



EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

HIGH REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE UNION FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
SECURITY POLICY

Brussels, 3.7.2026
JOIN(2026) 15 final

JOINT REPORT TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL
on the implementation of the EU strategic approach to the Black Sea region

1. INTRODUCTION

The Joint Communication on the European Union's strategic approach to the Black Sea region ⁽¹⁾ (also referred to as the 'Black Sea Strategy' or the 'Strategy') calls on the European Commission and the High Representative / Vice-President (HR/VP) to deliver a progress report one year into its implementation. Accordingly, this joint report outlines the progress made since its adoption in May 2025.

In June 2025, the European Council welcomed the Joint Communication ⁽²⁾, which reaffirms the Black Sea's geostrategic role and sets out a vision for a more secure, interconnected, prosperous, and resilient region – anchored in shared values, the rule of law, sustainability, and effective cooperation. The EU is committed to advancing this vision jointly with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova ('Moldova'), Türkiye, and Ukraine, through mutually reinforcing cooperation.

The first year of implementation of the Strategy saw intensified Russian hybrid attacks, drone and missile warfare against military and civilian and critical infrastructure, including ports, especially in the Odesa region. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, lasting for more than four years since 2022, continues to severely undermine security and stability in the Black Sea region, dramatically expanding negative consequences for the region and beyond.

Despite the war's impact, most countries in the region maintain macroeconomic stability and are implementing structural reforms ⁽³⁾. Some of them are on the path to EU accession, and their gradual integration into EU initiatives has reinforced cooperation, cohesion and coordinated action with the EU. The ongoing peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan offers a historic opportunity to consolidate cross-border cooperation and connectivity in the South Caucasus, and to facilitate linkages with Central Asia. Complementarities with the EU Strategy for Central Asia, especially for cross-regional connectivity efforts, have been pursued.

In line with the objectives of the Black Sea Strategy, the current report highlights the EU's increased strategic engagement and coordinated actions to: (i) enhance security, stability and resilience across the Black Sea region (Pillar 1); (ii) strengthen economic growth and transport, energy, and digital connectivity (Pillar 2); and (iii) ensure environmental and climate resilience and preparedness, and civil protection (Pillar 3). Central to these efforts has been the support provided by the EU to Ukraine.

2. ADVANCING EU ENGAGEMENT AND COOPERATION IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

The EU engagement in the Black Sea region and with its partner countries reflects new levels of ambition and significant steps taken forward to deepen political, economic and sectoral cooperation with partner countries. The ministerial meeting on cross-regional security and connectivity in Luxembourg on 20 October 2025 marked a major step in fostering closer mutually beneficial partnerships and taking forward cross-regional cooperation on security and connectivity. The meeting brought

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025JC0135>

⁽²⁾ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/cjtb3oep/20250626-european-council-conclusions-en.pdf>

⁽³⁾ <https://www.ebrd.com/home/news-and-events/publications/economics/transition-reports/transition-report-2025-26.html>

together EU Member States and partner countries from the Black Sea region, the South Caucasus and Central Asia ⁽⁴⁾. Discussions deepened political dialogue on security, stability, and resilience in the region. The meeting also advanced the cross-regional Connectivity Agenda, aimed at strengthening trade and economic growth by better connecting the EU, Ukraine and Moldova, to the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia via Black Sea and Türkiye. Participants reaffirmed their determination to step up cooperation in areas of shared interest, enhance resilience and promote more connected, secure and prosperous regions.

Ukraine has shown strong commitment to reform so as to meet EU accession requirements ⁽⁵⁾ and to prepare for future reconstruction, despite Russian attacks against cities and civilian and energy infrastructure continuing to escalate. The implementation of the reforms agreed in the Ukraine Plan has been strong, with 77 reform and investment steps completed so far across key sectors, such as rule of law, anti-corruption, energy markets, public administration, and governance of state-owned enterprises. Ukraine has also seized the opportunities for early integration into the EU market made available through the DCFTA and other agreements with the EU: Ukraine joined the EU roam-like-at-home area, adopted the legislation to start the electricity market coupling and updated its partnership with EU on critical raw materials.

Moldova has made significant progress on its ambitious reform agenda ⁽⁶⁾ and on the path to EU membership. Despite massive Russian interference, the Parliamentary elections of September 2025 reaffirmed the country's accession path. Besides facilitating deeper EU integration, the EU's cooperation with Moldova has included support on energy, notably reducing dependency on Russian supplies and further integrating with EU energy systems, as well as on cybersecurity and increasing resilience to electoral interference.

On 15 June 2026, negotiations on Cluster 1: fundamentals were formally opened for Ukraine and Moldova, marking an important step forward on the countries' EU accession paths.

The recent positive regional developments, notably the historic momentum in the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process, opens avenues for the region's new transformative path. Inter-connected strategic industries, markets, transport corridors, digital networks, and energy interconnections help building trust and binding neighbours together. This is showcased with progress in the normalisation of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, including through the initialling of a bilateral peace treaty, the 2025 Washington Political Declaration and the TRIPP ⁽⁷⁾ connectivity project. Likewise, Armenia and Türkiye have made progress in the normalisation of their relations, including through efforts to facilitate bilateral trade and discussions to re-establish railway links.

(4) <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/10/20/co-chairs-conclusions-on-strengthening-cross-regional-security-and-connectivity/>

(5) https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/ukraine-report-2025_en

(6) https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/moldova-report-2025_en

(7) The Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) is a U.S.-brokered transit corridor through Armenia's Syunik region to connect Azerbaijan with its exclave Nakhchivan.

The EU's relations with Armenia reconfirmed a strong positive momentum, reflected in the Strategic Agenda adopted in December 2025 ⁽⁸⁾, which raised the level of ambition with short- and medium-term priorities across all sectors of cooperation. The first EU-Armenia Summit ⁽⁹⁾, held in Yerevan on 4-5 May 2026, represented a significant milestone in the EU-Armenia relations. With the announcement of the EU-Armenia connectivity partnership ⁽¹⁰⁾, bilateral engagement was strengthened on energy, transport and digital, which will be central to future engagement. The EU-Armenia visa liberalisation dialogue is progressing well as Armenia initiated the reforms necessary to move towards a visa-free regime with the EU. Recent elections have reaffirmed the country's commitment to the path of peace, democratic governance, and regional normalisation. In parallel, in response to Russia's economic coercive measures, the EU has mobilised a comprehensive package of support aimed at strengthening Armenia's resilience and mitigating the economic impact of external pressure.

The strategic importance of the EU-Azerbaijan partnership was reaffirmed at the highest level in March 2026 ⁽¹¹⁾, with a commitment to further deepening political dialogue and practical cooperation, including in the areas of energy, transport and digital. Building on this positive momentum, the EU and Azerbaijan are advancing discussions on new Partnership Priorities and have recently resumed negotiations on a comprehensive bilateral agreement, reflecting a shared interest in modernising the bilateral relationship. Azerbaijan continues to play a key role in regional connectivity and remains a reliable partner in the diversification of Europe's energy supplies and in the expansion of the transport potential of regional links. The cooperation between the EU and Azerbaijan reflects the shared interest of both sides and contributes to the promotion of peace, stability, connectivity and sustainable development in the wider Black Sea, South Caucasus and Central Asia regions.

Georgia's geographical position makes it a natural transit corridor linking Central Asia to Europe. The EU's cooperation with Georgia ⁽¹²⁾ has continued to be strongly impacted by the country's democratic backsliding, which has resulted in a *de facto* halt of the country's EU accession process and the suspension by the EU in March 2026 of visa-free travel for holders of Georgian diplomatic, service and official passports. Georgia's role within this Strategy will largely depend on the authorities' willingness to take tangible steps towards improving the situation.

The EU and Türkiye, a key partner, NATO ally, and an EU candidate country, have exchanged views on the Black Sea Strategy and discussed its implementation on multiple occasions over the past year, including during regular consultations on Foreign and Security Policy. The EU Black Sea Strategy was most recently discussed during the 2026 EU-Türkiye Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)

⁽⁸⁾ https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/european-union-and-armenia-adopt-new-strategic-agenda-deepen-partnership-2025-12-02_en

⁽⁹⁾ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/05/05/joint-declaration-following-the-first-armenia-eu-summit/>

⁽¹⁰⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/da/ip_26_988

⁽¹¹⁾ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/03/11/joint-press-statement-by-president-of-the-european-council-antonio-costa-and-president-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-ilham-aliyev/>

⁽¹²⁾ https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/georgia-report-2025_en

consultations. Bilateral and regional cooperation on connectivity, where Türkiye plays a central role, is of mutual interest and a pillar in EU-Türkiye relations. In particular, both sides agreed to strengthen coordination in shaping the regional connectivity agenda across the energy, transport, digitalisation and trade sectors to contribute to stability, resilience and sustainable growth across Black Sea, South Caucasus and Central Asia. Türkiye has initiated work on a Connectivity Investment Plan with a view to developing a pipeline of projects. In parallel, Türkiye has taken positive steps towards the normalisation of relations with Armenia, including lifting restrictions in preparation for direct bilateral trade and the launch of preparatory work to rehabilitate the Kars-Gyumri railway line. The normalisation process can play an important role in promoting security, stability and resilience in the region, while also unlocking economic and connectivity opportunities.

The relevance of the Strategy was underlined in several fora, including the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly in Yerevan (October 2025) and the Eastern Partnership Senior Officials' Meeting in Brussels (March 2026). In its opinion adopted in December 2025 ⁽¹³⁾, the European Economic and Social Committee called for sufficient resources to be used to swiftly and decisively implement the Strategy. The Committee of the Regions followed in March 2026 with an opinion calling for structured and well-resourced implementation ⁽¹⁴⁾.

3. PILLAR 1: SECURITY, STABILITY, AND RESILIENCE

Over the past year, the security landscape of the Black Sea region continued to be impacted by Russia's multiple actions to destabilise it. Russia has systematically used drone and missile strikes against Ukrainian ports and their access infrastructure. Particularly in Odesa, Chornomorsk, and along the Danube Corridor, the strikes have disrupted grain exports and escalated risks for commercial shipping. These attacks also impacted neighbouring coastal states like Romania who faced multiple breaches of its airspace and debris falling on its territory. In late May 2026, a Russian drone incursion struck a densely populated area in Galați, Romania's largest river and sea port on the Danube River and its second-largest port, injuring civilians. Maritime security in the Black Sea continues to suffer as a result of Russia's hybrid tactics – including electronic warfare – as well as from interference of navigation systems (spoofing and jamming). These continuous attacks increase the costs of trade and shipping, endanger seafarers and cause major environmental damages. Moreover, Russia's shadow fleet has continued its efforts to evade sanctions, using deceptive practices like sailing under a false flag. This poses additional risks of sabotage and environmental degradation, further undermining the protection of critical maritime infrastructure, including underwater, and energy corridors.

In response, the EU remains committed to proactively supporting regional stability and security. The EU adopted further sanctions packages targeting Russia's military-industrial supply chains, energy revenues, and vessels linked to illicit activities. These measures, combined with enhanced support for Ukraine's defence and resilience,

⁽¹³⁾ <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/news-media/news/eesc-calls-ambitious-and-pragmatic-implementation-eus-strategic-approach-black-sea-region-0>

⁽¹⁴⁾ <https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions/cdr-2757-2025>

notably through the EUR 90 billion Ukraine Support Loan for 2026-27 ⁽¹⁵⁾, contribute to the operationalisation of the Strategy's security pillar.

The EU raised security challenges in the Black Sea and responses brought by the EU strategy during the 3rd Black Sea Security Conference under the International Crimea Platform hosted in Chişinău, on 23 April 2026 ⁽¹⁶⁾ and the 3rd Odesa Black Sea Security Forum held on 29-31 May 2026 ⁽¹⁷⁾. Concrete exchanges of experience were organised to highlight the coherent approach among European sea basins in addressing security challenges faced in the Baltic and the Black Seas – including undermined safety of navigation, challenged maritime security, hybrid tactics, including electronic warfare, navigation systems interference (spoofing and jamming). More peer exchanges at expert level will enable experience sharing between the Baltic and Black Sea basins, with a focus on civilian preparedness and resilience ⁽¹⁸⁾ and on addressing Russian shadow fleet and hybrid activities.

FLAGSHIP 1: Black Sea maritime security

Since the adoption of the EU's strategic approach to the Black Sea in May 2025, Bulgaria and Romania have jointly developed a concept for the establishment of a regional Black Sea Maritime Security Hub (also referred to as the 'Hub'). The Hub is designed as a regionally owned, civilian-led, inter-institutional collaborative network structure, co-initiated and coordinated jointly by the two countries and supported by the EU. It aims to enhance maritime situational awareness and regional resilience, to facilitate cooperation and capacity building in maritime security, to protect critical infrastructure and counter complex hybrid threats, enhance environmental safety and develop common threat assessment in support of civilian crisis scenarios. The Hub will be leveraging and analysing multiple data sources to support timely and informed decision-making by the littoral EU Member States and the EU, while seeking further engagement of other EU Member States and participation of key regional partners Türkiye, Ukraine and Moldova initially. Specific attention will be paid to integrating surveillance and monitoring capabilities of the participating states, and ensuring interoperability and links with EU networks, like the Common Information Sharing Environment (CISE) implemented by the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA). The Hub will also contribute to protecting critical maritime infrastructure in the Black Sea region in a consistent, coordinated way and provide better visibility and predictability in a changing security context. As a subsequent step, close liaison and coordination will be sought with other regional platforms, mine countermeasure groups, and structures operated by Black Sea partners, for example the national Joint Maritime Security Centre (JMSC) in Odesa (Ukraine). The Mine Countermeasures Black Sea initiative set up by Türkiye-Romania-Bulgaria is the primary safeguard against drifting mines, playing thus a crucial role in maintaining open and secure sea lines of communication, including for flows of grain transport to and from Ukraine.

¹⁵⁾ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/04/23/council-finalises-90-billion-support-loan-to-ukraine/>

¹⁶⁾ <https://crimea-platform.org/en/news/third-black-sea-security-conference-of-the-international-crimea-platform-begins-in-moldova/>; <https://mfa.gov.md/en/content/republic-moldova-host-third-edition-black-sea-security-conference-under-auspices>

¹⁷⁾ <https://odesaforum.org/>

⁽¹⁸⁾ A side-event during the Macro-Regional and Sea Basins Strategies Days (Brussels, 8-9 July 2026)

3.1. Cooperation on demining and maritime safety, defence and security

In support of maritime safety and security in the Black Sea, the EU Advisory Mission (EUAM) in Ukraine has assisted in establishing the **national Joint Maritime Security Centre (JMSC) in Odesa**. The JMSC aims to improve inter-agency coordination and strengthen Ukraine's operational capacities on maritime security operations in the Black Sea. The first ministerial level Steering Committee meeting on the establishment of the JMSC took place on 26 February 2026, followed by the second meeting on 6 May 2026, during which the Steering Committee endorsed the Concept of Operations. Hosted by EUAM, the meetings brought together Ukrainian ministries and agencies responsible for maritime security, the International Maritime Capability Coalition and the NATO Representation to Ukraine. The JMSC will allow Ukraine to integrate into European cooperative frameworks.

In February 2026, the EU adopted the **Action Plan on Drone and Counter Drone Security** ⁽¹⁹⁾, which includes pilot actions to improve maritime domain awareness and deployment of undersea sensing capacities to better protect critical maritime infrastructure in the Black and Baltic Seas.

Following the approval in February 2026 by the Council of the financial assistance to Romania and Bulgaria under SAFE and the signature of the loan agreements, approximately EUR 20 billion will be made available to these Member States to close critical capability gaps, thus supporting the security in the Black Sea region.

The Ukraine Support Loan with an allocation of EUR 90 billion, out of which EUR 60 billion planned to cover the country's most urgent defence industrial capacity needs in 2026 and 2027, is an important pillar for the security in the Black Sea. In March 2026, EU approved an allocation of approximately EUR 6 billion for drones from Ukraine, for Ukraine.

As part of the EU support to Ukraine in the area of **protection of critical infrastructure**, a workshop on Protective Security for critical infrastructure was organised in February 2026. With the support of TAIEX, Ukraine has been working on transposing the Directive on the resilience of critical entities. A call for proposals under the Internal Security Fund on resilience of critical infrastructure with 15 million EUR budget was opened to Ukrainian participants.

Following the adoption of the **Action Plan on Cable Security** ⁽²⁰⁾ in February 2025 and the publication of the 'Report on Security and Resilience of EU Submarine Cable Infrastructures', an EU-wide mapping and coordinated risk assessment of submarine cable infrastructures ⁽²¹⁾ has been agreed in October 2025 by the informal Expert Group on Secure and Resilient Submarine Cable Infrastructures. The report states the importance of developing a coordinated approach with Türkiye in fostering and preserving security, stability and connectivity in the Black Sea region.

⁽¹⁹⁾ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/action-plan-drone-and-counter-drone-security>

⁽²⁰⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025JC0009>

⁽²¹⁾ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/report-security-and-resilience-eu-submarine-cable-infrastructures>

In February 2026, the EU published the **Cable Security Toolbox** ⁽²²⁾, which recommends mitigation measures to address risk scenarios identified in the above-mentioned report and proposes the Black Sea as a priority area for Cable Projects of European Interest (CPEIs). The European Commission has issued an initial call of EUR 10 million to fund regional cable hubs benefitting all sea basins around the EU, including the Black Sea. CPEI areas will be prioritised in upcoming Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) Digital calls ⁽²³⁾ for proposals.

Under the 2026 European Defence Fund, the EU intends to support semi-autonomous maritime systems as well as layered critical seabed infrastructure protection. Once available, the capabilities developed could be leveraged in support to regional security.

To limit the threats and risks posed by the **Russian shadow fleet**, including in the Black Sea, the EU has imposed **sanctions** listing 632 vessels and over 60 enablers ⁽²⁴⁾ so far. The EU continues outreach to other countries to de-register such vessels and to raise awareness on the environmental risks and costs associated with any spillovers. In the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the EU is also active to advance the work on regulatory frameworks, **tackling substandard shipping** and introducing mandatory ship reporting and civil liability certificates.

The EU has been **strengthening Europe's capacity for maritime demining**, environmental risk mitigation and protection of critical maritime infrastructure, while supporting future regional cooperation in post-conflict marine remediation. The 2025 European Ocean Pact comprises a flagship action for a comprehensive Unexploded ordnance (UXO) removal strategy, starting in the Baltic and North Seas and expanding to the Black Sea, utilising advanced detection and disposal technologies. The Netherlands and Belgium have donated seven mine countermeasures vessels to Bulgaria in 2025 with the aim to strengthen maritime security in the Black Sea.

The EU is scaling up **technologies and methodologies for large-scale cleanup of UXO dumped at sea**. While the current efforts focus on the Baltic Sea, a similar approach to large-scale UXO cleanup can be applied to the Black Sea, once security conditions permit. Through EU-funded initiatives, notably the European Parliament-supported CAMMera project, the EU is developing and testing innovative technologies for the safe detection and remediation of submerged munitions. At a January 2026 workshop in Sofia, experts from EU Member States, regional organisations and research institutions evaluated the potential transfer of technological solutions and operational lessons learned to the Black Sea and other sea basins. The EU continued to support Ukraine in demining efforts with the handover in February 2026 of the fifth batch of EU-trained mine detection dogs to the Ukrainian authorities.

⁽²²⁾ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/submarine-cable-security-toolbox-and-cable-projects-european-interest>

⁽²³⁾ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/activities/cef-digital>

⁽²⁴⁾ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/04/23/russia-s-war-of-aggression-against-ukraine-20th-round-of-stern-eu-sanctions-hits-energy-military-industrial-complex-trade-and-financial-services-including-crypto/>

3.2. Enhancing military mobility and dual use infrastructure

In November 2025, the Commission and the High Representative presented the **Military Mobility Package** ⁽²⁵⁾, consisting of a Joint Communication and Regulation proposal aimed at ensuring the seamless movement of troops, equipment, and military assets across the EU. Together with Member States and supported by the EU Military Staff, the Commission identified 500 ‘hotspot’ projects for urgent investment to bring the four priority military mobility corridors ⁽²⁶⁾ in line with military requirements and make the network more resilient. These projects include reinforcing bridges, widening tunnels, and increasing capacity at ports and airports. The Commission coordinates with Member States to ensure investments are implemented swiftly and coherently along the corridors. This is also coherent with an emerging EU work strand to support dual use industries in Ukraine.

Four of the nine TEN-T European Transport Corridors already extend into Ukraine and one into Moldova, with a first set of **important investments in dual-use infrastructure** ongoing. In parallel, preparatory works are ongoing to deploy European nominal standard track gauge on the European Transport Corridors connecting Moldova and Ukraine to EU Member States.

3.3. Countering hybrid threats

The security landscape of the Black Sea region is also defined by an unprecedented surge in hybrid threats. Russia has continued to deploy multifaceted tools designed to destabilise democratic processes, erode public trust, degrade critical infrastructure, probe vulnerabilities and test responses.

The Union remains resolute in imposing costs on malign actors through the sanctions regime ⁽²⁷⁾ against Russia’s destabilising activities. As of April 2026, the Council has expanded restrictive measures to include 69 individuals and 19 entities identified for their roles in large-scale information manipulation. Additionally, the **EU Cyber Sanctions Regime** ⁽²⁸⁾ is rigorously enforced, with restrictive measures currently applied to 19 individuals and 74 entities.

The EU also adapted its response mechanisms to the evolving threat landscape and to **counter hostile operations meant to undermine the electoral integrity** and democratic processes. In Moldova, the EU is supporting the country’s efforts to protect its democratic processes from Russia’s interference. The EU has been also actively strengthening its support to democratic and institutional resilience in Armenia ahead of the June elections. A key achievement was the deployment of EU Hybrid Rapid Response Teams (HRRT) in both cases, providing short-term tailored technical and strategic advisory support to national authorities regarding strengthening electoral integrity.

Direct support for Black Sea partner countries via **Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions** remains a primary vehicle for resilience building, while

⁽²⁵⁾ https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/military-mobility_en

⁽²⁶⁾ https://transport.ec.europa.eu/transport-themes/military-mobility_en

⁽²⁷⁾ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions-against-russia-hybrid-threats/>

⁽²⁸⁾ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions-against-cyber-attacks/>

contributing to regional security. The EU Partnership Mission in Moldova supported Moldovan authorities' efforts to ensure democratic integrity during the 2025 elections and continues to focus on long-term institutional capacity building in view of strengthening Moldova's resilience. Similarly, the EUAM in Ukraine is expanding its support to Ukrainian authorities to counter hybrid threats in line with evolving needs, including in the maritime domain through supporting the development of the Joint Maritime Security Centre (JMSC). EUAM Ukraine provided specific expertise on **maritime cybersecurity** in the Black Sea and the Danube Corridor during the second forum *Rebuilding Ukraine* in December 2025.

The **EU Partnership Mission in Armenia** is the newest civilian EU CSDP mission⁽²⁹⁾, established on 21 April 2026 with the aim to enhance the country's democratic resilience and its ability to manage crisis in the long term. The mission will support Armenia facing multi-layered threats such as Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI), cyber-attacks and illicit financial flows.⁽³⁰⁾

The **CyberEast+ regional initiative** continued to strengthen cyber resilience in the Black Sea and Eastern Partnership countries, by supporting alignment with the NIS2 Directive⁽³¹⁾, delivering tailored training and capacity building, organising simulation exercises and workshops to counter cyber threats, disinformation and Foreign Information Manipulation and interference (FIMI), including in electoral contexts.

In **Armenia**, the EU organised a series of workshops and TAIEX events for representatives of state institutions and stepped up its support to local civil society and independent media in their efforts to counter FIMI.

At the December EU-Armenia Partnership Council⁽³²⁾, a **new regional initiative** was launched to counter FIMI and disinformation in the Eastern neighbourhood by strengthening civil society and independent media capacities to engage in strategic communication, promote media literacy among citizens.

A **regional EU rapid response exceptional assistance measure** was set up in early 2026 to support partner countries, particularly in Europe and Central Asia exposed to hybrid threats building on successful assistance models developed for and continuing to support Ukraine. Support is already being provided to Moldova under the new framework. Through these and other initiatives the EU continues to develop a whole of society approach by fostering partnerships among state institutions, civil society, academia and media both within countries and across the region to help ensure sustainable resilience against hybrid threats.

In Moldova, the EU has provided rapid response for cyber and internal security (including relevant equipment). During the recent **election cycles**, rapid response was instrumental to help safeguard the country's democratic processes against hybrid interference. Furthermore, the EU has mobilised rapid response to support

(29) <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/04/21/armenia-eu-establishes-a-new-civilian-mission-to-contribute-strengthening-the-country-s-resilience/>

(30) <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/04/21/armenia-eu-establishes-a-new-civilian-mission-to-contribute-strengthening-the-country-s-resilience/>

(31) Directive (EU) 2022/2555 OJ L 333 27.12.2022, p. 80, <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2022/2555/2022-12-27>

(32) <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-ministerial-meetings/2025/12/02/>

independent media and continues working to strengthen Moldova's strategic communication capacities.

Also in Moldova, the EU is supporting the country's efforts to protect its democratic processes from Russia's interference, including through the activity of a new regional hub of the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), which supports Moldova and other countries in detecting and analysing manipulation and disinformation campaigns, particularly Russian disinformation.

Through rapid response measures, the EU is supporting Ukraine's resilience in the face of Russia's war of aggression and hybrid threats, by notably enhancing internal and civilian security and safety as well as the country's strategic communication capacities.

3.4. Fighting organised crime and trafficking

The Commission, in cooperation with the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), provided legal and policy support on tracing, seizing and confiscating criminal assets. It contributed to legislative reforms (notably in Ukraine and Moldova), promoted the social reuse of confiscated criminal assets, and enhanced practitioners' skills through training and case-based mentoring. Under the regional project Training and Operational Partnership Against Organised Crime (TOPCOP II), CEPOL⁽³³⁾ supported structured cooperation and law enforcement capacity through workshops and training on operational management, open-source intelligence, migrant smuggling, and counterfeiting. The **EMPACT**⁽³⁴⁾ Support Network, with experts from Europol and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency ('Frontex'), supported strategic intelligence development, introducing advanced analytical approaches and new data sources such as travel intelligence. In partnership with Europol, under the EU-funded project 'Fight against organised crime in the EaP countries', the Commission continued to further integrate Eastern partners in EMPACT, strengthening operational capacities, addressing key crime priorities including cybercrime, and supporting war crimes investigations in Ukraine.

Through EUAM Ukraine, the EU continued to support Ukrainian authorities in strengthening interagency cooperation and analytical capacities to **counter serious and organised crime, enhance integrated border management** in line with EU standards, improve cross-border coordination with neighbouring countries, and address illicit firearms trafficking through targeted capacity building and strategic advice. EUAM Ukraine supported cross-border operational coordination through quarterly trilateral meetings between Ukrainian, Romanian and Moldovan border and customs authorities, contributing to strengthened cooperation against cross-border organised crime.

As part of the implementation of the EU Drugs Strategy⁽³⁵⁾, which states that the Commission will explore cooperation with candidate countries on port security, the Commission invited – among other third countries – Ukraine and Moldova as

⁽³³⁾ CEPOL is the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training.

⁽³⁴⁾ EMPACT (European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats) is a permanent EU security initiative that brings together member states, EU agencies (like Europol), and international partners to fight serious organised crime.

⁽³⁵⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025DC0743>

observers to its European Ports Alliance Public-Private Partnership (PPP) expert workshop on port security in smaller seaports and inland ports in February 2026. Moreover, the Commission shared its insights on port security from the European Ports Alliance PPP at an expert meeting of the Danube Commission in April 2026.

4. PILLAR 2: GROWTH AND PROSPERITY THROUGH BETTER CONNECTIVITY

The Black Sea Strategy introduced the cross-regional Connectivity Agenda as a long-term strategic initiative to facilitate the diversification of trade routes away from high-risk dependencies, making connectivity more integrated, cost-effective and faster. In line with the Strategy, the Commission advanced efforts to strengthen trade, investment, and connectivity. The flagship cross-regional Connectivity Agenda is central to boosting the competitiveness of Black Sea countries' economies and deepening regional integration.

4.1. Boosting connectivity and energy security

Sustained political dialogue has yielded strong political support for the cross-regional Connectivity Agenda among partner countries and EU Member States, aligning stakeholders around the need to coordinate and accelerate the delivery of tangible actions. Thanks to joint efforts, this flagship initiative progressed well in formalising structured regional cooperation with clear priorities.

FLAGSHIP 2: Connectivity Agenda

As a gateway linking Europe to Türkiye, the Southern Caucasus, Central Asia and beyond, the Black Sea region plays a key role for European and overall global security, international trade, energy, critical raw materials and food security. The region has significant untapped potential for economic development and is crossed by strategic transit routes. Strengthening regional cooperation and improving economic links would contribute to the competitiveness of the region, and of the EU. To this end, the Connectivity Agenda aims to leverage the full potential of the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor (TCTC) in the field of transport, including trade facilitation, and to improve energy and digital links. Since the adoption of the Strategy, the Commission has worked to roll out this flagship initiative. Significant progress has been made on improving and coordinating investment planning in support of the Connectivity Agenda:

- The Commission published a **meta-study in February 2026** to consolidate recommendations on priority investments and regulatory reforms necessary for the operational delivery of the Connectivity Agenda. This comprehensive analysis, carried out under the EU4Digital programme ⁽³⁶⁾, reviewed multiple studies and over 200 ongoing or planned investment projects, and mapped where investment is needed to strengthen transport, trade, energy and digital connections along the TCTC. The study highlights key stretches where infrastructure in neighbouring countries is missing, outdated or not fit for today's volumes, providing a strategic baseline for setting investment priorities with partner countries and international financial institutions (IFIs). Practical guidance for investment and required regulatory ('soft connectivity')

⁽³⁶⁾ https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/meta-study-advancing-cross-regional-connectivity-agenda_en

measures will give governments and the private sector a clear picture of where their capital can make the biggest difference in building modern and reliable infrastructure.

- Building on the outcome of the ministerial meeting on cross-regional security and connectivity in October 2025 ⁽³⁷⁾, the Commission intensified bilateral engagement through a series of **high-level and technical missions to partner countries**, including Türkiye, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Discussions aim to enhance cooperation on regional stability and connectivity, including priority investment.
- In consultation with partner countries, the Commission designed a **coordination platform**, which will focus on the Black Sea and South Caucasus partner countries and operate in synergy with the existing cooperation framework covering Central Asia. Both public and private sector actors confirmed the need for such a coordination mechanism during the TCTC and connectivity investors forum in Tashkent in November 2025 ⁽³⁸⁾. The Connectivity Agenda platform, launched on 23 June 2026, will guide collective efforts, optimise project pipelines, and ensure efficiency across hard and soft connectivity initiatives.

Recent multilateral agreements have bolstered connectivity and maritime security. In December, Greece, Bulgaria and Romania established the Black Sea–Aegean Corridor Platform ⁽³⁹⁾. In March 2026, Romania, Moldova and Ukraine agreed to continue working together on the Danube Action Plan 2.0, created under the European Commission’s **Solidarity Lanes initiative** ⁽⁴⁰⁾. This initiative optimises navigation safety, port communication and information exchange and mitigates disruptions to Black Sea / Danube traffic. To support the Solidarity Lanes’ functioning, the CEF) provided additional funding in 2025 ⁽⁴¹⁾. Railway and road rehabilitation is facilitated in Moldova in the framework of Global Gateway projects ⁽⁴²⁾. Implementing infrastructure projects under the extended TEN-T ⁽⁴³⁾ should also help unlock the TCTC’s full economic potential. The TEN-T Indicative Investment Action Plan was updated in December 2025 for Moldova and Ukraine.

Several electricity interconnection projects between the EU and Ukraine and Georgia were included in the second list of Projects of Common and Mutual Interest ⁽⁴⁴⁾ (PMI)

⁽³⁷⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_2452

⁽³⁸⁾ https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/trans-caspian-transport-corridor-and-connectivity-investors-forum-eu-advances-cross-regional-2025-11-27_en

⁽³⁹⁾ https://transport.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/greece-bulgaria-and-romania-strengthen-cooperation-key-transport-links-2025-12-04_en

⁽⁴⁰⁾ https://transport.ec.europa.eu/ukraine/eu-ukraine-solidarity-lanes_en

⁽⁴¹⁾ https://transport.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/eu-support-better-transport-connections-eastern-europe-ukraine-and-moldova-2025-11-07_en

⁽⁴²⁾ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-16415-2025-INIT/en/pdf>

⁽⁴³⁾ https://transport.ec.europa.eu/transport-themes/infrastructure-and-investment/trans-european-transport-network-ten-t/tentec-information-system-and-ten-t-map-library/ten-t-maps-indicative-extension-neighbouring-countries_en

⁽⁴⁴⁾ PMI status gives accelerated permitting procedures, increased investor visibility, and eligibility for EU funding under the 'Connecting Europe Facility'.

under the TEN-E Regulation ⁽⁴⁵⁾. Through the Central and South-Eastern Europe Energy Connectivity (CESEC) High-Level Group ⁽⁴⁶⁾, the Commission continues to promote regional energy integration, maintaining oversight of priority projects in Ukraine, Moldova, Romania and Bulgaria.

In March, the 12th ministerial meeting of the Southern Gas Corridor Advisory Council ⁽⁴⁷⁾ and the 4th ministerial meeting of the Green Energy Advisory Council in Baku, Azerbaijan, identified further opportunities for cooperation on clean energy and regional energy connectivity in the South Caucasus. Representatives from partner governments, leading energy companies, regulatory bodies and IFIs emphasised the crucial role of the Southern Gas Corridor in the EU's efforts to diversify away from Russian gas imports. In the margins of the ministerial meeting, the high-level EU-Azerbaijan Green Connectivity Investment Roundtable, contributed to translating policy into investment opportunities along the three green energy corridors, as well as in grid infrastructure and transmission, renewables, energy efficiency and offshore wind.

The Commission launched the third phase of the regional EU4Energy programme ⁽⁴⁸⁾ in January 2026, strengthening its focus on improved regional energy connectivity and regulatory frameworks coordination. This work directly supports the Black Sea strategy's measures to **tackle gaps in regulatory frameworks** and the convergence of regulatory frameworks and network codes.

With the adoption of the **EU Ports and Industrial Maritime Strategies** ⁽⁴⁹⁾, the Commission has provided the tools Europe's maritime shipping and shipbuilding sectors need to lead the clean energy transition, secure trade and defence, and remain globally competitive. To achieve these objectives, the Commission is supporting large-scale energy efficiency projects, for example in the port of Constanta.

Supported by the Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin programme ⁽⁵⁰⁾, Bulgaria, Türkiye and Georgia are cooperating to **improve performance in the logistics sector**. By late 2027, the recently launched BSB-LOGINET project ⁽⁵¹⁾ aims to have launched a cross-border logistics information exchange portal.

As follow up to the EU-Central Asia Summit (April 2025) ⁽⁵²⁾, the EU provides support for addressing bottlenecks at Black and Caspian Sea ports and reducing transit

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Draft delegated act was published on 1 December 2025, with a scrutiny period of the Council of the EU and the European Parliament running until 1 April 2026. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=PI_COM%3AC%282025%298144&qid=1766157187792

⁽⁴⁶⁾ https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/infrastructure/high-level-groups/central-and-south-eastern-europe-energy-connectivity_en

⁽⁴⁷⁾ https://energy.ec.europa.eu/news/press-statement-dan-jorgensen-european-commissioner-energy-and-housing-and-parviz-shahbazov-minister-2026-03-03_en

⁽⁴⁸⁾ https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/international-cooperation/key-partner-countries-and-regions/neighbourhood-east_en

⁽⁴⁹⁾ https://transport.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/commission-unveils-eu-ports-strategy-strengthen-competitiveness-security-and-sustainability-european-2026-03-04_en

⁽⁵⁰⁾ <https://blacksea-cbc.net/interreg-next-bsb-2021-2027>

⁽⁵¹⁾ <https://www.blacksea-cbc.net/interreg-next-bsb-2021-2027/projects/bsb00959>

⁽⁵²⁾ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/04/04/joint-declaration-following-the-first-european-union-central-asia-summit/>

costs, thereby helping to increase trade volumes in line with the Black Sea strategy's aim to **deepen cooperation on critical raw materials** and secure supply chains. Armenia currently receives support from the Critical Raw Materials (CRM) Facility⁽⁵³⁾ co-funded by the EU. The Facility aims to strengthen global partnerships and advance international projects to build sustainable and resilient CRM value chains. Ukraine and Central Asian countries have signed CRM partnerships with the EU and have access to this Facility. Diversifying import routes and securing supply chains across the Black Sea will remain critical. At the same time, the EU is providing support for circular economy initiatives to manage the demand side.

In line with efforts to **advance digital links and create a trustworthy digital environment**, the Commission will organise a Connectivity Agenda Digital Summit in the second half of 2026. The inaugural Summit is expected to convene ministers, digital business leaders, and key private sector investors from across the EU and partner countries for a high-level exchange on the future of regional digital connectivity. It will serve as a platform to foster cooperation in emerging technologies, cybersecurity, and trusted digital infrastructure.

4.2. Integrated development for a competitive Black Sea region

Significant steps forward were made in 2025 on implementing the Common Maritime Agenda (CMA) for the Black Sea⁽⁵⁴⁾, reinforcing joint **action on sustainable blue economy development** under Ukraine's coordination. Key achievements include the operational work of the Black Sea Assistance Mechanism and national hubs in offering practical support to meet the blue economy goals, such as uniting the regional blue economy community at the CMA Stakeholder Conference in Constanta, boosting funding access, exchanging good practices and supporting project development. National events notably on maritime connectivity (Bulgaria) and sustainable aquaculture (Türkiye) raised awareness of local actors. The technical group on aquaculture proposed a joint aquaculture monitoring programme. The technical group on sustainable tourism completed its first full year of operation, laying the foundations for a long-term regional vision for sustainable tourism that would link cultural heritage, innovation, and community-based development. Across all its activities, the CMA promoted alignment in the Black Sea region with broader EU priorities, notably the EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters and the EU Ocean Pact.

To facilitate **sea basin cooperation** on maritime spatial planning, the Commission launched a call for proposals in January 2026, funded under the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund⁽⁵⁵⁾. The objective of the call is to develop innovative solutions for EU Member States in the Atlantic and Black Sea to tackle challenges in implementing, monitoring and reviewing their Maritime Spatial Plans.

To **ensure sustainable use of marine resources**, the Commission continues to work closely with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean⁽⁵⁶⁾ (GFCM), focusing on sustainability through catch limits and management plans for key species

⁽⁵³⁾ <https://crmfacility.eu/>

⁽⁵⁴⁾ <https://black-sea-maritime-agenda.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2026-03/CMA%20-%202025%20implementation%20report%20compressed.pdf>

⁽⁵⁵⁾ <https://black-sea-maritime-agenda.ec.europa.eu/node/755>

⁽⁵⁶⁾ <https://www.fao.org/gfcm/en/>

like turbot and sprat. The EU plays a critical role in enforcing compliance, by combating illegal fishing under the 2030 GFCM Strategy. A key milestone was reached during the 2025 GFCM annual session, when the Working Group for the Black Sea was elevated to a statutory body within the GFCM, thus recognising its pivotal role in advising on regional fisheries management and conservation. For the first time, the GFCM agreed to introduce a mechanism to monitor and ensure compliance with regional fisheries measures⁽⁵⁷⁾. If regional measures are not respected, the GFCM will require Mediterranean and Black Seas countries to address the identified deficiencies.

The EU provides significant financial support for GFCM initiatives. The long-standing BlackSea4Fish project continues to **foster effective scientific collaboration in fisheries**. By sustaining an inclusive multinational operational platform bringing together fisheries stakeholders, the project has strengthened national expertise and scientific capacity, and is working towards ensuring a level-playing field for fisheries management. These efforts are yielding measurable results: according to the 2025 GFCM publication ‘The State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries’⁽⁵⁸⁾ the percentage of overexploited stocks has dropped to 52 per cent, the lowest level recorded in the time series.

The **Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin programme** also further contributed to **development and cohesion in the region** through multi-country cooperation projects involving organisations from Armenia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Türkiye, and Ukraine. Since the adoption of the Strategy, ten projects have been implemented to boost sustainable aquaculture and coastal and maritime tourism, enhancing maritime spatial planning, and strengthening cooperation with other sea basins (see the projects in Annex I). For example, the INTERSMARTS project is reshaping tourism in the Black Sea basin. With partners from Bulgaria, Greece, Moldova and Türkiye, the project created a cross-border network and earned multiple international awards for its smart tourism and blue growth innovation platform in 2025. The BlueDial project introduced the multi-country BlackBlueNET platform that aims to strengthen maritime governance across the Black Sea region.

Moreover, through the **Communication on the EU’s eastern regions bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine**⁽⁵⁹⁾ adopted in February 2026, the EU strengthened its support for the stability, prosperity, and resilience of the EU’s eastern border regions, including along Romania and Bulgaria’s maritime border in the Black Sea, focusing on five priorities areas. The Communication has been accompanied by the first annual high-level political dialogue and the launch of the ‘**EastInvest Facility**’, a dedicated financial platform that is estimated to provide at least EUR 28 billion in private and public investments in those regions.

Under **Horizon Europe**, the European Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, EUR 205 million were awarded to 481 grants across the Black Sea region in the reporting period. The participation of the Black Sea countries demonstrates their importance to European research and innovation. The Operational Network of

⁽⁵⁷⁾ https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/news/eu-leads-efforts-harmonise-fishing-rules-across-mediterranean-and-black-seas-countries-2025-11-11_en

⁽⁵⁸⁾ FAO. 2025. *The State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries 2025*. General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd7701en>

⁽⁵⁹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52026DC0082>

Funders (including Bulgaria, Romania, Georgia, Moldova, Türkiye and Ukraine) steers regional cooperation in this area and ensures that the **Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda** (SRIA) for the Black Sea is implemented effectively. Recent milestones include the December 2025 launch of specific calls under the 2025-26 EU ‘Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030’ work programme.

The ‘**Black Sea Digital Twin**’ platform, launched in 2025 through the EU-funded DOORS ⁽⁶⁰⁾ and BRIDGE-BS ⁽⁶¹⁾ projects and developed in cooperation with key regional stakeholders ⁽⁶²⁾, integrates real-time multi-source data with AI-enhanced models of sea dynamics. It enables users to predict the impacts of climate change and environmental stressors, fostering more informed and evidence-based decision-making.

The Joint Research Centre (JRC) is a key provider of methodological guidance and analytical support for innovation policies in the Black Sea region, notably in Ukraine, Moldova and Türkiye. A workshop in February 2026 convening representatives from all candidate countries’ economies was designed to turn the strategic vision of smart specialisation into concrete cross-border cooperation actions, strengthening the region’s innovation ecosystem and fostering economic integration with the EU.

5. **PILLAR 3: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE AND PREPAREDNESS, CIVIL PROTECTION**

The EU is committed to sustainable development and preparedness in the Black Sea region and is strengthening environmental protection, climate change resilience, and civil protection.

FLAGSHIP 3: Preparedness of coastal communities and blue economy sectors

Black Sea coastal communities face the impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and, in certain areas, security threats due to ongoing military activities. Together, these pressures affect regional stability and strain local livelihoods. At the same time, the regions’ rich natural and cultural heritage offers significant potential for sustainable growth and innovation. To help address challenges and seize opportunities, on 10 June 2026 the Commission adopted two dedicated Strategies, one for EU islands and one for EU coastal communities ⁽⁶³⁾. Across several projects, measures to improve preparedness are delivered on the ground.

The EU is supporting work to **monitor and assess the growing environmental damage that Russia continues to inflict as a result of its war of aggression against Ukraine**. In 2025-26, the “European Union for Environmental Monitoring in the Black Sea” project ⁽⁶⁴⁾ carried out sampling to document the impacts of the Kerch

⁽⁶⁰⁾ <https://doi.org/10.3030/101000518>

⁽⁶¹⁾ <https://doi.org/10.3030/101000240>

⁽⁶²⁾ European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *Connecting the DOTs – An exploratory study of global activities and collaboration potential for Digital Ocean Twins*, Kluckner, S.(editor), 2025, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/2375732>

⁽⁶³⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_26_1318

⁽⁶⁴⁾ <https://emblasproject.org/>

Strait oil spill in December 2024 and the destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam in June 2023. Although sampling is difficult and limited, analysis of the data collected offered insights into the immediate and longer-term environmental, health, and economic effects of the war. A regional round table meeting on war-related pollution, held in June 2025 under Ukraine's coordination of the CMA, aimed to identify monitoring and mitigation priorities, while fostering regional cooperation.

The EU **strengthened data sharing and analysis** to expand joint monitoring of the Black Sea environment. This includes the maintenance of the Black Sea e-data Platform⁽⁶⁵⁾, which covers most of the descriptors required by the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive and contains multiannual data series. The designation of Moldova⁽⁶⁶⁾ and Ukraine⁽⁶⁷⁾ as cooperating countries with the European Environment Agency in 2026 marks a further promising step in improving EU and regional environmental cooperation. The Commission **helped to leverage new technologies** to address climate and environmental challenges. In early 2026, EU assistance enabled the delivery of advanced analytical equipment to Ukraine for water quality and microplastics analysis. Work to deploy innovative techniques such as environmental DNA (eDNA) analysis and modelling continued.

To further **strengthen regional environmental cooperation and governance**, the Commission continued its work in relation to the Bucharest Convention for the protection of the Black Sea. The Permanent Secretariat of the Black Sea Commission has been actively involved in the governance of various EU-funded initiatives. The EU's strategic aim to acquire membership of this convention remains valid.

The Commission, in cooperation with EMSA, has continued to support Black Sea partner countries to prevent **and reduce marine pollution**. In September, several Black Sea countries participated in an oil pollution response exercise hosted by Türkiye. EMSA mobilised its oil spill response vessel "Aktea II" and other specialised equipment. The Ukrainian Sea Port Authority received equipment to strengthen its emergency response capabilities. EMSA also provided support to ratify, implement and enforce international maritime conventions and implement the EU *acquis*.

Overall, 34 Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin projects worth almost EUR 38 million (about EUR 34 million of EU funding) contributing to Pillar 3 were implemented or launched during the reporting period. Key initiatives include: AIRQUEST, which is developing an integrated air quality monitoring system across the region, combining satellite- and land-based monitoring; MACRO CLEAN, which has published a methodology guide for converting marine on macroalgae into fertiliser and bioplastics and LEARN4SEA, which helped Bulgaria and Türkiye to establish Environmental Information Centres.

The Commission has dedicated resources **to advancing joint initiatives that improve environmental and climate change resilience, including water**

⁽⁶⁵⁾ <https://blackseadb.org/>

⁽⁶⁶⁾ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/newsroom/news/eea-and-eionet-welcome-moldova-as-a-cooperating-country>

⁽⁶⁷⁾ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/newsroom/news/eea-and-eionet-welcome-ukraine-as-a-cooperating-country>

resilience. In 2025-2026, regional programmes such as EU4Climate Resilience ⁽⁶⁸⁾ promoted nature-based solutions for climate adaptation. The city of Cantemir and the municipality of Ceadir-Lunga in Moldova were awarded grants for pilot actions designed to strengthen local resilience to climate impacts. In Armenia, such grants benefit the Gavar and Tashir municipalities. The Interreg BRIGHT project supports local level actors in Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova and Türkiye to deliver energy and climate action aligned with EU 2050 climate targets.

The **EU Water Resilience Strategy** ⁽⁶⁹⁾ was adopted in June 2025 and has put forward a proactive approach to restoring and protecting water cycles from source to sea, build a water-smart economy and safeguard water security for all to ensure sustainability and resilience. Support for policy action on water resilience is provided, for example, through the EU4Green Recovery East ⁽⁷⁰⁾ programme. The programme will look at the water and climate nexus from a transboundary perspective with a focus on the South Caucasus. Furthermore, the new Interreg Blue&Green Resilience project, launched in March, supports Black Sea cities in addressing water scarcity and climate risks through nature-based solutions and stronger cross-border cooperation.

The EU actively supports grassroots actions, such as **clean-ups and educational events**. Examples include cetaceans monitoring activities involving Georgian pupils, and a WaterTech Bootcamp in Azerbaijan where young innovators presented their solutions for sustainable water management. In Ukraine, the Black Sea ‘weekend school’ brought together children and scientists for four months in 2025, with 29 diplomas awarded on Black Sea Day.

Preparedness and disaster management have advanced in line with the **Preparedness Union Strategy** ⁽⁷¹⁾. The fourth phase of the EU-funded regional civil protection programme in the Eastern Partnership countries was launched in November, to improve disaster resilience and response capacities while fostering integration with the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM). The Commission also continued bilateral capacity-building efforts to support disaster preparedness and prevention: in 2025, six UCPM-funded projects involving entities from Türkiye (including one led by the national civil protection authority with a focus on an ecosystem-based approach to strengthen knowledge-sharing and good practices linking ecosystem restoration, nature-based solutions, and disaster risk prevention and preparedness), two involving entities from Romania (including one led by the national civil protection focused on strengthening capacities for search and rescue operations in the event of aviation incidents), and one from Moldova (led by the national civil protection authority, which developed a feasibility study for a national early warning system) were successfully completed. Another project focused on improving floods management in Samsun, a major Black Sea port, was ongoing during 2026. In April 2026, a new UCPM project involving Türkiye and Romania, alongside France, Germany, Italy and Portugal, was launched to protect cultural heritage from the impact of disasters using a whole-of-society model. In the context of the deepening EU-Armenia partnership and ahead of the first EU-Armenia Summit in Yerevan on 5 May 2026, the EU and Armenia signed a new arrangement on civil protection

⁽⁶⁸⁾ <https://eu4climate.eu/>

⁽⁶⁹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025DC0280>

⁽⁷⁰⁾ <https://www.eu4greenrecoveryeast.eu/>

⁽⁷¹⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/topics/preparedness_en

cooperation aimed at strengthening disaster resilience, preparedness and emergency response cooperation.

Through the UCPM, the EU swiftly responded to requests for assistance from Moldova and Ukraine. In 2026, EU assistance helped tackle oil spills in the transboundary Dniester/Nistru River, a major source of drinking water for Moldova which was caused by Russia's attacks on critical infrastructure in Ukraine. The river's contamination not only jeopardises the water supply, but also the integrity of aquatic ecosystems and overall water quality in the region. Romania, Belgium and Luxembourg helped with absorbent materials and equipment. Absorbent material was also provided through the EU's Service for Foreign Policy Instruments. Additionally, the EU Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) mobilised personal protective equipment from its strategic rescEU stocks hosted by Germany and Poland and activated EMSA satellite imagery services to detect and monitor oil spills. In Ukraine, in response to sustained attacks on energy infrastructure, generators and transformers were offered to reinforce and repair the electricity grid. The delivery of the Vilnius Thermal Power Plant was the largest and most complex logistical operation under the UCPM to date, providing electrical capacity to serve an estimated one million people.

Several Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin projects have contributed to regional cooperation on preparedness and disaster management. Under IMPACT+, a Common Emergency Response Plan was developed to improve emergency preparedness in rural areas and effective coordination between authorities and local communities. The CO-RESILIENCE project provided support to develop a training centre in Çatalca Elbasan in Türkiye, for forest firefighting experts and volunteers, which will be pivotal to strengthening regional wildfire prevention and response capacities. Similar investments are planned in Kameno in Bulgaria and Nestoia in Ukraine, and through a Mobile Centre for Information and Prevention in Moldova. Additional projects launched in 2025, including NAT-RES, BSB-BSUAND, RISCARE and ISTROS (see Annex I), are expected to further boost regional resilience and preparedness.

The European Commission plays a key role in **responding to radiological incidents** through the early warning system of the European Community Urgent Radiological Information Exchange (ECURIE) and the European Radiological Data Exchange Platform (EURDEP). Ukraine and Türkiye currently participate in EURDEP, and Ukraine is due to join ECURIE in 2026.

6. WAY FORWARD

During the first year of implementation, the Commission and the High Representative have considerably advanced EU engagement with the partner countries of the Black Sea region. This strengthened engagement focused on shared interests, both through new initiatives, such as the Connectivity Agenda, and well-established streams of regional cooperation, such as the CMA for the Black Sea and the SRIA for the Black Sea.

The Black Sea region will remain a core EU priority. In response to intensifying geopolitical pressures, the EU is committed to forge a united approach to security and connectivity across the region.

The first Ministerial meeting on cross-regional security and connectivity in October 2025 fostered political resolve and a common understanding of shared interests across a diverse region facing significant geopolitical challenges. A follow up ministerial is planned for late 2026 to sustain the strong political momentum, review progress achieved and agree on the subsequent priority actions.

Joint efforts under Pillar 1 ‘Security, Stability and Resilience’ will continue to address hybrid threats, enhance maritime safety and security, and protect critical infrastructure and trade routes, amid increasing Russian attacks against Ukraine’s civilian infrastructure, such as energy infrastructure, and its Black Sea ports. In this context, the EU will support Black Sea littoral states in implementing the concept of a regional maritime security hub in coordination with EU Member States and relevant partner countries.

Pillar 1 ensures that the EU Black Sea strategy is part of a new EU policy mix that builds on the principle of ‘preparedness by design’, contributing to long-term resilience across various sectors. This implementation report of the Black Sea Strategy is placed in a context where EU action is geared and streamlined through concrete action, shaped by initiatives such as the Action Plan on Drone and Counter Drone Security ⁽⁷²⁾, the Communication on the EU’s eastern regions bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine ⁽⁷³⁾, or the EU Ports strategy ⁽⁷⁴⁾. Looking ahead, the EU will enhance its security commitments to the Black Sea region and will ensure coherence among security and defence initiatives in the region.

The implementation of the Black Sea Strategy, notably through its Pillar 1, supports the EU’s wider objective to integrate crisis anticipation, resilience, and coordinated response capabilities into its policy framework. It also contributes to a more coherent and integrated approach to action across the sea basins surrounding the EU. Looking ahead, efforts will be made to strengthen coherence, notably by promoting the exchange of experience and best practices between the Baltic and the Black Sea basins. Particular attention will be given to addressing challenges posed by substandard shadow fleet, the protection of critical maritime infrastructure, and the countering of hybrid threats.

Under Pillar 2 ‘Growth and Prosperity’, the Strategy has set out efforts to unlock economic potential and strengthen connectivity, particularly through the flagship initiative on the cross-regional Connectivity Agenda and the CMA for the Black Sea. These initiatives are central to boosting trade, investment, and sustainable growth across the region. The Connectivity Agenda demonstrates the EU’s strategic resolve to foster prosperity, cooperation, and stability in the Black Sea and South Caucasus regions, as well as in Central Asia. The Commission is working closely with partner countries and IFIs to identify and prepare priority infrastructure projects and mobilise the investments required for their implementation. In this regard, the Connectivity Agenda Platform, launched in June 2026, will be an instrumental coordination mechanism, providing a coherent development platform for the entire TCTC corridor.

⁽⁷²⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52026DC0081>

⁽⁷³⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52026DC0082>

⁽⁷⁴⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52026DC0112>

The Commission will also support Member States in promoting private sector engagement through the emerging project pipeline.

Priority actions will also include fostering synergies between the Black Sea and the Danube region as a strategic link for connectivity, economic cooperation and sustainable development.

Bulgaria has become the CMA coordinator for 2026⁽⁷⁵⁾, succeeding Ukraine. Upcoming activities and the annual stakeholder conference, planned for the second half of 2026, will contribute to further strengthen strategic dialogue and regional cooperation on maritime safety and security, environmental protection, innovation and the sustainable development of the Black Sea blue economy.

Under Pillar 3 ‘Environmental Protection, Climate Change Resilience and Preparedness, Civil Protection’, peer exchange and cooperation on environmental and climate resilience contributed to finding rapid solutions, including to pollution induced by Russia’s war of aggression. The EU will continue to work closely with coastal communities and further strengthen its support to them. The Commission will mobilise the entire array of instruments at its disposal to step up coordinated action to safeguard the environment, strengthen climate resilience and enhance preparedness and civil protection across the region.

The EU remains firmly committed to advancing a more secure, better connected, and resilient Black Sea region, as a matter of strategic interest for the Union and its partners, while fostering sustainable growth opportunities in a mutually reinforcing and beneficial way. Against the backdrop of Russia’s war of aggression and a rapidly evolving geopolitical context, the Strategy’s implementation will remain flexible and adaptive, guided by continuous assessment of the conditions and challenges affecting its delivery. Under each of the three pillars, EU Member States and partner countries play a key role in delivering on shared goals under the Strategy. Moving forward, the Commission and High Representative will continue to prioritise result-oriented dialogue and joint action at all levels of cooperation, with a clear focus on strategic impact, unity of purpose, and the delivery of tangible outcomes in the region.

⁽⁷⁵⁾ <https://black-sea-maritime-agenda.ec.europa.eu/bulgaria-takes-lead-coordinating-common-maritime-agenda-black-sea-2026>

Annex A Major multi-country projects under implementation in the Black Sea region in 2025-2026

Project title	Duration (start – end, month.year)	Black Sea basin countries involved in the project									Instrument	Budget, million EUR	Project scope
		BG	EL	RO	AM	AZ	GE	MD	TR	UA			
PILLAR 1													
Fighting against organised crime in the Eastern Partnership region II	01.2025 - 12.2028				■	■		■		■	NDICI	1.8	Enhance participation in EMPACT
Training and Operational Partnership against Organised Crime (TOPCOP) II	07.2024 - 06.2028				■	■		■		■	NDICI	5.2	Strengthen cooperation to address criminal threats
Improving cyber resilience in Eastern Partnership countries I	12.2024 - 11.2027					■		■			NDICI	1.7	Legislative support on NIS 2 Directive and capacity-building
Improving cyber resilience in Eastern Partnership countries II	12.2024 - 12.2026				■					■	NDICI	1.8	Same as above
CyberEast+: Enhanced action on cybercrime for cyber resilience in the Eastern Partnership States	03.2024 - 02.2027				■	■		■		■	NDICI	3.5	Ensure a more effective criminal justice response to cybercrime
Support to Eastern Partnership Countries to Enhance Asset Recovery II	10.2027				■	■		■		■	NDICI	1.00	Support asset recovery policies and practices and facilitate operational implementation in the recovery of proceeds of organised crime
EU4MD II – EU4Monitoring Drugs II	12.2027				■	■		■		■	NDICI	1.00	Enhance monitoring, assessment and response capabilities in relation to contemporary drug issues
Resilient & Connected	12.2025 - 03.2028				■	■	■	■		■	NDICI	5.00	Countering disinformation and FIMI, and support media literacy

Project title	Duration (start – end, month,year)	Black Sea basin countries involved in the project									Instrument	Budget, million EUR	Project scope
		BG	EL	RO	AM	AZ	GE	MD	TR	UA			
Flexible Response Mechanism (FRM)	02.2026 - 07.2027							■			NDICI - CRISIS	18	Strengthen partner countries' capacities to respond to hybrid threats, with a focus on provision of critical equipment. Currently active in MD, available multi-country.
PILLAR 2													
BLUE-GATES	09.2024 - 03.2027	■		■				■	■	■	Interreg NEXT BSB	1.40	Innovative tools to improve aquaculture and safeguard marine resources
AQUABATOR	09.2025 - 09.2027	■							■	■	Interreg NEXT BSB	1.40	Incubator for sustainable aquaculture
SUSDEST-NET	11.2025 - 05.2028	■	■	■				■	■		Interreg NEXT BSB	1.42	Sustainable Destinations Black Sea Network
SUSTAIN-2	12.2025 - 12.2027	■	■					■	■	■	Interreg NEXT BSB	1.09	Sustainability model for tourism supported by artificial intelligence
MARMAPS	06.2024 - 12.2025	■	■							■	Interreg NEXT BSB	0.50	Joint maritime spatial planning and conservation of marine ecosystems
BIOSUSTAIN	12. 2025 - 06.2027	■	■				■				Interreg NEXT BSB	0.55	Sustain biodiversity through traditional and novel knowledge
e-AQUAF	02.2026 - 08.2028	■	■	■	■		■			■	Interreg NEXT BSB	1.40	Smart aquafarming solutions
EfxINNOs	08.2024 - 02.2027	■	■	■			■		■		Interreg NEXT BSB	1.64	Marine Technology Transfer Network for blue economy

Project title	Duration (start – end, month.year)	Black Sea basin countries involved in the project									Instrument	Budget, million EUR	Project scope
		BG	EL	RO	AM	AZ	GE	MD	TR	UA			
BlueDial	02.2026 - 08.2027	■		■			■			■	Interreg NEXT BSB	0.50	Support coordination and alignment of national and regional strategies with the CMA for the Black Sea and a common sustainable blue economy vision
INTERSMARTS	06.2024 - 12.2025	■	■				■	■			Interreg NEXT BSB	0.55	Improving sustainability performance and innovation absorption in tourism and services
Facility for Eastern Partnership Investment in Connectivity (EPIC)	12.2021 – 12.2028				■	■	■	■	■	■	NDICI		Advisory and technical support to improve transport connections
EU4Energy Phase II and II+	01.2021-12.2025				■	■	■	■	■	■	NDICI	13.49	Facilitate regulatory reforms for clean energy transition and energy market liberalisation
EU4Innovation East	04.2024 - 09.2028				■	■		■		■	NDICI	22.12	Develop high-performance incubators, expand funding and market opportunities for startups
EU4Digital Facility	06.2022 - 09.2026				■	■		■		■	NDICI	16.00	Support integration into the EU Digital Single Market
EU4Digital: Investing in Broadband Connectivity	11.2023 – 11.2026				■	■		■	■	■	NDICI	5.00	Broadband mapping for digital connectivity investment planning
PILLAR 3													
Black Sea SIERRA	10.2023 - 09.2026	■		■					■	■	EMFAF	0.75	Preparedness in response to civil and military pollution

Project title	Duration (start – end, month.year)	Black Sea basin countries involved in the project									Instrument	Budget, million EUR	Project scope
		BG	EL	RO	AM	AZ	GE	MD	TR	UA			
RESPONSE	10.2023 - 09.2026	■	■	■			■			■	EMFAF	0.60	Training and curricula for the monitoring, reporting, management and mitigation of marine pollution, focusing on pollution caused by armed conflicts
ANEMONE PLUS	09.2025 - 03.2028	■		■					■	■	Interreg NEXT BSB	1.48	Assess the vulnerability of the Black Sea marine ecosystem to human pressures
ALGAEREVIVE	09.2024 - 03.2027	■		■			■			■	Interreg NEXT BSB	1.47	Harness algae power for pollution reduction and blue growth
AIRQUEST	07.2024 - 07.2026	■		■					■	■	Interreg NEXT BSB	1.20	Mobilise communities for air quality
IASON+	06.2024 - 12.2026		■	■			■		■	■	Interreg NEXT BSB	1.40	Invasive Alien Species Observatory and assessment of climate change impacts and ecosystem services
BS-SEOS	10.2024 - 03.2027			■			■		■		Interreg NEXT BSB	1.29	Black Sea Smart Marine Environmental Outcome System
LAP-BACK	09.2024 - 09.2026		■				■		■	■	Interreg NEXT BSB	1.46	Strengthen local intervention capacities for climate change
MACRO-CLEAN	09.2024 - 03.2027	■					■		■		Interreg NEXT BSB	1.51	Research and pilot application of cleaning methodologies to manage macroalgal blooms
MicroDanger	12.2025 - 06.2028			■			■		■	■	Interreg NEXT BSB	1.45	Public outreach to reduce microplastic pollution

Project title	Duration (start – end, month,year)	Black Sea basin countries involved in the project									Instrument	Budget, million EUR	Project scope
		BG	EL	RO	AM	AZ	GE	MD	TR	UA			
HERO	12.2025 - 12.2027	■					■		■	■	Interreg NEXT BSB	1.64	Address environmental impacts on reefs
AGRIPERMA	12.2025 - 06.2027	■					■	■		■	Interreg NEXT BSB	0.44	Exchange of good practices and knowledge on regenerative agriculture and permaculture
STEP2CleanPlan	07.2024 - 01.2026	■	■						■		Interreg NEXT BSB	0.50	Cooperation for sustainable energy and climate actions’ planning and monitoring
SG4Y-CLIMATE	11.2025 - 05.2027			■				■	■		Interreg NEXT BSB	0.55	Youth involvement in climate action
NAT-RES	11.2025 - 11.2027		■						■	■	Interreg NEXT BSB	1.64	Advanced technologies to anticipate, mitigate and respond to Natural Hazard Triggering Technological Disasters events
BSB-BSUAND	09.2025 - 03.2027	■	■						■		Interreg NEXT BSB	0.50	Joint action against natural disasters
RISCARE	09.2025 - 09.2027	■		■					■		Interreg NEXT BSB	1.64	Joint procedures and training for rapid intervention
ISTROS	09.2025 - 03.2028			■				■		■	Interreg NEXT BSB	1.28	Strengthen biodiversity protection
CO-RESILIENCE	06.2024 - 08.2026	■						■	■	■	Interreg NEXT BSB	1.48	Cooperation on capacity building for wildfire community resilience and early warning systems

Project title	Duration (start – end, month,year)	Black Sea basin countries involved in the project									Instrument	Budget, million EUR	Project scope
		BG	EL	RO	AM	AZ	GE	MD	TR	UA			
IMPACT+	07.2024 - 01.2026	■		■			■	■			Interreg NEXT BSB	0.55	Improve emergency response to natural and man-made disasters in small communities
SPEER-A	09.2025 - 01.2028	■	■	■					■		Interreg NEXT BSB	0.76	Strengthen earthquake emergency response and rescue capacity
DARE-EU	12.2025 - 12.2027	■						■	■		Interreg NEXT BSB	2.33	Disaster assistance and response in Moldova, Bulgaria and Türkiye
REDA_NEXt	10.2025 - 03.2027		■	■					■		Interreg NEXT BSB	0.50	Rapid Earthquake Damage Assessment - Expanded
GREEN URBAN RESILIENCE	07.2024 - 09.2026	■	■				■		■		Interreg NEXT BSB	1.29	Green solutions for urban areas addressing climate change, heat stress and thermal discomforts
LEARN4SEA	06.2024 - 08.2026	■		■			■		■		Interreg NEXT BSB	0.82	Joint learning for environmentally-friendly behaviour at community level
CAGOS	06.2024 - 12.2026	■		■				■		■	Interreg NEXT BSB	1.49	Clean areas, green and open streets
EcosySTEM	07.2024 - 07.2026	■	■						■	■	Interreg NEXT BSB	1.63	Empower children for environmental sustainability through E-STEM
EcoYOU	06.2024 - 12.2025			■			■	■			Interreg NEXT BSB	0.43	Clean and green minds for environmentally-friendly behaviour

Project title	Duration (start – end, month,year)	Black Sea basin countries involved in the project									Instrument	Budget, million EUR	Project scope
		BG	EL	RO	AM	AZ	GE	MD	TR	UA			
UCare	08.2025 - 08.2027		■	■				■			Interreg NEXT BSB	1.47	Green infrastructure for urban climate adaptation and recovery
DIALOGUE	09.2025 - 12.2026										Interreg NEXT BSB	0.54	Dialogue for innovation and better governance
easyPEST	12.2025 - 06.2027		■				■		■		Interreg NEXT BSB	0.52	Establish a plant pest monitoring system
GwB	12.2025 - 06.2028	■	■				■		■		Interreg NEXT BSB	0.95	Decision support system for global water balance
GreenS4BlackSea	12.2025 - 06.2027		■				■		■		Interreg NEXT BSB	0.45	Protection of virgin forests as a green solution for the Black Sea
WISE-WASTE	12.2025 - 12.2027	■	■				■		■		Interreg NEXT BSB	1.48	Cooperation on waste management and pollution reduction
Sustain BIO&CLIMA	12.2025 - 06.2028	■	■	■					■		Interreg NEXT BSB	1.61	Enhance accessibility, biodiversity, and climate resilience through sustainable practices
EU4EMBLAS	04.2021 - 06.2026						■			■	NDICI	2.19	Monitoring surveys and equipment, public awareness and participation
Strengthening environmental resilience and maritime safety for Black and Caspian seas riparian states (BCSEA II)	09.2026					■	■	■	■	■	NDICI	4.50	Enhance maritime safety and environmental protection through training, improved vessel traffic monitoring, and pollution control

Project title	Duration (start – end, month,year)	Black Sea basin countries involved in the project									Instrument	Budget, million EUR	Project scope
		BG	EL	RO	AM	AZ	GE	MD	TR	UA			
EU4ClimateResilience	01.2024 - 12.2027				■	■	■	■		■	NDICI	19.58	Support climate policy design and implementation
EU4Green Recovery East	01.2025 - 12.2028				■	■		■		■	NDICI	21.30	Support water resilience, circular economy, legislative alignment, transboundary projects
Prevention, Preparedness and Response to natural and human-induced disasters in the Eastern Partnership countries – phase 4 (PPRD East 4)	11.2025 - 10.2029				■	■		■		■	NDICI	5.00	Strengthen Disaster Risk Management (DRM) systems and enhance cooperation with the Union Civil Protection Mechanism

*The EU funding for Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin projects amounts to 90% of the total project budget.