Executive Summary

The present document aims at contributing to the global programming of the CPMR Balkan and Black Sea Commission activities for the period 2020-2022, taking into account the new BBSC political orientations, the EU agenda, and the CPMR general objectives and actions, harnessing as well the BBSC past political declarations and activities.

It should constitute a “framework for action” for BBSC members, built on the discussions between all the Balkan and Black Sea Member Regions to turn into concrete actions the new political orientations of the Balkan and Black Sea Commission and enhance its political visibility at EU and Balkan and Black Sea regional levels.

This document constitutes also the perimeter of concrete actions to be undertaken by the Balkan and Black Sea Commission’s Vice-Presidents to support their activities in accordance with the BBSC membership.

To ensure the participatory approach of this exercise, this document should be agreed in the main principles during the BBSC Plenary (October 2020) and approved in its final version at the next BBSC General Assembly by the overall BBSC membership (spring 2021).

In a logic of continuity of the action, this participatory process will not prevent the BBSC to be involved in short-term activities according to the main principles agreed in its Plenary or in the recently amended Rules of Procedure.
1. Global Approach and Transversal Priorities of the Action Plan

1.1. New BBSC political priorities

The BBSC, in order to seize and harness the opportunities offered at EU level, will focus its actions and activities on the main strategies and initiatives covering the wider Balkan and Black Sea regions.

These political orientations are summarised below:

1. To make the most of new EU instruments (EU Recovery Plan and new Multi-Annual Financial Framework) and EU policies linked with the Green Deal for the benefit of the Balkan and Black Sea Regions’ key economic sectors to face the challenges deriving from the Covid-19 outbreak.

2. To provide useful feedback and support the development and implementation of the following EU strategies and initiatives in the wider Balkan and Black Sea region:

- **EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)**: the CPMR has been coordinating the Adriatic Ionian Network of Universities, Regions, Chambers of Commerce and Cities (AI-NURECC Initiative), an initiative involving the key stakeholders of the Adriatic Ionian Regions, i.e. the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion (AIE), the Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities (FAIC), the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce, and the Association of Universities of the Adriatic-Ionian area (UniAdrion). By promoting a structured dialogue and a stronger, more effective cooperation among Regional & Local Authorities, Universities, Chambers of Commerce, youth associations and networks, entrepreneurs and civil society, the AI-NURECC partnership aims to support the EUSAIR’s implementation and appropriation by the regional and local stakeholders.

- **Western Balkans**: working closely with the members concerned to further progress on topics coherent with the CPMR political priorities, such as transport, environment, climate action etc. Focusing on the latest tools available for the long-term economic recovery of the region, to support a green and digital transition and foster regional integration and convergence with the European Union, will allow the organisation to identify possible synergies with other strategies in the region and encourage different cooperation opportunities. The BBSC will aim for cooperation with regional and local authorities and stakeholders from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia.

- **EU Black Sea Synergy initiative**: the BBSC has been actively involved and contributed to a high-level conference aiming to stimulate the discussion on the future of the EU Black Sea Synergy initiative in the short and medium term. Particular emphasis was placed on four cooperation fields that have known less progress over the years, namely tourism and culture, education, transport, and energy. In accordance with the BBSC membership we will carry on seeking involvement of regions in the procedure

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1 The countries participating in the EUSAIR are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia.

2 The Western Balkans consists of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo*, and Serbia.

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

3 The countries covered by the EU’s Black Sea Synergy initiative are: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Romania, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Türkiye, and Ukraine.

*Due to the current situation in Ukraine, we are fully in line with the EU’s response regarding the different frameworks of cooperation with the Russian Federation.
and facilitating synergies between a wider range of stakeholders towards the implementation of its objectives.

- **Eastern Partnership**: by working closely with the BBSC members concerned towards the implementation of the long-term policy objectives for the Eastern Partnership beyond 2020, which are coherent with the CPMR political priorities. The CPMR is also a member of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) and we will work closely with the BBSC members concerned on the topics chosen.

- **Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea (Black Sea CMA) and Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for the Black Sea (Black Sea SRIA)**: the CPMR participates as an observer in the CMA Steering Group meetings and is among the main actors involved in the Black Sea SRIA. Priorities are to make the regions’ voice to be take into consideration in the governance, and to encourage synergies between different stakeholders involved.

- **EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)**: steps have been done to examine possible synergies with stakeholders from the region overlapping with the EUSAIR, mainly in the fields of culture and tourism.

- **and a possible Macro-Regional strategy for the Carpathian Region**: to be followed up further to coordination with the members concerned.

3. **To enhance the visibility of the Balkan and Black Sea Commission towards new members, the EU institutions and relevant fora; and increase partnerships**, notably with the other CPMR Geographical Commissions.

### 1.2. Key actions for the mandate

In this context, the BBSC will put in place different type of actions: policy messages, lobbying activities, organisation and co-organisation of high-level political conferences and seminar sessions with its Member Regions and key partners in the area (such as the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS), Black Sea Association of Maritime Institutions (BSAMI) and National Alliance for Local Economic Development (NALED)). Participation in fora at EU, international or sea-basin level, as well as in specific cooperation projects (funded by the EU or regional/international donors) corresponding to the political orientations of the BBSC will also be of priority.

**Political Positions:**

- **Two BBSC political declarations** should be prepared in the framework of the BBSC General Assemblies in 2023 and 2024, which should be jointly elaborated together with the President and Vice-Presidents harnessing the transversal and per political priority work as well as the main objectives of the cooperation projects in which the BBSC is involved as a partner or facilitator.

- **Possible ad-hoc political documents** could be developed according to the needs of the BBSC and its member regions, in agreement with the President and Vice-Presidents.

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4 The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is a joint initiative of the EU, its Member States and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine.

5 The 7 member countries of the Black Sea CMA and SRIA are: Bulgaria, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russia, Türkiye, and Ukraine.

*Due to the current situation in Ukraine, the participation of the Russian Federation in the Black Sea CMA and SRIA is suspended.*
Contributions to **CPMR political positions.** The BBSC Secretariat and members will be contributing to the definition of relevant messages from the angle of BBSC members needs and priorities.

**High-level events and lobbying activities:**

- Planning to encourage the renewal of the “Friends of EUSAIR” interest group of the European Parliament.
- Organisation of **Seas, Rivers, Islands & Coastal Areas (SEARICA) Intergroup** events with specific focus on the Danube and the Black Sea, hosted by the **SEARICA Vice Chair responsible for the Danube and the Black Sea, MEP Carmen Avram.**
- Participation as observers in the Steering Committee meetings of the Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme 2021-2027.

**Participation in fora:**

- The CPMR has organised an online workshop in the framework of the European Week of Regions and Cities to present the newly established Cultural and Creative Regional Ecosystems (CCRE-S3) thematic area, under the Smart Specialisation Platform for Industrial Modernisation of the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre (JRC). The CPMR is supporting this thematic area, led by three active CPMR Member Regions. The **Region of Western Greece** is the leading partner from the Adriatic-Ionian and wider Black Sea region.
- Participation in the **Annual Event of the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea** (further information available soon).
- Organisation of AI-NURECC PLUS conferences back-to-back to the **annual EUSAIR forum** in 2023.
- The BBSC Secretariat will encourage its President and Vice-Presidents to be actively involved in the CPMR Intercommission Working Groups and Task Forces (e.g., Transport Working Group, Adriatic-Ionian Task Force, ...) and closely work with other CPMR Geographical Commissions to ensure synergies on topics of common interest.

**Consolidation and development of BBSC membership:**

- The BBSC will explore with its members the possibilities of cooperation with other regions from the geographical coverage, as mentioned in the BBSC Rules of Procedure (EUSAIR and Black Sea Synergy countries), and capitalise on the work initiated with the cooperation projects in which it is involved (e.g., AI-NURECC PLUS).
- Specific attention will be given to approaching non-CPMR member regions in the Balkans and the Black Sea, via the support of the President and Vice-Presidents further to coordination with the BBSC Secretariat. BBSC regions could work as ambassadors of the CPMR in the regions and act as a bridge between non-CPMR members’ priorities and the CPMR/BBSC objectives and services. Ad hoc political meetings between regions, technical meetings with CPMR staff or punctual invitation to Working Groups meetings could be a tool used in this respect.
Participation in European projects:

- In order to support the priorities of the BBSC membership and the implementation of its Action Plan, the BBSC will monitor, together with the CPMR Secretariat, funding opportunities (mainly EU) that can materialise a “win-win” cooperation and grant additional resources for concrete actions.

- For the time being, four EU projects are in progress (i.e., Adriatic Ionian Network of Universities, Regions, Chambers of Commerce and Cities Initiative PLUS (AI-NURECC PLUS), Innovative SOft SkilLs to Maritime Education and Training (iSOL-MET), Supporting Youth Entrepreneurship in Cultural Tourism for coastal communities in the Black Sea region (CulTourE4Youth), Advancing Black Sea Research and Innovation to co-Develop Blue Growth within Resilient Ecosystems (BRIDGE-BS)), and other ideas are under development. Some of these actions will open the door to concrete collaboration with other CPMR Geographical Commissions in the framework of the CPMR strategy on EU projects.

- The BBSC will also promote the replication and/or capitalisation of results from other CPMR Geographical Commissions’ past projects, as well as the circulation among its network of contacts of specific partners search for new EU projects proposals that can be related with its key priorities (e.g. at the initiative of its members or external partners).

Communication Activities:

- In addition to ensuring the representation of the BBSC in the CPMR communication activities and contribution to the CPMR communication strategy, the BBSC Secretariat propose to develop Flash Info to update the BBSC members on activities developed.

- The BBSC will continue to update its webpage with external events organised by our key partners, in which it is directly or indirectly involved, as well as boost the BBSC and AI-NURECC PLUS Twitter accounts. The President and Vice-Presidents will have a leeway to propose news articles on activities developed or issues of interest for the BBSC members.

- To ensure the visibility of the work done by BBSC member regions, the webpage will be constantly updated including in particular the calendar of key events.

- The BBSC Secretariat will maintain a regular communication via email on all relevant information to its Member Regions and will also communicate in relation to the EU projects where it is currently/will be directly involved.

2. Sectoral Approach of the Action Plan

For the most efficient implementation of this Action Plan, the President will delegate portfolios to all Vice-Presidents so that the cover all thematic areas of the CPMR and fields of priority to the BBSC that may not correspond to any CPMR topics. The President and Vice-Presidents will coordinate with the BBSC Secretariat so that their work corresponds to the priorities agreed by the BBSC General Assembly and leaves no members, who have expressed their interest, behind.

The BBSC Secretariat kindly puts forward for consideration the following portfolios:

- **Maritime Affairs**: led by the BBSC President, Mr Horia Teodorescu, President of the Tulcea County Council

- **Transport and Skills**: led by Mr Giorgi Guguchia, State Representative-Governor of Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti Region

- **Energy & Climate**;

- **Cultural and Creative Regional Ecosystems**: led by Mr Fokion Zaimis, Deputy Regional Governor of Western Greece*;
- **Western Balkans**: led by the BBSC 1st Vice-President, Dr Konstantinos Kapodistrias, Deputy Regional Governor of Ionian Islands;

- **Eastern Neighbourhood**: led by Mr Tornike Rijvadze, Chairman of Government of Ajara Autonomous Republic. Mr Rijvadze is the CPMR Vice President responsible for Neighbourhood Policy.

The President and 1st Vice-President will monitor developments in all portfolios transversally (at Balkan and Black Sea levels). They will also coordinate with the BBSC Secretariat for any actions aiming at different cooperation programmes in the BBSC region (e.g., participation in public consultation, activities for CPMR eligibility, lobbying for specific calls, ...).

* The Region of Western Greece, leading partner of the CCRE-S3 thematic area, will be leading this topic despite the fact that they are not having a position of Vice-President.

Therefore, all countries participating in the CPMR BBSC will be actively involved and contribute to the general orientations and objectives of the BBSC and to the implementation of its Action Plan, be able to participate in lobbying activities with the CPMR, gather intelligence and enable the BBSC to act as a forum for regions to share best practices and/or develop joint cooperation projects.