding sources and streams will also be considered for the full exploitation of the funding potential.

The Senior Officials working group for the implementation of the Black Sea Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (Black Sea WG-GSO) which has the mandate to steer the Black Sea Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) Implementation, recognized in their last meeting the need for such a Network as a basis for common ownership of the SRIA Implementation Plan.

The Black Sea WG-GSO will be at the core of the ONF, and the WG-GSO members will nominate their own representatives to the meetings of the ONF, which does not aim to be another structure by itself, but complementary working on specific content with representatives of the Black Sea WG-GSO. Up to two Black Sea WG-GSO members from public funding agencies/ministries from each country will be appointed by the countries to join the ONF, ensuring avoiding conflict of interest in the ONF. The Black Sea CONNECT CSA Coordinator will support the ONF to inform the group on the joint actions and the SRIA Implementation Plan. When necessary, the Black Sea WG-GSO members of the ONF will invite other key actors relevant to the funding of a specific joint action or co-funding call to take part in meetings.

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- Working multilaterally (as a member state, associated country, or third country) in relation to Horizon Europe for Horizon Europe calls, like Pillar II Societal Challenges WP 2021-2022/WP 2023-2024 and for the **European Partnership for a climate-neutral, sustainable, and productive Blue Economy (Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership)** as co-fund approach between MS/AC and EU;
- Joint preparation of dedicated calls, multilateral through parallel funding at the same time in different countries for new projects outside Horizon Europe;

ONF will meet regularly on a quarterly basis. The meetings will be arranged back-to-back with the Black Sea WG-GSO meetings. More meetings can be organized if deemed necessary, and the meeting can take place physically or virtually. ONF will be chaired by the same country chair of the WG-GSO. The working language will be English, and outputs of the ONF meetings should be reported to the Black Sea WG-GSO.

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The role of the ONF will be defined and decided at the Black Sea WG-GSO level. Potential overlaps between the ONF and other similar entities that include funding agencies will be avoided.



Draft Agenda for the 1st ONF meeting

Draft Agenda for the 1st ONF meeting Date and Time (TBC) Ankara, Turkey (TBC)
Opening Remarks Black Sea WG-GSO Chair
Tour de Table ONF Members
Black Sea CONNECT Implementation Plan and Joint Actions Black Sea CONNECT CSA Coordination
National Funding Mechanisms and Opportunities which can be benefitted for the implementation of the Black Sea SRIA joint actions 1 ONF member per country (+ 1 alternate)
Horizon Europe Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership (TBC)
Other Funding Opportunities (TBC)
Open discussion on the presented opportunities in the light of Black Sea SRIA Joint Actions and Implementation Status (ALL)
Summary and next steps (TBC)





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