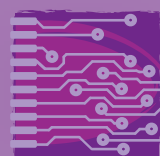


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## Black Sea SCENE: Black Sea Scientific Network

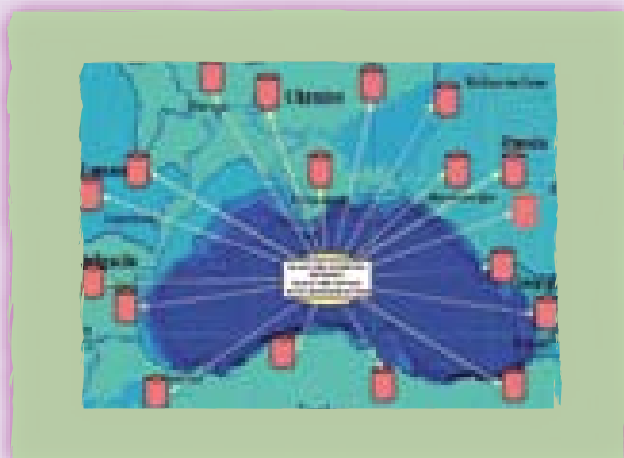
The Black Sea is one of the world's most remarkable seas. It is almost completely cut off from the oceans but is up to 2 212 metres deep. What dark secrets lurk beneath it? - A wealth of biological diversity and a maze of scientific wonders for marine biologists, environmentalists, conservationists, oceanographers and hydro-meteorological experts for a start. Volumes of environmental and socio-economic data have already been gathered by Black Sea institutions. Their scientific knowledge and expertise is now being mobilised for the benefit of the international research community by the EU-funded Black Sea SCENE project. 25 partners from countries bordering on the Black Sea - Ukraine, Russia, Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia - together with seven partners from EU Member States and one Associated State are setting up a network of research institutes, universities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from the region, featuring a virtual data infrastructure to facilitate access to information on the Black Sea.

### ● BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP BLACK SEA

Strategically placed between the EU, candidate countries and neighbours, the Black Sea region constitutes an axis of increasing geopolitical importance for Europe. With its vast marine, energy and other natural resources, unique eco-systems and diverse interests ranging from shipping to tourism and fisheries to oil pipelines, nowhere is regional cooperation busier or more diverse. But the area is heavily populated and seriously polluted, so nowhere is regional environmental cooperation as necessary.

Eutrophication due to excessive loads of nutrients from the rivers running into it - like the Danube, Dnieper and Don - and directly from the six coastal countries, has led to radical changes in the eco-system over the last 50 years. This has had a major trans-boundary impact on biological diversity and human use of the sea.

While there is already a good institutional framework for regional environmental cooperation in the Black Sea-Danube area, what is needed is better coordination of all the various initiatives and this is where the Black Sea SCENE project can help. Its research infrastructure will help stimulate scientific cooperation, exchange of knowledge and expertise, and strengthen the regional capacity



and performance of marine environmental data management, providing improved information delivery services for the Black Sea region at a European level. Black Sea SCENE's work is fine-tuned with another EU-funded research infrastructures project, SeaDataNet.

### ● FEEDING INTO GLOBAL CHANGE AND ECO-SYSTEM RESEARCH

The overriding aim is to set up a Black Sea Scientific Network of leading environmental and socio-economic research institutes, universities and NGOs from the region. Together with partners from EU countries, experts from these bodies meet regularly in workshops to formulate specifications, coordinate networking activities and consider longer-term cooperation, among other

thing, by raising public awareness and knowledge about the local environment.

The virtual data infrastructure that the project is putting together includes a Black Sea regional portal with central meta-directories, equipped with dynamic mapping functions, and giving links to

distributed datasets, managed by the regional partners. Datasets like these make essential reading for many researchers working on global change and eco-systems, and are also important for wider efforts towards sustainable development and management of European marine eco-systems. The partners' work will be greatly helped by internationally-agreed protocols for cataloguing and exchanging datasets and standardised meta-directories.

Indeed, standards are given a high profile in the project. By introducing and comparing with European environmental and data-management guidelines and practices, the Black Sea partners can tune their data quality control and management practices into a coherent approach that is consistent with European and international standards.

Black Sea SCENE and the virtual data infrastructure will encourage transnational and worldwide (IOC, NATO Sfp, GEF, UNEP and UNDP projects) use of available datasets, in turn boosting cooperation between the Black Sea regional institutes and international users.

Black Sea SCENE is making an important contribution to structuring the European Research Area, and it is also a valuable tool for policy-making. It hosts the necessary logistics for future work on sustainable development and rehabilitation of the entire Black Sea eco-system. Its Advisory Board members include governmental representatives from the Black Sea Commission and Black Sea Secretariat as well as from the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River.

### ● BLACK SEA SCIENTIFIC NETWORK IN SUMMARY

**Project acronym:** Black Sea SCENE

**Funding scheme (FP6):** Coordination Action (CA)

**EU financial contribution:** €2 million

**EU project officer:** Anna-Maria Johansson

**Duration:** 36 months

**Start date:** 1 December 2005

**Completion date:** 30 November 2008

**Project webpage:** [www.blackseascene.net](http://www.blackseascene.net)

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Ecological Problems (UA), Odessa National University (UA), Moscow State University (RU), State Oceanographic Institute (RU), Shirshov Institute of Oceanology (RU), Institute of Limnology and Space Research Institute, Russian Academy of Science (RU), All Russian Research Institute of Hydro-meteorological Information – World Data Centre (RU), Middle East Technical University, Institute of Marine Sciences (TR), Sinop Fisheries Faculty of Ondokuz Mayıs University (TR), Black Sea Technical University of Marine Sciences (TR), Institute of Oceanology Bulgarian Academy of Science (BG), Institute of Fisheries and Aquaculture (BG), National Institute for Marine Research and Development (RO), Tbilisi State University (GE), Institute of Geophysics Georgian Academy of Science (GE), Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources (GE), Georgian Coastal Protection Scientific-Industrial Center of Research and Governance of Coastal Formation Processes (GE), Black Sea NGO Network (BG), Institute of Biology of the Southern Seas (UA), Hellenic National Oceanographic Data Centre (EL)