



Press release – Bulgarian Blue Economy Week

The initiative “Blue Economy Week”, which included a national conference and “Blue Careers Days”, was completed on 3 December.

Under the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea, this national conference entitled "**Sustainable Blue Economy - Trends and Prospects for Bulgaria**" was organised on 30 November by the Bulgarian CMA national hub. Operated by Marine Cluster Bulgaria, the national hub is part of the Black Sea Assistance Mechanism, supported by the European Commission.

The hybrid event gathered over a hundred participants in the conference hall and online.

Speakers from the European Commission and international and national institutions presented the audience with the results of research and evaluation activities related to the Bulgarian blue economy and its potential, as well as opportunities for scientific and business development through the programmes "Maritime Affairs, Fisheries and Aquaculture", "Horizon Europe" 2021-2027 and Interreg NEXT "Black Sea Basin" 2021-2027. Participants were introduced to the French experience on the road towards a sustainable blue economy.

Experiences and good practices were shared by businesses and local authorities. In addition, several interesting ideas for future development in blue economy sectors were presented in line with the vision, goals and objectives of Bulgaria's Maritime Spatial Plan 2021-2035.

The roundtable discussion, informed by the previous sessions, highlighted important topics for the national blue economy. Given the scale of the blue economy and its importance for GDP, it was noted that the blue economy should be recognised as a strategic pillar of the national economy. It was highlighted that the sectors of the blue economy are fragmented across departments of various ministries and institutions, with lack of coordination between them. The need for joint efforts by the maritime community to define objectives, to propose adjustments and outline the community's contribution was emphasised. The audience agreed that a vision for the development of the blue economy is necessary. The participants discussed the need for efforts to be coordinated between government, public and private actors related to the blue economy.

As a result, the roundtable participants coalesced around the initiative to prepare a proposal for the newly elected Council of Ministers to establish an *Interdepartmental Coordination Council for Sustainable Blue Economy*, which would serve as a liaison between individual ministries and interact with all relevant stakeholders to create a comprehensive, holistic and sustainable strategic framework for the national blue economy.

On 1-3 December the fifth edition of the "**Blue Careers Days**", organised by the Marine Cluster Bulgaria in conjunction with the Bulgarian Chamber of Shipping and with the assistance of the Technical University of Varna, Naval Academy “N.Y.Vaptsarov” and the College of Tourism at the University of Economics-Varna was held. The event took place online, attracting students from all over the country. Representatives of business, universities and research organisations introduced the audience to the variety of professions and opportunities in blue economy sectors, gave valuable guidance and useful tips to the young people present.

Students willing to participate in the accompanying contest were able to submit their works till 6 December. The results will be uploaded on the Marine Cluster Bulgaria website on 19 December. The prizes for the winners are provided by the Municipality of Varna.