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NEXT Black Sea Basin

HERO

Healing Environmental by Reef Options in the Black Sea



New transnational project
for the restoration of
Black Sea coastal ecosystems



Brief project description

HERO is a 24-month transnational initiative funded by the Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme. The project aims to improve the ecological status of Black Sea coastal zones through coordinated marine litter removal, restoration of degraded habitats using pilot artificial reefs, scientific monitoring, and public awareness-raising.

Project start date: **23 December 2025**.

Project end date: **22 December 2027**.

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Project partners



Ukrainian Association
of Business Support Centers
(UABSC)

Lead Partner



IPA Strategic Consultancy
Joint Stock Organization
(IPA)

Partner 2



Konstantin Preslavsky
University of Shumen
(ShU)

Partner 3



BATUMI SHOTA RUSTAVELI
STATE UNIVERSITY
(BSU)

Partner 4

Financing

Total eligible project
budget:

€1 643 481,48

Interreg NEXT programme
funding (90%):

€1 479 133,32

Partners' co-financing
(10%):

€164 348,16

Partner-level budget breakdown

(total budget / Interreg grant / partner contribution)

Ukrainian Association of Business Support Centers (UABSC)	€386 118,06 / €347 506,25 / €38 611,81
IPA Strategic Consultancy Joint Stock Organization (IPA)	€600 687,30 / €540 618,57 / €60 068,73
Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen (ShU)	€327 375,06 / €294 637,55 / €32 737,51
BATUMI SHOTA RUSTAVELI STATE UNIVERSITY (BSU)	€329 301,06 / €296 370,95 / €32 930,11

Key objectives and expected results



Reduce marine and coastal litter pressure through systematic clean-ups and inventories;



Restore degraded habitats by installing pilot artificial reefs and testing a range of materials and designs;



Develop and deliver management tools: an Interactive Digital Litter Map (web and mobile) and a common monitoring protocol;



Increase public awareness through the “Be a HERO” campaign, ARTREEF underwater photography festivals, and an international conference;



Produce practical recommendations (Guideline) on best practices for artificial reef installation and monitoring across the Black Sea basin.

Main activities

(with implementation periods and dates)

Preparatory actions and methodology harmonisation	first 8 months (23.12.2025 – 22.08.2026)
Capacity building for field teams and stakeholders	first 8 months (23.12.2025 – 22.08.2026)
Inventories of surface, coastal and seabed litter; data integration into the Digital Map	Periods 2–3 (23.04.2026 – 22.12.2026)
Habitat loss assessments and baseline biodiversity surveys (pre-deployment)	Periods 2–4 (23.04.2026 – 22.04.2027)
Testing of artificial reef materials and deployment technologies	Periods 3–4 (23.08.2026 – 22.04.2027)
Pilot artificial reef deployments	Period 4 (23.12.2026 – 22.04.2027)
Joint impact monitoring of reefs and preparation of the Best-Practice Guideline	Periods 4–6 (23.12.2026 – 22.12.2027)
Communication and dissemination events: international conference, “Be a HERO” campaign, ARTREEF festivals	Periods 5–6 (23.04.2027 – 22.12.2027)

Target beneficiaries



Local and national authorities, researchers and universities, NGOs, businesses in the blue economy sector, tourism stakeholders and the general public — who will gain access to harmonised data, methodologies, training and practical solutions to reduce pollution and restore coastal environments.

Contacts for media and stakeholders

IPA Strategic Consultancy Joint Stock Organization (IPA)

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Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme 2021 - 2027

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(IPA) within the framework of the European Neighbourhood and Cohesion policy. The cooperation area of the program covers the entire or part of the territories of seven countries, including three EU member states (Bulgaria, Greece, Romania) and four non-EU countries (Georgia, Moldova, Turkey, Ukraine).



HERO is financed by the Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme.

Follow project updates, data releases and events on the project website and partners' communication channels.

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