



European  
Commission

# European Maritime Day

31 May - 1 June  
Burgas, Bulgaria

## CONFERENCE REPORT



Maritime  
Affairs



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA  
Ministry of Transport, Information Technology  
and Communications

# Introduction

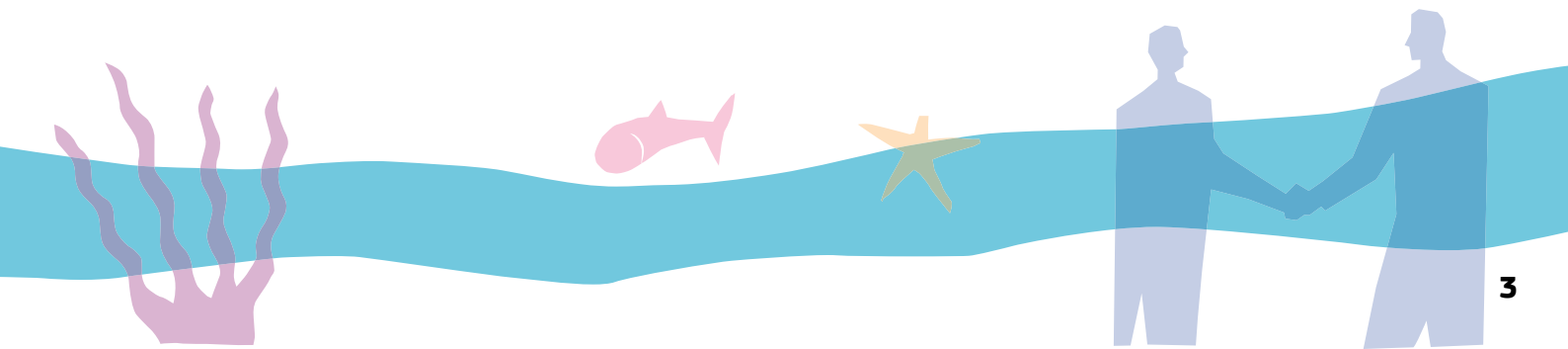
On the occasion of the 11<sup>th</sup> European Maritime Day (EMD), Dimitar Nikolov (the Mayor of Burgas) and European Commissioner Karmenu Vella (Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries) welcomed 800 participants from the maritime sector across the Black Sea and the EU. Over 1.5 days, the conference hosted 130 speakers, 18 stakeholder workshops, 3 DG MARE info sessions, as well as 28 exhibitors. In addition, 154 business-to-business (B2B) meetings were facilitated by the European Enterprise Network.

The EU's blue economy generates more than 560 billion euros a year and employs more than 3.5 million people. The rich diversity of jobs, research, projects and action which are generated across the marine and maritime sectors played a key role in the conference's proceedings. Wide-ranging discussions on clean shipping, underwater robotics, the blue bio-economy, aquaculture, cruise tourism and coastal protection all featured strongly. Insights were shared into how mega trends of big data and digitalisation are driving new developments for the prosperous future of our oceans and seas. With this, a very strong connectivity theme was evident throughout the conference. Speakers and participants discussed and reflected on the Blue Economy's future and how this is underpinned by inter-dependencies which can be shaped for future growth, for example in value chain development.



**The conference took place for the first time in the Black Sea region, in Burgas (Bulgaria)** – the country’s largest cargo port and major hub for seaside tourism. The city’s mayor reflected on how Burgas has been transformed from its village origins to an important maritime city, through the efforts of its ‘entrepreneurial people’. Commissioner Vella noted that the European Commission and the Bulgarian EU Presidency had dedicated the conference to showcasing examples from the Black Sea region’s cooperation activities, including the signing of a new partnership Declaration.

**Ministers and representatives from Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine reaffirmed their commitment to working more closely with the endorsement of the Declaration towards a Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea.**



# Political opening and conference plenary sessions

## MINISTERIAL DECLARATION OF BURGAS

### “TOWARDS A COMMON MARITIME AGENDA FOR THE BLACK SEA”

The political opening of the conference was dedicated to demonstrating the reinforced commitment of joint working across the countries of the Black Sea and the European Commission. The Ministerial Declaration of Burgas – “Towards a common maritime agenda for the Black Sea” - endorsed by all littoral Black Sea countries and Republic of Moldova in the presence European Commission and the Black Sea Economic Commission - sets out a framework to support continued collaborative working and to identify joint regional maritime and marine priorities and actions. This voluntary approach includes key areas such as marine and coastal environment protection, technology transfer and enhancing access to sustainable financing. Shipping, cruising lines and coastal tourism are also noted for voluntary cooperation. A wide range of EU and Black Sea institutional and sectoral partners, as well as politicians, contributed to the opening session, signalling the commitment across the Black Sea and the EU to further enhancing maritime-focused strategic cooperation. Romania’s State Secretary, Maria Magdalena Grigore noted that: **“the Black Sea will be a place of stability, security and prosperity for all our people.”** This vision was reinforced by the Ambassador of Turkey to Bulgaria, Hasan Ulosoy: **“the Black Sea is a sea of friendship and cooperation.”** Emphasising the EU’s supporting role in facilitating cross-Black Sea dialogue, Commissioner Vella noted the significant opportunity of transforming the future **“from a sea of differences to a sea of opportunities”**.

Link to [Ministerial Declaration: Towards a Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea](#)





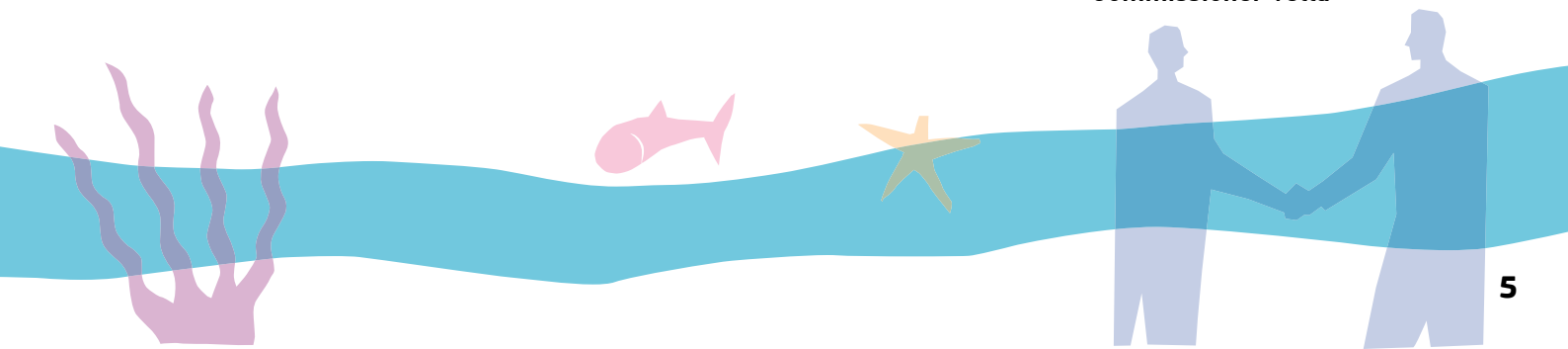
## BURGAS VISION PAPER: A BLUE GROWTH INITIATIVE FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IN THE BLACK SEA

Researchers and scientists, representing lead institutes from all coastal countries and the Republic of Moldova, have developed a shared vision for a productive, healthy, resilient, sustainable and better valued Black Sea by 2030 (the Burgas Vision Paper). This vision aims to turn into a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for the Black Sea in 2019 and serve as a reference framework and a programmatic tool for defining national, European, and sea-basin priorities, incl. for securing necessary funds for the implementation. Commissioner Vella noted that an enhanced research agenda is supported by events such as the mid-May Blue Invest matchmaking event, the EU strategy on ‘Plastic Waste’ and the forthcoming investment platform for the Blue Economy. These all signal a significant strategic and investment boost for the Blue Growth agenda.

Link to [Burgas Vision paper towards a Blue Growth Initiative for Research and Innovation in the Black Sea](#)

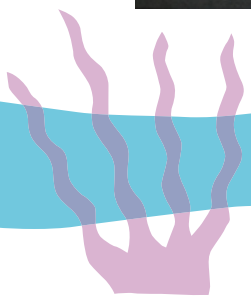
“ I truly believe that the **Black Sea** is ready for its own ‘**Big Bang**’ for sustainable blue growth ”

Commissioner Vella



## PANEL SESSION – BIG BANG BLACK SEA?

This session opened with a question to the audience concerning views of the most important maritime challenge. Responses saw over half of participants focusing on **the 2 topics of marine pollution and a current lack of effective cross-border cooperation**. This offered a strong focus for the discussion which followed with a wide range of institutional and political actors offering ideas and highlighting successes and challenges to further deepening the potential for Black Sea cooperation. It was noted that Bulgaria and Romania's accession to EU membership has delivered huge investment to the Black Sea and has influenced plans to create an international centre for Black Sea exploration. Reflecting on the efforts required to generate organisational synergies across the many different stakeholder groups, connected ownership was deemed critical to sustainable success. Sigi Gruber from the Commission's DG for Research and Innovation noted that **"science and innovation is the driver of the Blue Growth economy"**, signalling the **importance of the Vision paper in accelerating collaboration efforts**. Actions to support the development of a 'blue, Black Sea' included common approaches to data sharing, creating a more positive debate concerning how the Black Sea is perceived and engaging stronger citizen participation through networks with a strong project orientation. The session moderator concluded with a reflection that the Black Sea requires **"cooperation for action and action for cooperation"**.



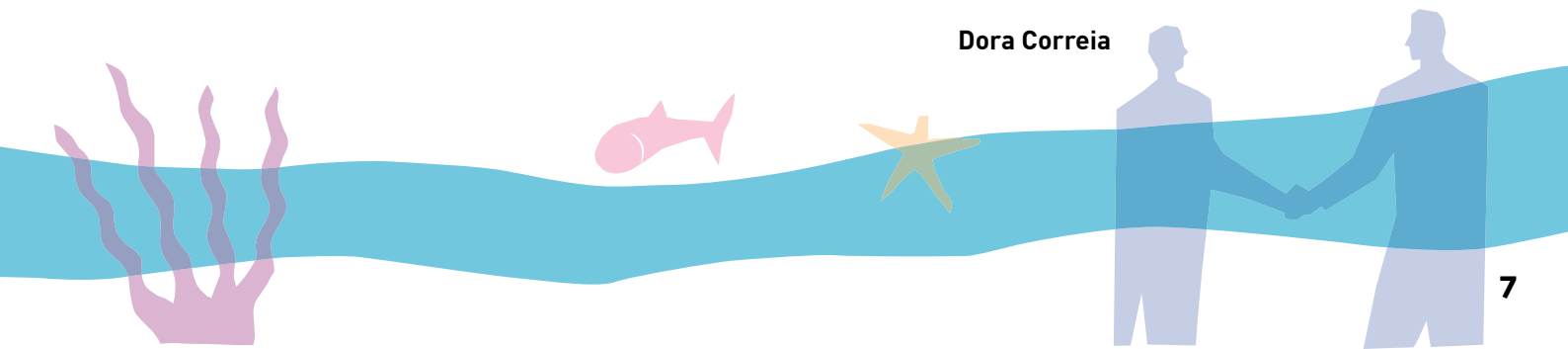
## PANEL SESSION – EU FUNDS POST 2020

Dora Correia, DG MARE Director, provided **an early outline of the Commission’s proposals for the post-2020 European Maritime and Fisheries Fund**. Highlighting the scale of the Blue Economy’s growth potential, Ms Correia noted 3 key categories of established and emerging sectors, together with ‘enablers’. **The post-2020 programming period must balance how to facilitate the sector’s growth potential with distributing scarce public resources. Leveraging investment, especially from the private sector, remains critically important through EU funds which include the Connecting Europe Facility, Horizon Europe and the European Structural and Investment Funds**. Enhanced added value will be sought through a strong local development focus on sustainable and prosperous coastal communities. The draft Common Provisions Regulation has already addressed the need for a simpler ‘rule book’ while the continued shared management approach will drive a new results-based orientation and greater flexibility. Addressing the investment gap (especially in areas such as biotechnology, ocean energy and digitization) will be supported by blended finance, through **the set-up a blue economy investment platform in the autumn**. The platform will be underpinned by blue growth calls, with **a budget of €7 million**. As well as providing financial advice and business support, it will facilitate access to finance, with the aim of accelerating investment-ready projects.

Sigi Gruber from the European Commission noted that, under the current Horizon 2020 programme, an Info Day will take place on 25 June which includes ‘sustainable aquaculture 4.0’ as part of innovation actions. With the post-2020 research programme proposals – Horizon Europe – expected to be announced on 7 June, **Ms. Gruber noted the anticipated strong alignment between marine research and innovation priorities and the three pillars of the new programme. These include a societal challenges and ‘missions’ orientation and the set-up of the European Innovation Council intended as a frontrunner in supporting EU industry with breakthrough innovations.**

“ The EU will continue to support  
the Blue Economy  
through EU funds ”

Dora Correia



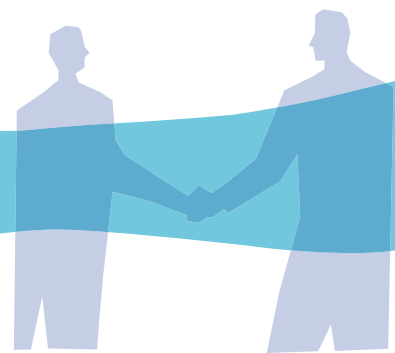
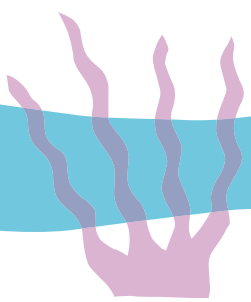
## Exhibition area and ‘pitch presentations’

The conference venue was ideally positioned to host 28 exhibitors from across the marine and maritime community. The large open-floor space was occupied by various stands, state-of-the-art tools and communication materials to showcase projects and actions. There was a strong and engaging interactive environment in the open space area, with intensive sharing and exchange of knowledge and ideas across exhibitors and participants. Exhibitors included a think-tank for marine science policy, a large-scale network focused on marine data and promoting widespread use of interactive maps, a project on ocean literacy and a range of organisations committed to improving the effectiveness of sea basin collaboration.



“ There are **no borders** in the sea.  
It belongs **to us all** ”

Michael Christides





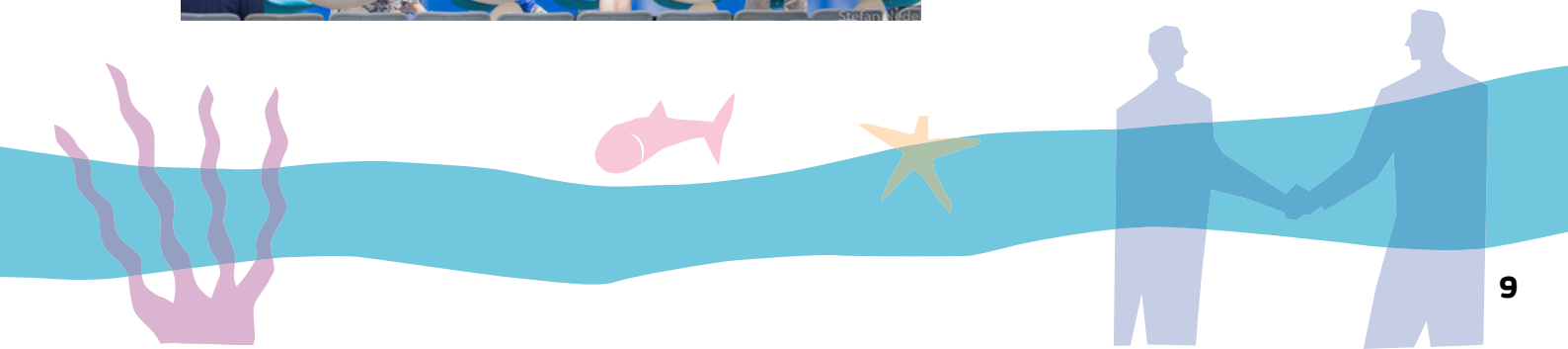
The ‘pitch presentation’ sessions provided a unique, awareness-raising platform for EMD community stakeholders to share knowledge and insights into current marine-focused projects.

These included:

- Showcasing the added value of large-scale cooperation actions to address challenges and create new opportunities. Insights were provided into new, inter-disciplinary research projects as well as skills and mentoring initiatives. There was a connected theme across these pitch sessions of moving beyond blue growth and a blue economy, to a ‘blue society’. As noted by one presenter: “our oceans are a common heritage for everyone” (Iwona Gin, MARINA H2020 project).
- A strong maritime ecosystems and environmental focus with insights into projects as diverse as trans-national coordination of marine research efforts (for example in testing and solutions for maritime safety) and technological developments linked to rebuilding the mineral content of the ocean soils.
- 5 stakeholders from 73 EMD “In My Country” events (across 17 EU countries as well as Israel the Ukraine) offered insights into inspiring examples of marine and maritime-focused



collaboration efforts which ranged from Black Sea and Aegean to the Azores Archipelago. All examples illustrated the significant value of citizen-focused awareness-raising of marine and maritime resources and innovative ways to create both interest in and incentivise action to protect and value our oceans and seas.



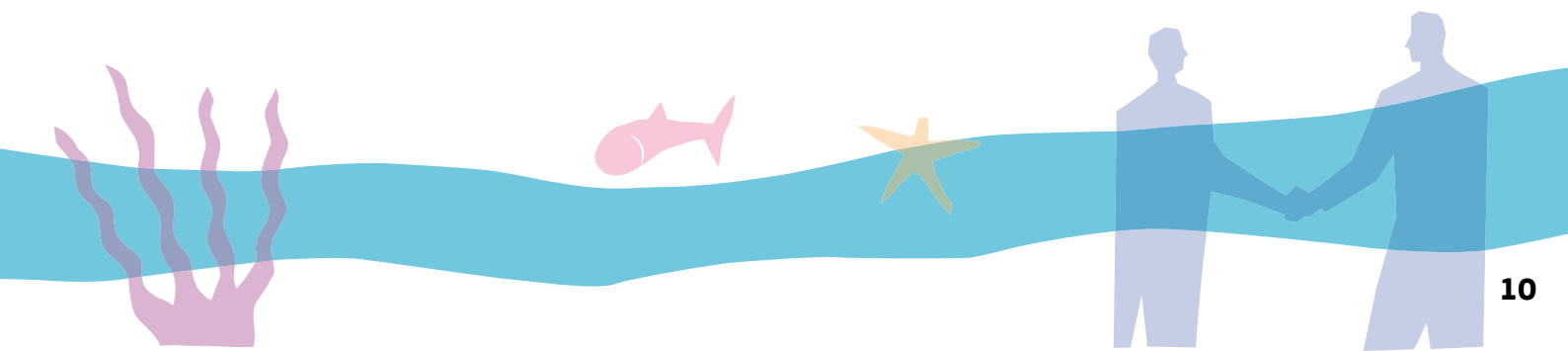
# Stakeholder Workshops

An important feature of the EMD is the stakeholder workshops, which create an added value forum for the EDM community to discuss new, innovative approaches to addressing the many challenges and opportunities which are posed by our oceans and seas. This year saw the delivery of **18 workshops**, spanning existing, new and emerging topics across the marine and maritime spectrum. The report's annex provides summarised details and further insights into each of these workshops, including challenges and successes, as well as outlining ideas and recommendations for future action. A summary and flavour of overarching themes which emerged across the 18 workshops is highlighted below:



“ Desire and ability [to act]  
need to be married ”

Workshop participant re Ocean Literacy



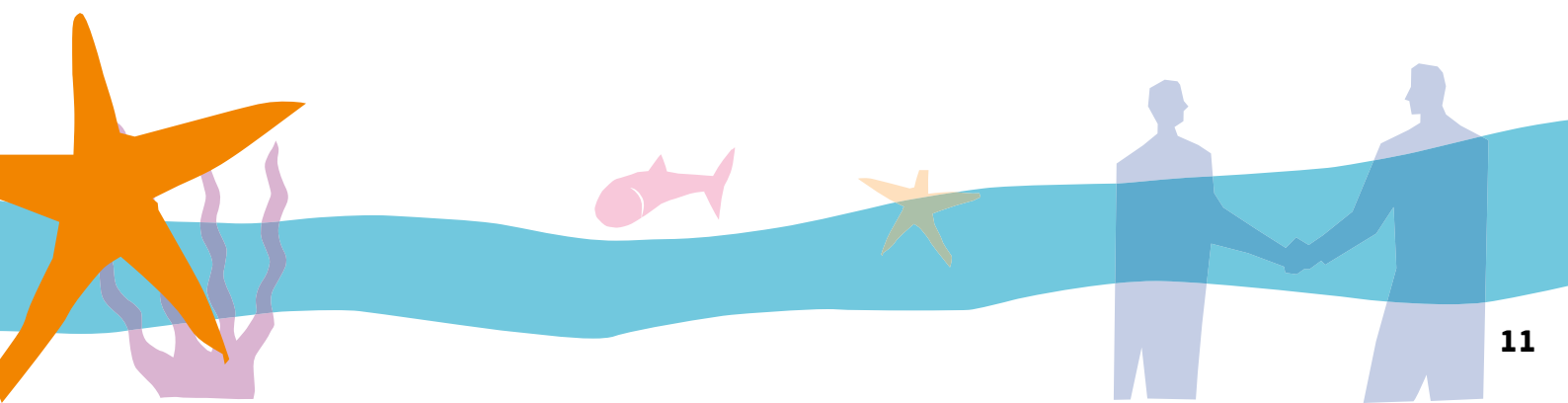
## • MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABILITY

With increasing recognition of the need for EU-wide strategic responses to address marine environmental challenges, new approaches are emerging (and are being tested) to identify solutions. Correspondingly, there is growing demand for solutions which are aligned across different maritime geographies and beyond the EU. Examples include a multiple-port solution to addressing how ship-generated waste is discharged. Macro-level responses require to be balanced with successful 'bottom-up' local responses including FLAGs (fisheries local action groups). This particular initiative was highlighted in its potential to link to other EU funds including Rural Development. This leveraging investment function can play a significant role in supporting targeted, territorial development objectives and offers a 'closer to home' approach to incentivise and engage citizens to take stronger ownership of (for example) marine environment challenges.

The scale of the challenge in addressing marine litter is better addressed when the root causes are well understood. Many marine initiatives are in place, globally, to shed new light on the origins of this problem. The workshop shared examples of projects which use technology to connect and engage citizens in understanding the nature of the challenge through, for example, web portals and data visualisation. Generating improved ownership – across different groups of EU society – will be critical in creating a culture of 'stewardship of the environment'.

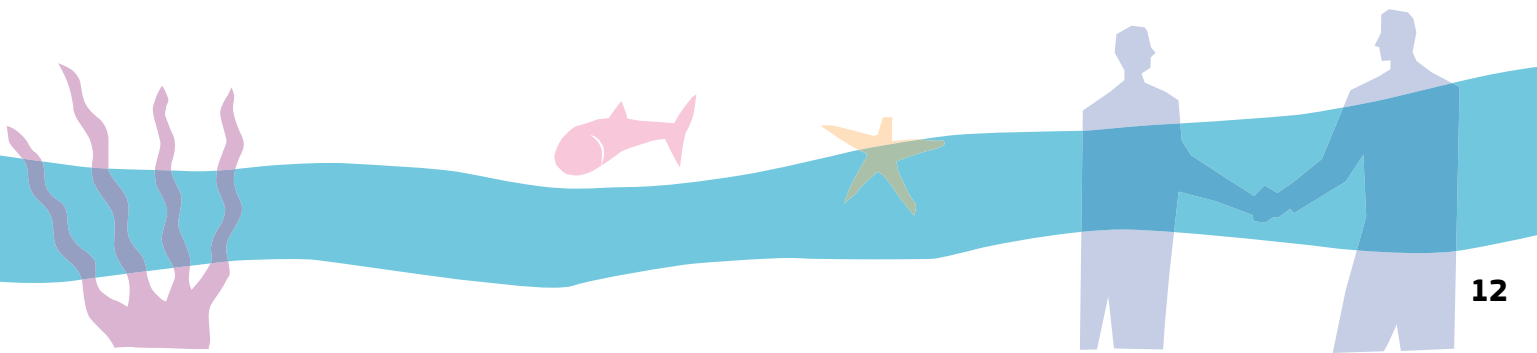
“ **More sea than land** is under the jurisdiction of the Member States...it should be **at the heart of EU policy Black Sea** ”

Gesine Meissner, MEP



## • NEW DIRECTIONS FOR COASTAL TOURISM

Ocean literacy and the circular economy agenda are at the core of a developing framework to drive new directions for coastal tourism. Overall, an holistic approach is required (e.g. taking account of MSP, leveraging investment opportunities and engaging actors from across the spectrum of tourism, marine and maritime industries). With the global rise of ecotourism, marine ecotourism has emerged as a growing trend which requires support and direction to optimise its influence on both Blue Growth and sustainability objectives. New approaches to governance are needed, to align efforts across the different levels and actors involved in this emerging area. Different groups (from both 'supply' and 'demand' sides of marine ecotourism) require different advice, support and incentives which imply targeted responses.



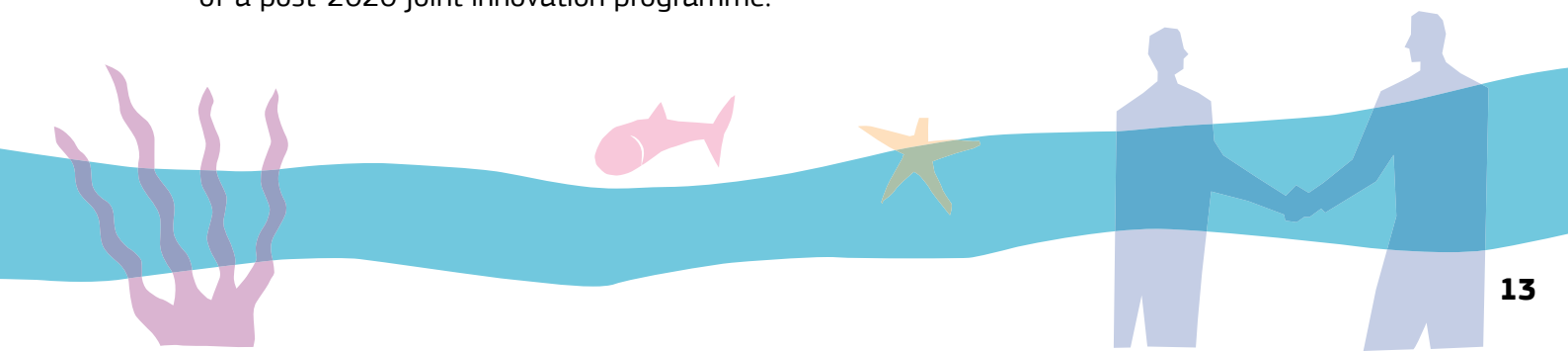
## • MANAGING BLUE GROWTH AND STRENGTHENING CAPACITY

As the Blue Growth sector gathers strength and momentum in its reach to support innovation, competitiveness and sustainability, there is a corresponding need to coordinate and manage large-scale responses. This is an issue which strongly characterises how marine digitalisation and big data is evolving and how associated risks are managed. Data sharing remains a challenge although there is clear demand to address this as a route to unlocking Blue Growth potential. Information ‘entry points’ (for example, with coastal tourism, ports and ships) are recognised target areas for strengthening capacity, in order to support the whole Blue Growth ecosystem. Equally, as the sector builds capacity for investment in ocean literacy, new questions and challenges emerge concerning how to convert knowledge into policy and targeted action, and how to generate sustained ownership. With the ocean literacy agenda still in its relative infancy, the marine community is determined to build stronger engagement and capacity beyond the marine sector, in order to widen the net of responsibility and ownership.

## • ACCELERATING MARINE COOPERATION

This broad theme ran through the whole conference with strong support for the benefits which scaled-up efforts (e.g. across regions and sea basins) can deliver for the marine and maritime agenda. Whether through geographical neighbours, sea basins or more widely dispersed interregional collaboration, the concept of ‘joining forces’ was signalled as a core condition to addressing opportunities and challenges across the blue economy. One of the workshops called for greater efforts across the sector to create ‘strategic frameworks’ to facilitate such cooperation. It was also noted that this could generate a shift in thinking ‘from oceans to ocean’ – i.e. by connecting up efforts across different marine territories, this could create a border-less marine ecosystem.

The concept of cooperation across sea basins has already taken root in places such as the Black Sea and the Danube where a memorandum of understanding has been signed to address common strategic goals such as reducing pollution: “The specific geography of the Black Sea is a strategic opportunity for cooperation” (Commissioner for Black Sea and Bulgaria and Depute Minister for Environment, Atanaska Nikolova). The concept of ‘co-opetition’ was also noted through the ‘Sisters Sea’ programme across the Baltic and North Seas with the development of a post-2020 joint innovation programme.

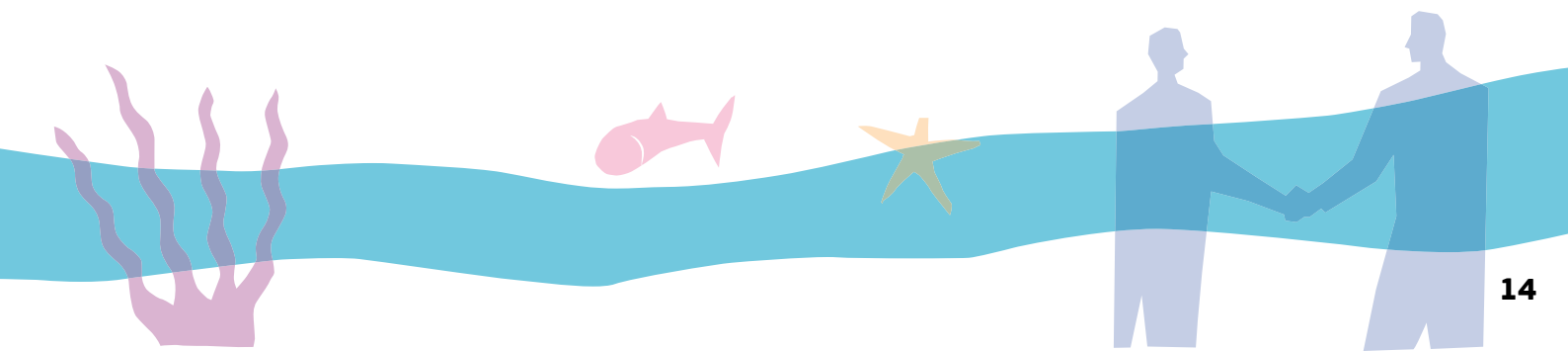


Data collection and management remains a critical area of focus to support planning and cooperation (for example, in relation to MSP). The debate concerning ‘more versus better data’ has shifted to a position more clearly focused on the need for improved data, not least as MSP requires to be addressed in an international, marine context. Political commitment is recognised as a core condition to improving data for MSP.

#### • BLUE INNOVATION INSIGHTS

The conference workshops highlighted that ‘Blue Innovation’ transcends innovation activities, and extends to strategies, policies and collaboration efforts – i.e. combining the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of Blue Innovation. For example, the Blue Bioeconomy is encouraging actors across the sector to develop new, innovative alliances which combine cross-sectoral ideas and actions. This is also supporting the supply of and demand for EU financial instruments which incentivise cutting-edge approaches to science, research and innovation. Furthermore, marine-oriented innovation is generating new insights and directions for how Blue Innovation can be positioned across multiple value chains, with increasing interest in scaled -up testing and demonstration activities. Marine-oriented clusters are clearly positioned as industrial leaders in supporting an accelerated innovation drive.

Workshops also demonstrated that large-scale innovation efforts can be boosted by robust foundations to support long-term commitment. These include political commitment, public consultation exercises and strong capacity for public procurement.

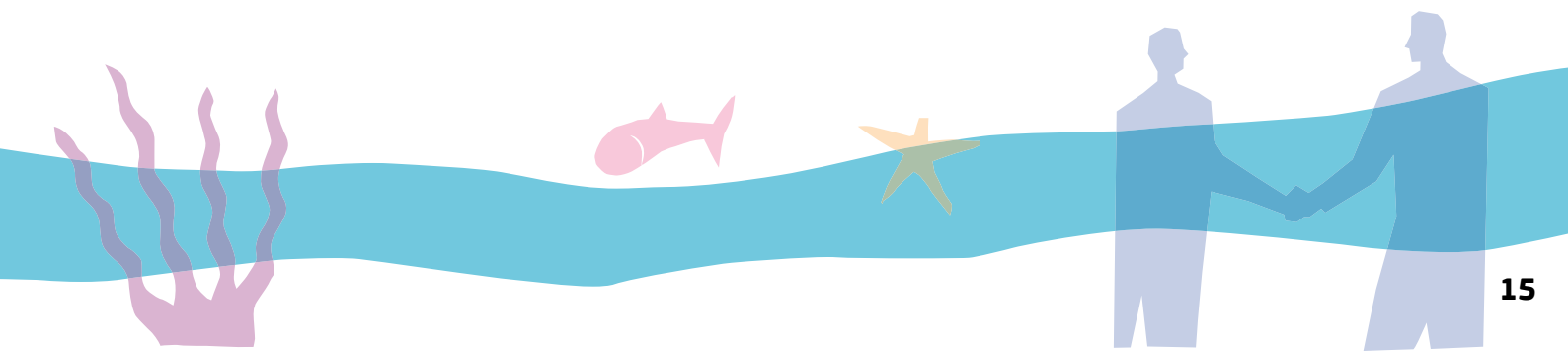


## • AN UPDATE ON MARINE AND MARITIME DEVELOPMENTS

The conference provided an excellent opportunity to reflect on recent sectoral developments which have seen new and innovative methods to addressing long-term objectives. For example, improved data collection methods are generating a better evidence base concerning unwanted catches, thus reducing reliance on historical methods of anecdotal evidence. The landing obligation of the CFP remains an imperative in supporting the EU's marine ecosystem. Reflecting on maritime technology skills, a critical insight was offered into the need for strong alignment of traditional and new skills and capacities. This challenge includes effective 'capture' of key skills and competences of the older maritime workforce (which remain highly relevant to the sector's future) and blending these with a more 'enabling' competences base, which is linked to technological needs and drivers. This is essential in supporting the attractiveness of the sector to the future workforce, as well as ensuring that skills investments match the sector's future needs.

“ How to manage river-sea systems  
in an adaptive and sustainable way ”

DANUBIUS-RI H2020 project



# MARE Info Sessions

There were 3 workshop Info Sessions organised by DG MARE, focusing on topics which are high priorities for the future innovation, sustainability and investment of the marine and maritime agenda.

## TURNING MARINE LITTER INTO A SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

This session reflected on the scale of the challenge in addressing marine litter, particularly plastics, and acknowledged that comprehensive and wide-ranging solutions are required: “even in countries with good management systems we have waste issues” (workshop participant). The session provided insights into innovative business models and practices which are seeking to widen engagement and incentivise action across society to play a role in addressing the challenges. New and innovative approaches to recycling were showcased by a range of actors from across the social sector and industry. Innovative solutions to addressing the challenge were shared including a mechanism for collecting floating plastic first trialled in Barcelona. This has led to the fishermen involved becoming ambassadors for wider deployment. The workshop highlighted the role and value of NGOs who possess significant knowledge of how to address the related challenges and are a key partner in working towards effective and sustainable solutions.





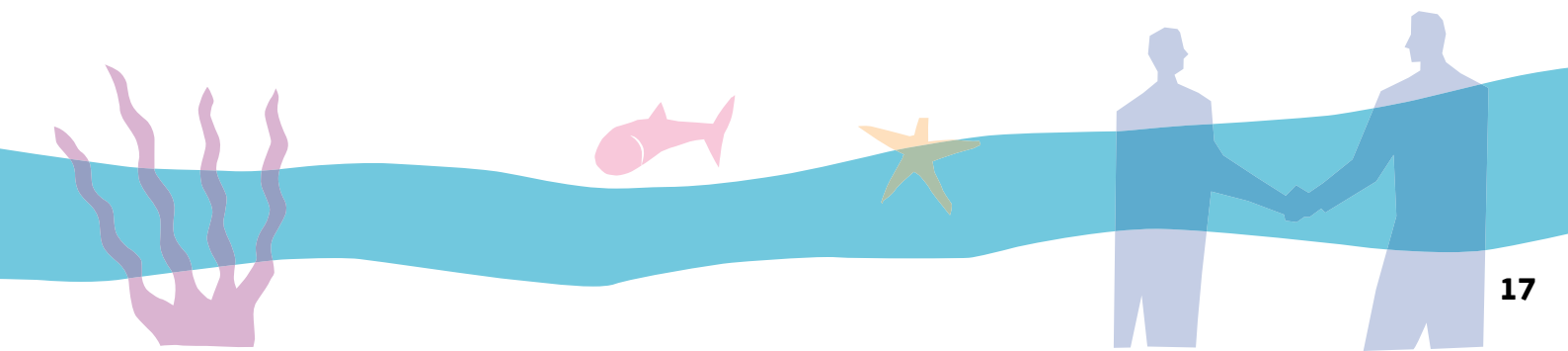
## MEASURING THE EU BLUE ECONOMY

With the first annual economic report on the Blue Economy due in July, new steps have been taken in addressing the need for improved accuracy and comparability of data in measuring the Blue Economy. This session underlined that strong economic analysis is required to support policy decision making. The forthcoming report will offer a much improved overview of the different sectors underpinning the Blue Economy (including aquaculture, marine transport and coastal tourism). Importantly, the report will also provide key trends data, showing strong growth across the Blue Economy (with different rates of growth and decline of related sectors). Record high profits for the EU's fishing fleet are also highlighted, demonstrating how sustainable fishing policies have played a role in reducing fish mortality rates. This, in turn, supports new developments in other related sectors of the Blue Economy.

## FINANCING STRATEGIC COOPERATION FOR BLUE GROWTH

This session raised awareness of the breadth of current activity and future opportunity in Blue Growth investment, catalysed by cooperation efforts (e.g. interregionally and trans-nationally). The Brussels-based network, ERRIN, provided insights of activities which generate new responses to investment cooperation and capacity for Blue Growth, for example, through the efforts of the network's Working Groups (including Blue Growth and Tourism). Other EU programmes (such as Interreg) create conditions for partners to coalesce around a common challenge (e.g. addressing marine corrosion). This also highlights increased demand for pan-EU efforts in scaling up innovation capacity to create Blue Growth value chains. Interreg has funded 358 maritime cooperation projects since 2007.

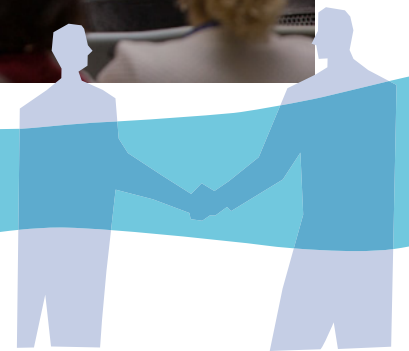
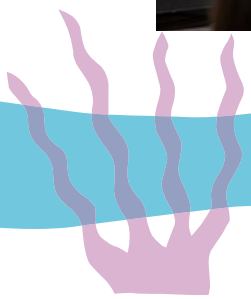
The session also noted the importance of the post-2020 multi-annual financial framework. For example, the post-2020 Cohesion Policy has already signalled strong support for interregional collaboration and innovation-driven investment, very relevant to the marine and maritime sector. Speakers and participants noted that reduced complexity of the funding landscape would be a welcome step in encouraging stronger engagement from across the investment community to explore investment routes for funding leverage. The added value role which intermediary support platforms can offer was also discussed, with an appeal that these respond to demand for improved simplification and guidance of EU investment channels.



## Conclusions

The 1.5 days EMD conference reinforced the enthusiasm, commitment and on-going focus of the whole marine and maritime community to address ongoing challenges while seeking out new approaches to Blue Growth innovation and investment. Underpinning the event's discussions was a strong awareness of generating EU added value by facilitating and accelerating the co-operation potential in sea basins and beyond. Speakers and participants demonstrated a clear willingness and ability to scale-up efforts – across different territories – and deliver sustainable solutions to challenges such as pollution and biodiversity loss. This, in turn, boosts the potential of existing and new Blue Growth innovation opportunities.

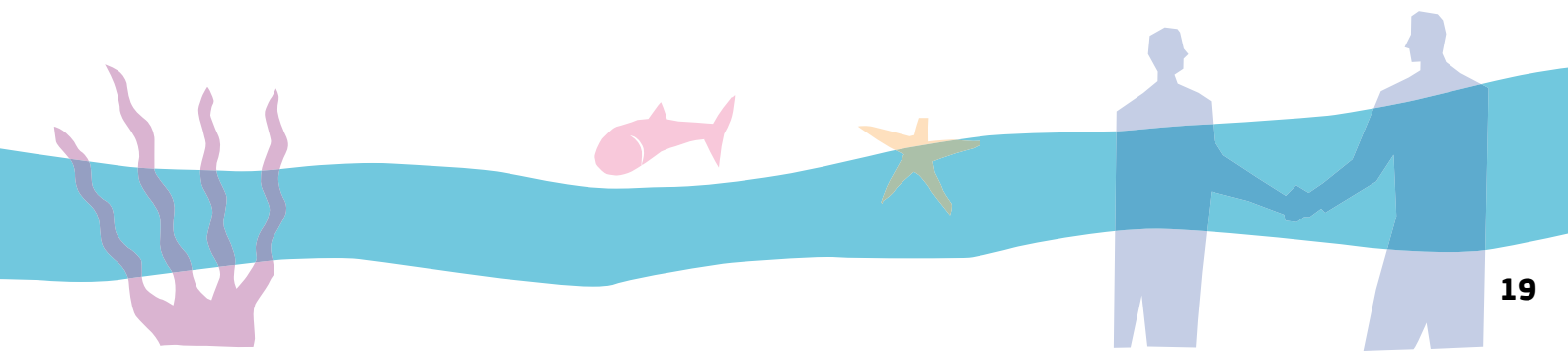
The conference concluded with a decisive 'next steps' focus on accelerating investment (for example through Blue Invest match-making efforts and blended funding mechanisms). This is driven by a recognised need to address the current investment gap especially in emerging sectors and to continue to unlock innovation capacity through environmentally-responsible solutions. **With next year's EMD taking place in Lisbon, the conference will move from the 'East Coast to the West Coast'.** This was noted during the handover ceremony which also marked the end of the 2018 EMD. Overseen by Burgas' Vice-Mayor, Ms Ruska Boyadzhieva, and the Secretary General of Lisbon City Council, Alberto Laplaine Guimarães, the conference ended on a high note with a reflection on the distance travelled, while embracing the challenges ahead for our oceans and seas.



“ Together, we have achieved significant breakthroughs in fisheries management, in research and blue growth.

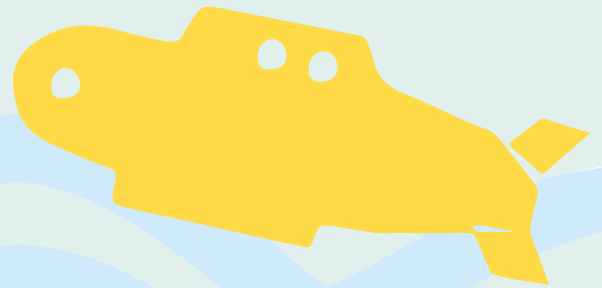
The declaration endorsed by ministers today paves the way for more structured and pragmatic cooperation on all things maritime ”



Commissioner Vella



# EUROPEAN MARITIME DAY

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- 2011 GDANSK / Poland
- 2012 GOTHENBURG / Sweden
- 2013 VALLETA / Malta
- 2014 BREMEN / Germany
- 2015 PIRAEUS / Greece
- 2016 TURKU / Finland
- 2017 POOLE / United Kingdom
- 2018 BURGAS / Bulgaria
- 2019 LISBON / Portugal
- 2020 CORK / Ireland



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