



## PRESS RELEASE

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### Ukrainian-Georgian Joint Black Sea Surveys as a significant step forward in the implementation of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive

From May 16 till June 5 2016, in frame of the EU / UNDP assistance project on marine policy, “Improving Environmental Monitoring in the Black Sea” (EMBLAS) the Joint Black Sea Surveys were conducted both in Ukrainian and Georgian territorial waters using the biggest research vessel in EU “Mare Nigrum”. The main goal of the surveys was to collect the new information about the environmental status of the Black Sea. During the surveys many samples of water, sediments, biota were taken from the different depths including up to 2 km, which will be analyzed at the advance laboratories. The surveys are unique by the parameters measured and equipment used, therefore can be considered as one of the most important milestones in the scientific history of the Black Sea region.

The Joint Black Sea surveys consisted of the three parts: National plot monitoring in Ukraine, Joint open-sea surveys and National pilot monitoring in Georgia. They accommodated a team of highly qualified specialists from Ukraine (Ukrainian Scientific Center of Ecology of the Sea and Institute of Marine Biology of National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine) and Georgia (National Environmental Agency “Black Sea Monitoring Center”), being reinforced by experts from five EU Member States assisting at implementation of novel monitoring methodologies.

The surveys are **unique in many terms**. These surveys are the first deep open Black Sea surveys in the territorial waters of Ukraine and Georgia; for the first time the parameters for determination of the good environmental status of the Black Sea will be defined based on their results; for the first time the screening of emerging organic pollutants, large-scale study of marine litter; photographic identity catalogue of dolphins’ populations will be performed; for the first time marine microbes will be identified by their DNA; first in XXI century study of the life in hydrogen sulphide layers; first determination of the status of the sea by the algae species and for the first time, detailed study of hypoxia was carried out.

The preliminary observations show the good news - that **the Black Sea is being rehabilitated**. The final results of the surveys are expected in October/November 2016 after obtaining the reports from laboratories.

The surveys **raised significant public interest** for the current state of the Black Sea. The departure of the vessel for the open sea surveys from Odessa, Ukraine (May 17) was followed with a large press-conference representing more than 30 journalists from different media. The vessel and its team was ceremonially met by high level officials in Batumi, Georgia (May 27) and the relevant press-conference was widely highlighted in all main TV channels and media.

The surveys contribute to the **implementation of EU-Ukraine and EU-Georgia Association Agreements** in the field of environment, addressing namely the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive in part of the initial assessment of marine waters and the EU Water Framework Directive in part of the status assessment of the coastal waters.

**Background:** The Joint Black Sea surveys are conducted within the framework of the Project ‘Improving Environmental Monitoring in the Black Sea’ (EMBLAS). The Project is co-financed by the European Commission (EC) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Project implementation started on 1 April 2014 and will end on 31 May 2018. The overall objective of the project is to help improve the protection of the Black Sea environment. More information at <http://emblasproject.org/>



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