



ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Permanent International Secretariat

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE WORKING VIDEO-MEETING REGARDING POSSIBLE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BLUEMED PROJECT IN THE BLACK SEA REGION AMONG THE INTERESTED MEMBER STATES

14 July 2020

1. In order to examine and elaborate the prospects for the implementation of the BLUEMED project¹ in the Black Sea region by interested BSEC Member States, a working video-meeting was held on 14 July 2020 upon the initiative of the BSEC PERMIS.
2. The meeting was moderated by Ms. Sandra VUJINOVIĆ, BSEC PERMIS Executive Manager, who welcomed the increased participation of experts from relevant national authorities in the meeting and invited them to actively engage in the discussion, in order to formulate the next concrete steps in developing the BLUEMED pilot project at selected sites of the interested Member States.
3. In his introductory address the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Michael B. CHRISTIDES presented a brief “historic note” on how PERMIS learned about the project and came up with the idea to consider following the BLUEMED example, with the aim of protecting, preserving, and presenting the underwater natural and cultural heritage of the Black Sea, which, thanks to its uniqueness, enables good preservation of archeological discoveries and other relicts recently found on the seabed. He expressed his expectation that the outcome of this event could be the confirmation of interest from any Member State wishing to participate in this project and the subsequent establishment of a network of contacts with the competent authorities and other stakeholders, so that all interested parties can continue liaising and working on the concrete steps forward. Furthermore, Ambassador Michael B. CHRISTIDES stressed that at a time of economic uncertainty caused by the devastating impact of the Coronavirus outbreak, the above project is even more important as it offers a valuable platform for locally enhancing and promoting Tourism, the most affected sector.
4. The video-meeting was attended by representatives from the following BSEC Member States:
 1. Republic of Armenia
 2. Republic of Azerbaijan
 3. Republic of Bulgaria
 4. Georgia
 5. Hellenic Republic
 6. Republic of Moldova

¹ The BLUEMED is a Med-European project that concerns **the protection, preservation and effective presentation of the underwater natural and cultural heritage** of selected locations in the Mediterranean Sea, which could act as a model of adoption in the Black Sea.

7. Romania
8. Russian Federation
9. Republic of Serbia
10. Republic of Turkey

The representative of the project promoter - *Atlantis Consulting SA (Thessaloniki, Greece)*, also participated the Meeting as invited Guest.

The List of Participants is attached as **Annex I**.

5. Mr. Angelos MANGLIS, Founder and President of *Atlantis Consulting SA*, delivered a comprehensive presentation entitled “**BLUEMED Roadmap: how to up-take the BLUEMED model**”. The above presentation, attached as **Annex II**, represents an integrated road-map and strategy of the EU-funded BlueMed Project that could serve as a model for adoption in the Black Sea by offering responsible and sustainable promotion and accessibility of underwater cultural assets that remain largely unknown to the general public.

6. The long-term vision is to select a number of underwater heritage sites and establish the respective “Knowledge Awareness Centers” in locations along the Black Sea coastline. These would exhibit to visitors detailed illustration on the history and ecology of the sites using the latest technology and 3D visualization techniques. To attract “diver tourism” augmented reality systems would be created at each site to enhance the underwater experience and the installation of virtual reality technologies offering “dry dive visualization” would help to draw non-divers to the Knowledge Awareness Centers.

7. Furthermore, Mr. MANGLIS provided a broad overview of the legislative, management, financial and operational framework of prerequisites for project implementation, including the necessary steps to be followed in order to uptake the BLUEMED model, the eligibility criteria that candidate-sites need to meet (the level of maturity of the selected sites in terms of accessibility and sustainable tourism development), and how to proceed with the site mapping.

8. The participants welcomed the initiative of the BSEC PERMIS in organizing the above online meeting and expressed their initial interest in considering the possibility of implementing the project in the Black Sea region. They briefed on domestic legislation related to the management and accessibility of underwater cultural heritage sites and exchanged views on further steps, which should be considered in case some Member States decide to implement the BLUEMED.

9. The importance of full adherence with the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, adopted in 2001, was underlined, as it set out basic principles for better protection of submerged cultural heritage. A proposal for the establishment of a special technical advisory body for cooperation and coordination between the competent authorities and other stakeholders in the interested Member States was also presented.

10. At the end of the Meeting, Mr. Angelos MANGLIS responded to participants’ queries and pointed to the need to find a common theme that would connect the Black Sea region, which is considered the cradle of many civilizations, known for its rich archeological discoveries and other important natural and historical sites. Moreover, he underlined the need for closer coordinated cooperation between the PERMIS and all stakeholders and for joint forces in the preparation of a comprehensive, bankable project proposal.

11. In his closing remarks, the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General thanked all participants for presenting some interesting ideas that added significant “*Food for Thought and, hopefully, Action*” to the overall endeavor. Further on, he summarized some of the most important conclusions of the above video-meeting, as follows:

- BSEC PERMIS will distribute to all Member States the Roadmap presented by Mr. MANGLIS (**attached as Annex II**), so that they have the opportunity for deliberations and coordination among the various co-responsible entities and authorities at the national level, before deciding whether they wish to participate in the development of the BLUEMED pilot project at selected locations on their Black Sea (or other) coastline;
- In order to achieve tangible results and continue to elaborate on a concrete roadmap for further actions, PERMIS will take the initiative at the right time to organize another meeting in the near future;
- Participants were encouraged to establish direct contact with the project proponent, to further discuss the project in details and how it can be applied by the interested Member States. At the same time, the importance of informing the Secretariat was emphasized, so that PERMIS can follow up and contribute to the coordinated promotion of the project for any of the Member States that may be interested in pursuing it further;
- Regarding financial aspects and different funding options, it was concluded that in the event of a comprehensive, bankable project proposal, it will certainly arouse the interest of various International Financial Institutions, among them hopefully also that of “our” *Black Sea Trade and Development Bank* (BSTDB).