The meeting was opened by Mr Horia Teodorescu, President of the CPMR Balkan and Black Sea Commission, President of Tulcea County Council (RO) and Dr Konstantinos Kapodistrias, 1st Vice-President of the CPMR Balkan and Black Sea Commission, Deputy Regional Governor of the Ionian Islands (GR). Mr Teodorescu warmly welcomed the participants and expressed his regret that the members once again could not meet in person because of the sanitary situation. He followed by greeting the development and the progress of the Balkan and Black Sea Commission (BBSC), especially with the new members welcomed under the chairmanship of Mr Valentin Moldoveanu, Member of the European Commission’s Mission Board for Healthy Oceans, Seas, Coastal and Inland Waters, former Acting President of the Balkan and Black Sea Commission, Tulcea County Councillor (Romania). He underlined the expanded fields of action in a large number of EU policies and projects, which has allowed a better implementation of the BBSC Action Plan. He thanked the members for their involvement and the assistance of the CPMR General Secretariat that helped the BBSC to achieve several goals set and further improve the standing at pan-European level. The Commission has found the capacity to make its voice heard at both regional and EU level, notably by contributing to the priorities of the new Horizon Europe Programme and through its various participations such as in the Mission Board for Healthy Oceans, Seas, Coastal and Inland Waters, of the European Commission (EC). He added that the BBSC Secretariat is nowadays the voice of the regions in numerous important bodies, such as the Steering Group of the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea. He concluded by reminding participants of the great potential of the Balkan and Black Sea area. He called on members to collaborate even more and create a more promising environment for citizens, especially for the youth and to keep on being actively involved, with all stakeholders from the wider Balkan and Black Sea territories.

The opening session was followed by Dr Konstantinos Kapodistrias’ speech during which he welcomed the comments previously made by President Teodorescu. He expressed his satisfaction with the Commission’s initiatives carried out so far to increase its visibility at both regional and EU levels. He pledged to be already fully committed in the Commission’s future work and activities. He invited the BBSC Presidency to work together to lay the groundwork for increasing EU funding for the countries of the region and to achieving the Action Plan.

Mr Valentin Moldoveanu, provided an update on the activities of the European Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030. This Mission, part of the Horizon Europe programme, is now in the monitoring phase with the first meeting planned mid-November 2021. The Mission aims in the next decade to restore the health of the ocean and waters. It will deliver by restoring ecosystems and biodiversity, eliminating pollution, and making the blue economy carbon-neutral and circular.
The Mission will endeavour to deploy innovative solutions at sea basin scale, with each basin focusing on a particular area in the developing and piloting phase (2021-2025) such as the Danube River basin that will focus on protect and restore ecosystems and biodiversity. Phase two (2026-2030) will focus on deployment and upscaling, with the replication of pilot activities. He believed in the added value of members’ input to the Mission’s work and urged them to contribute with their own views and thoughts.

**Ms Georgia Chantzi**, Research and Policy Development Manager, International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) (CPMR Cooperation Agreement partner) provided an update on the BRIDGE-BS and CulTourE4Youth projects in which the CPMR, through its Balkan and Black Sea Commission, participates in the consortiums. She reminded participants of the long collaboration between the CPMR, the BBSC and the ICBSS, reinforced by the signature of the Cooperation Agreement.

The ICBSS is in charge of enhancing the policy dialogue work package in the framework of the BRIDGE-BS project. It proposes a multidisciplinary, multi-sectorial programme building on regional and international initiatives with a view to contributing to the science-based policy needed to preserve the Black Sea ecosystems. The project aims to create a connected Black Sea community strengthened by a new generation of researchers and innovators to address emerging Black Sea challenges.

The BBSC plays a vital role in facilitating connections with the regions from the area. The BBSC also links the project to the SEArica Intergroup and local authorities. The Regional Stakeholder Conference is planned to be held in May 2022, in Varna, Bulgaria. The information and invitation would be sent in the forthcoming months.

The second project is CulTourE4Youth that focuses on five countries: Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine. CulTourE4Youth is coordinated by the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS), in cooperation with the CPMR Balkan and Black Sea Commission, and the METU Institute of Marine Sciences (METU IMS, Turkey). “Supporting Youth Entrepreneurship in Cultural Tourism for Coastal Communities Project” aims at developing a regional paradigm as capacity building initiator for empowered youth entrepreneurship. It puts emphasis on promoting sustainable coastal tourism practices, supporting youth entrepreneurship with concrete action and increasing the knowledge and entrepreneurial culture among youth to be able to meet market demands.

An online questionnaire will be launched on 25 October 2021 to examine the priorities at national level for supporting youth entrepreneurship in cultural tourism. The study carried out by the ICBSS stated that, at national level, the governments, and policies support youth entrepreneurship in cultural tourism however there is nothing that combine both so far. The digital aspects of cultural tourism were put forward during the pandemic period; this aspect is also part of the project in order to find how it is possible to support it with concrete actions. The first results of the questionnaire will be presented during the National Stakeholder Workshop on 30 November 2021 in Mersin in Turkey, which will be also discussed during the International Workshop in Batumi (Ajara Autonomous Republic) in February 2022.

On 10 November, an online webinar will be co-organised by the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia – with the aim of bringing together regional and international stakeholders to stimulate the discussion and exchange of good practices and lessons learned in cultural tourism; explore the untapped potential of regional partnerships; as well as to enhance regional responses to and recovery from the pandemic and build resilience for the future. The webinar will be built on the discussions on culture and tourism launched in the Regional Stakeholders Conference “Black Sea Synergy: the way forward” (Athens, 7 November 2019), organised by the ICBSS within the framework of the ENI East Instrument.
The results of the event are presented in the ICBSS Policy Paper ‘Black Sea Synergy: the way forward’ that sets the basis for a constructive follow-up with thematic workshops and project-oriented synergies in the targeted cooperation fields. A BBSC representative was invited to deliver a speech during this event in the first session dedicated to Cultural Tourism in the Age of Digitalisation.

Ms Chantzi also mentioned the Black Sea Cruise project that aims to analyse the state of play as well as environmental and socio-economic potential for novel small-scale cruising/yachting models in order to support, through the recommendation package, the sustainable development of the activity in the Black Sea. The structural dialogue on national level is engaged through the organisation of workshops.

Mr Stavros KALOGNOMOS, BBSC Executive Secretary gave an update on other CPMR BBSC projects.

On 26 October 2021, the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion organised, within the framework of the AI-NURECC PLUS Initiative, an online High-Level Conference on Circular Economy. The Conference was followed by the second Adriatic Ionian Youth Organisations online. The Conference focused on the challenges and priorities of an efficient transition to a more innovative, sustainable and inclusive development in the Adriatic Ionian area, as addressed by EUSAIR policy-makers, stakeholders and implementers.

On 12 November 2021, the Maritime Innovative Network of Education for Emerging Maritime Issues (MINE-EMI) Erasmus+ project will hold a Multiplier Event in Piraeus. MINE-EMI is related to the Innovative SOFT SkillS to Maritime Education and Training (iSOL-MET) Project coordinated by the University of the Aegean (Region of North Aegean, Greece), that focuses on the creation of a comprehensive maritime skills course programme for multidisciplinary and multicultural groups of students – through case study methodology – aiming to bridge the gap between the shipping world requirements and the needs of maritime universities’ students and maritime professionals.

Those two projects will be presented by Professor Lekakou, University of the Aegean (North Aegean Region, Greece) in Ferrara in Italy on 18 November 2021 during the Blue Economy Conference at SEALOGY.

Through Calarasi County Council, the BBSC participates in the Horizon 2020 SolaQua project in which the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission is involved. The BBSC applies the expertise and best practices experienced in different CPMR Member Regions and European sea basins in the wider Black Sea region. It has been actively involved in all Black Sea Stakeholders’ Conferences and contributes to driving maritime issues forward in the area. Agriculture has a significant role in the Balkans and the Black Sea region and the BBSC constitutes pivotal actors in strengthening ties with relevant actors in the area (Balkans, Danube, Black Sea), such as the BSEC and its relevant Working Groups. The BBSC members will be kept posted on the deliverables by Calarasi County Council that will be responsible for the dissemination of the results in the BBSC region.

Regarding the upcoming SEArica events, first of all, the BBSC welcomed the appointment of Ms Carmen AVRAM, Romanian MEP as 1st SEArica Vice-Chair. The different SEArica conferences aim to show stockholders the state of play in the Danube and the Black Sea area mainly on maritime, transport and climate issues.

On 4 November 2021, the conference on “Marine Litter in the Danube and the Black Sea region” will take place online with the aim to discuss and come up with tailored and concrete proposals to tackle marine litter in the region. During this event, stakeholders from other Geographical Commissions were encouraged to participate and share their views and experiences.
The SEArca Intergroup together with CPMR BBSC and the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) organised a webinar on “Fisheries and Aquaculture in the Danube and the Black Sea: views for building forward better”, that took place on 22 April 2021. The workshop’s aim was to provide a dialogue platform amongst EU, national policy-makers and key regional stakeholders to encourage a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities that derive from the various EU policies, strategies and initiatives that could be of high potential for the region. Mr Valentin Moldoveanu, as a former Acting President of the Balkan and Black Sea Commission, Tulcea County Councillor (Romania), and Danube Delta FLAG Manager, presented the Port of Sulina case study in Romania, as part of the Danube Delta biosphere reserve, which is recognised for the great diversity of habitats and life forms it hosts.

On 11 October 2021, the BBSC participated in the meeting of the EU Danube Strategy Priority Area 3 on culture and tourism that was an opportunity to present the activities in the framework of the Al-NURECC PLUS Initiative, and work done jointly with other CPMR Members in different geographical areas in the framework of the Creative Cultural Regional Ecosystem CCRE-S3 co-led by the Region of Western Greece.

The BBSC follows different Horizon Europe calls and has called on its members to express their interest in view of applying for Calls in the upcoming period.

Mr Davide STRANGIS, CPMR Executive Director, provided an update on the work carried out by the CPMR on sustainable tourism. One of the priorities is to make synergies with all Geographical Commissions by organising events such as SEArca events or during the EU Maritime Days. Those events are opportunities to talk about the solutions to enhance sustainable tourism, especially during the pandemic period. The idea is to maintain in the future this kind of workshop during which members together with various stakeholders could talk about experiences, challenges, and ways of facing them, as well as identifying and learning from the good practices of our neighbours.

He informed participants that an important Glasgow Declaration will be made during the COP26, that the CPMR fully supports. Each region has the possibility to support the Declaration individually as a region and participating in the engagement puts regions in a better position to cope with the needs for sustainable tourism.

The EC’s DG GROW launched a consultation on the “pathways of tourism in the future” to which the CPMR responded. A lot of contributions were gathered. The CPMR is involved with DG GROW in some workshops on green tourism and digital tourism. They will contribute to the proposal that the EC is making for the European Council that will gather in November under the Slovenian EU Presidency. The CPMR is fully influencing this process. The results from the projects in the field of tourism contribute entirely and feed every contribution of the CPMR in the higher EU sphere to make its voice heard clearly.

The macro-regional events will take place probably at the beginning of 2022. Interestingly, the next Interreg programme will be launched soon and will allow some regions from the area to participate.

**Update from the BBSC Political Bureau**
- **Maritime Affairs, inc. Transport and Skills**: BBSC President, Horia Teodorescu, President County Council Tulcea;
- **Eastern Neighbourhood**: Chairman Tornike Rijadze, Ajara Region, CPMR Vice-President responsible for Neighbourhood Policy;
- **Energy and Climate - Tourism - Western Balkans**: to be decided;
- **Cultural and Creative Regional Ecosystems**: Deputy Governor Fokion Zaimis, Western Greece Region, who expressed his interest in reinforcing culture and heritage thematic area and called for cooperation opportunities with other regions in order to develop synergies and share best practice.
**Point on Financial Documents**

The **BBSC budget** is no longer in deficit thanks to its involvement in various projects. No further changes have been made.

**Additional Information**

The **date and the venue** need to be identified for the next **BBSC Annual General Assembly**, which will be organised as far as possible in parallel with a project meeting between **April and July 2022**.

In **June 2022**, BBSC will organise the **Final Conference of the MINE-EMI project** back-to-back with a SEArica meeting.

**AspBAN** (Atlantic Smart Ports Blue Acceleration Network) project seminar could also take place during the second **semester 2022** with the focus on the Black Sea. The AspBAN project puts in place an acceleration services platform for EU Atlantic Ports as part of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) Call on “Cross-sectoral development of innovative port clusters in the Atlantic: Developing a blue accelerator scheme for Atlantic ports”. It will support Atlantic Ports to act as ecosystems to foster innovation in the blue economy, thus diversifying their business models and revenue sources. The results of this innovative project are highly awaited, as the goal is to attempt to replicate it in the Black Sea area.

**Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea** – Annual Stakeholders Conference will take place on **22 November 2021**. A representative has yet to be identified to present the CPMR BBSC in this event.

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. A first contact was made with the Union communities of Armenia. The Executive Secretary calls on all members to be an Ambassador for the neighbouring countries in order to ease to increase the membership.

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The **Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR)** represents more than 150 regional authorities from 24 countries across Europe and beyond. Organised in Geographical Commissions, the CPMR works to ensure that a balanced territorial development is at the heart of the European Union and its policies. One of these Commissions is the Balkan and Black Sea Commission.

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