

# “BLUE SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE”, Varna, Bulgaria

---

Date: 26 October 2023

Location: Yunashki salon /1, Hristo Botev Blvd/ Varna, Bulgaria

Type of event: In person

Common Maritime Agenda  
for the Black Sea

Supported  
by the



# Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Executive summary .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Objectives, format, and achievements .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Objectives .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Format .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Achievements .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Audience .....</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>Annexe 1: Agenda .....</b>	<b>6</b>
	<b>Annexe 2: Pictures .....</b>	<b>7</b>

## 1 Introduction

This event was organised within the framework of the project “Regional Maritime cooperation - Sea basins assistance mechanism for the Atlantic, Black Sea and Western Mediterranean”. The project aims to provide among others support to the six countries actively participating in the Common Maritime Agenda (CMA) for the Black Sea. The CMA is an EU sea basin initiative designed to enhance regional cooperation for achieving a sustainable blue economy in the Black Sea. Developed within the broader framework of the Black Sea Synergy, it recognises the need for a coordinated approach to address common maritime and blue economy challenges. It is the first initiative of its kind in the region, resulting from a bottom-up process initiated by the involved countries and backed by the European Commission.

Specifically, this event was organised by the CMA National Hub in Bulgaria. National Hubs consist of teams of national experts with an extensive network, capable of identifying areas of high potential and help develop project ideas while addressing local priorities. The event was organised as part of the CMA in My Country campaign in Bulgaria and it took place on 26 October 2023, in Varna.

## 2 Executive summary

The event started at 9:30 with the registration and the opening session. Moderated by Ilze Atanasova, Chair of the Marine Cluster Bulgaria and representative of the CMA BG national hub, the opening session featured key speakers including:

- Mrs. Milena Stancheva, Minister, Ministry of Innovation and Growth
- Gabriela Mitova, Ministry of Transport and Communications - National Coordinator of the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea (CMA)
- Peycho Peychev, Acting Mayor of Varna Municipality
- Assoc. Dr. Hristo Nenov, Deputy Rector of Technical University – Varna
- Captain. Prof. Dr. Nikolay Velikov, Naval Academy "N.Y.Vaptsarov"
- Valentin Enchev, Executive Agency Maritime Administration
- Alexander Kalchev, Chairman of the Board, Bulgarian Chamber of Shipping

Following this opening session, the event transitioned into two parallel sessions centred on the future of skills in the Blue Economy. One session, titled "Marketplace for Prospective Skills - Success Stories," involved engaging with professionals from various traditional and emerging sectors in the blue economy such as maritime transport (shipping, ports, logistics, agency, shipbuilding, and repair), coastal and marine tourism, marine life sciences, aquaculture, preservation, renewable energy, and ocean engineering. Simultaneously, the other session, entitled "Policy Dialogue with Stakeholders," addressed critical skill-related topics such as tackling brain drain, coping with digitalisation and green transformation, building, and retaining talent, and the role of dual training in the blue economy. These parallel sessions continued from 14:00 till 16:30 in the afternoon.

Before the networking lunch at 12:30, a special half-hour session entitled "Future Thinking - Interactive Session for Blue Careers" took place from 12:00 till 12:30. This session focused on themes including gaining insights into future career development within the Black Sea blue economy.

The event also featured special video messages from the Bulgarian Black Sea Young Ambassadors and showcased the maiden voyage of the Bulgarian scientific research vessel "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" to Antarctica.

Furthermore, the forum provided information about Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) services and opportunities, marking the 15th anniversary of the EEN and 30 years since the establishment of the European single market. Additionally, an EEN expert presented insights on "Future Literacy" to help foresee future trends and innovations during the event.

Throughout the day, a dedicated space was allocated for an exhibition showcasing companies, scientific institutions, and educational establishments, facilitating bilateral meetings among participants.

## **3 Objectives, format, and achievements**

### **3.1 Objectives**

The event had several key objectives. Firstly, it aimed to foster collaboration among businesses, educational institutions, academia, and NGOs to advance high technologies and innovation across various sectors of the blue economy. This involved presenting opportunities to students, focusing on blue skills in sectors like maritime transport, marine tourism, aquaculture, and renewable energy. Additionally, the event sought to engage stakeholders and facilitate policy dialogues to address challenges such as brain drain, digitalisation, green transformation, and the role of dual training. Secondly, it served as a platform for networking and knowledge exchange, allowing professionals, companies, scientific institutions, and educational bodies to showcase their work, share ideas, and engage in bilateral meetings. Lastly, special sessions were designed to guide attendees in planning their future career paths within the blue economy, providing valuable insights into career prospects and development opportunities in Bulgaria and wider Black Sea region.

### **3.2 Format**

The event was an in-person event to facilitate networking and fully engage during the parallel sessions and lectures.

### **3.3 Achievements**

The event covered several important topics: the difficulties companies face in getting young people interested in maritime jobs, the shifts toward digitalisation and greening in the blue economy, and the need for new skills supporting a sustainable and energy efficient future for the Black Sea Region. The discussions highlighted the need for better collaboration between schools and businesses and stressed the value of training programs for existing talent pools.

As a result of these talks, there is a clearer understanding of the gaps between skills needed and those available in the job market. Plans were made to continue these exchanges and team up for more projects to address these skill gaps in the blue economy.

Both business and academic representatives agreed on the importance of initiatives that promote blue economy careers among young people. These initiatives aim to provide updated information on the industry and the skills necessary for different blue economy jobs and sectors.

To help participants get a clearer understanding of the available job opportunities in the blue economy, a 'skills marketplace' was set up at the event. This provided a platform for attendees to meet up, talk about possible careers, and explore job opportunities in the blue economy sectors.

## **4 Audience**

The event gathered 211 participants, with a majority being university or high school students (the main target group for this blue skills-focused event). Additionally, the event welcomed representatives from academia, EU networks, national authorities, NGOs, private companies, and research organisations.

Annexe 1: Agenda

09:30	<b>REGISTRATION</b>	
10:00 - 12:00	<b>OPENING AND WELCOME</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcoming address by Mrs. Milena Stoycheva, Minister, Ministry of Innovation and Growth</li> <li>• Mrs. Gabriela Mitova, Ministry of Transport and Communications - National Coordinator of the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea (CMA)</li> <li>• Mr. Peycho Peychev, Acting Mayor of Varna Municipality</li> <li>• Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hristo Nenov, Deputy Rector of Technical University – Varna</li> <li>• Captain I rank Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nikolay Velikov, Naval Academy "N.Y.Vapsarov"</li> <li>• Capt. Valentin Enchev, Executive Agency Maritime Administration</li> <li>• Capt. Alexander Kalchev, Chairman of the Board, Bulgarian Chamber of Shipping</li> </ul> <p><i>Moderator: Ilze Atanasova, Chair of the Management Board of MCB, National Hub BSAM</i></p>	
	<b>Skills of the future – challenges, career opportunities and prospects in the Blue Economy</b> <i>Parallel sessions</i>	
	<b>Marketplace for prospective skills Success stories</b>  <i>Meetings with professionals in traditional and emerging sectors in the blue economy</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maritime transport - shipping, ports, logistics, agency and other port services, shipbuilding and ship repair</li> <li>• Coastal and marine tourism</li> <li>• Marine life sciences and aquaculture, marine preservation</li> <li>• Marine renewable energy and ocean engineering</li> </ul>	<b>Policy dialogue with stakeholders</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to tackle the brain drain?</li> <li>• What is the role of dual training?</li> <li>• How can we cope with the pace of digitalisation and green transformation so as to be internationally competitive?</li> <li>• How to build and retain promising talent?</li> <li>• New blue skills for a sustainable future of the Black Sea</li> </ul>
	<i>15th anniversary Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) and 30 years EU Single Market – opportunities for internationalisation, training and new skills to meet future challenges</i>	
	<i>Moderators: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petar Georgiev, TU – Varna, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rumen Stoyanov, Naval Academy</i>	
<b>MORNING SESSION – FOR STUDENTS WITH LESSONS / LECTURES IN THE AFTERNOON</b>		
12:00 – 12:30	<b>Future thinking – interactive session for blue careers</b> How to get insight into our own future career development?	
12:30 – 13:30	<b>Networking</b>	
14:00 – 16:30	<b>Skills of the future – challenges, career opportunities and prospects in the Blue Economy</b> <i>Parallel sessions: Marketplace for prospective skills and Policy dialogue with stakeholders</i>	
<b>AFTERNOON SESSION – FOR STUDENTS WITH LESSONS / LECTURES IN THE MORNING</b>		
09:30 – 16:30	<b>EXHIBITION OF COMPANIES, SCIENCE AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS – INDIVIDUAL BILATERAL MEETINGS</b>	



Annexe 2: Pictures

