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# WAVES OF EXPRESSION: EXPLORING THE BLACK SEA THROUGH PAINTING IN ART IAȘI MUSEUM

**PARTNER: Complexul Muzeal Național "Moldova"**

**COUNTRY: Romania**



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## 1. Introduction

Global citizenship is the idea that individuals have rights and responsibilities not only their nations states but also as members of a global community. It emphasizes: shared responsibility for global challenges like e.g. human rights, peace and climate change. The EU promotes democratic reforms, human rights, and good governance in non-EU Black Sea states through instrumental diplomacy, for example Black Sea Basin Programme<sup>1</sup>, Black Sea Synergy – Migration and Home Affairs<sup>2</sup> and Black Sea NGO Network<sup>3</sup>.

The idea of a training practice for a good E.U. values is to promote the Black Sea and his surroundings spaces. The Black Sea region includes E.U. members (Bulgaria and Romania and neighboring countries like Turkey, Ukraine, Georgia, Russia and Moldova. It is geopolitically sensitive and strategically important due to: security and conflict (Russia-Ukraine war). Energy transit routes, environmental concerns and EU Neighborhood Policy (ENP).

The International Black Sea Day is celebrated on October 31<sup>st</sup>. This day marks the anniversary of the signing of the Black Sea Strategic Action Plan in 1996, in Istanbul. It was the first Strategic Action Plan for the Rehabilitation and Protection of the Black Sea, a document that implements the provisions of the Convention for the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution, signed in Bucharest in 1992, also known as the Bucharest Convention. The Bucharest Convention is the legal institutional framework enabling the Signatory Parties to adopt and implement appropriate measures for the protection and conservation of the Black Sea marine ecosystem.

The Black Sea Strategic Action Plan, which focuses on rehabilitating and protecting the Black Sea ecosystem and reducing pollution, was signed by the six coastal countries: Bulgaria, Ukraine, Russia, Georgia and Turkey.

Global citizenship and EU values offer a framework to support peace, democracy, and sustainable development in the Black Sea region. The EU's role as a normative power – promoting human rights cooperation, and environmental responsibility – can help align regional development with global citizenship principles.

In order to understand the importance of this space - the Black Sea, we proposed to set up a painting workshop ***WAVES OF EXPRESSION: EXPLORING THE BLACK SEA THROUGH PAINTING IN THE IAȘI ART MUSEUM***, in which we focus on a series of works from the Art Museum in Iași. The capitalised knowledge of the Iași Art Museum's heritage is essential. The museum's collections include numerous works on the seascape. The workshop aims at getting to know, understand the heritage held by the Iași Art Museum and presenting it in an attractive form for the targeted age groups.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.blacksea-cbc.net/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/black-sea-synergy\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/black-sea-synergy_en)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bsad.bsnn.org/home.htm>

## 2. Activity Implementation

### 2.1 Activity Objectives

By the end of this activity, participants will:

- **Understand** the historical and cultural significance of Black Sea painting traditions made by Romanian painters.
- **Identify** key characteristics, themes, and techniques used in artworks inspired by the Black Sea region.
- **Analyze** selected paintings from the museum's collection, discussing symbolism, style and regional influence.
- **Create** their own artwork inspired by Black Sea, applying techniques learned during the workshop.
- **Reflect** on the connection between geography, culture, and artistic expression in the Black Sea area.

### 2.2 Activity Description and Methodology

The workshop activity: A hands painting workshop hosted at an art museum, focused on exploring the seascape as a subject through historical context, composition techniques, and personal expression.

- Duration: 90 minutes;
- Group size: 20 participants;
- Format: online or in-person.

#### *Step 1: Visit in Iași Art Museum (10-20 min)*

The workshop begins with a short presentation on the historical and artistic context of Black Sea painting traditions, highlighting works by Romanian artists Ștefan Dumitrescu, Gheorghe Petrescu, Nicolae Dobrescu, Theodor Pallady, Nicolae Tonitza and emphasizing how art reflects the shared yet diverse cultural narratives within Europe. Following this, participants will engage in a guided discussion to identify recurring themes such as nature, migration, resilience, and intercultural connection. During the visit, participants will learn new things about the works with a maritime theme and important Romanian artists in the exhibition *Masters of Romanian interwar art in the collections of the Iași Art Museum*. At the same time, we will insert during the visit information from the geographic field, in order to better understand the specificity of the maritime space, often taken up by many Romanian artists in their works. One of the most prolific periods in Romanian art was the inter-war period. In the first part of the exhibition, visitors will have the opportunity to admire works by such representative artists as Ștefan Dumitrescu, Gheorghe Petrescu, Nicolae Dobrescu, Theodor Pallady, Nicolae Tonitza, Marius Bunescu, Cecilia Cuțescu-Stork și Nutzi Acontz.

### **Step 2: Why does the Black Sea matters for us? (10-20 min)**

For this stage we will use a power point presentation, with images and text.

- *Geopolitical and Strategic Significance* – The Black Sea is a strategic gateway between Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia. It borders key NATO allies and partners: Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine and Georgia;
- *Energy and Trade Routes* – The Black Sea region is a hub for oil and gas pipelines. It serves as a critical trade corridor between Europe and Asia, including grain exports from Ukraine and Russia.
- *Security of allies and partners* – NATO members Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey rely on Black Sea stability.
- *Environmental and Scientific importance* – The Black Sea has unique biodiversity and a delicate ecosystem, with a deep anoxic (oxygen-free) layer. Also, UE cooperates on scientific research and environmental protection in international waters. Pollution, overfishing and climate change are concerns.
- *Historical and Cultural Connection* – UE foreign policy in the region reflects broader commitments to democracy, sovereignty and human rights.

### **Step 3: Creative Workshop (30-40 min)**

This hands-on painting workshop invites participants to explore the Black Sea as a source of inspiration for artistic expression. Hosted in a hall of our workshop (or virtually), the session combines art history, creative exploration, and guided painting. Participants will examine how seascapes have been represented across time, focusing on the Black Sea's unique cultural and geographic identity, and will be encouraged to reflect on European values such as cultural heritage, diversity, and unity.

### **Step 4: Sharing and Reflection (5-10 min)**

The session concludes with a group reflection, where participants share their artworks and discuss the meanings behind them. This encourages dialogue, empathy, and appreciation for diverse perspectives – supporting values of inclusion, cultural expression, and active citizenship.

## **2.3 Tools and Resources**

Art materials: for in-person or mailed in advance for online participants:

- Tempera, acrylics, or finger paints.
- Brushes in various size.
- Paper, canvas sheets, or painting boards.
- Palettes for mixing colors.
- Aprons for protecting.
- Pencils and erasers for sketching composition (optional).
- reference photo.

- Digital Tools (primarily for online)
- Video conferencing platform: Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Google Meet (with screen sharing and breakout room functions).
- Map of Black Sea.

## 2.4 Suggested integrations

This activity is suitable for:

- Museum education programs
- Adult art history or cultural heritage workshops
- Erasmus+ intercultural dialogue sessions
- Students of BA FINE ARTS

It aligns well with topics like

- Artistic expression and symbolism

Suggested pairings:

### **Pairing 1:** Artistic Identity

Activity: My first painting of the Black Sea

Description: This activity invites participants to explore their personal and cultural identity through their first artistic interpretation of the Black Sea. Building on the concept of artistic identity, participants create compositions that blend local heritage symbols.

### **Pairing 2:** Cultural heritage routes in the Black Sea

Activity: Imaginary journey to Balchik through works by Romanian artists exhibited in the Iași Art Museum

Description: In this activity, participants take an imaginary journey to the coastal town of Balchik, guided by the landscape paintings and travel-inspired artworks of Romanian artists featured in the Iași Art Museum. Through visual storytelling and discussion, participants explore travel, place, and artistic perception intersect, especially in the context of shared Black Sea heritage. Using historical paintings as both visual prompts and cultural windows, the activity emphasizes how artists captured the atmosphere, light, and emotional essence of Balchik – a symbol of cross-cultural interaction and artistic exploration in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## 3. Debriefing and Feedback

At the end of the workshop, participants have to connect their creative experience with broader themes such as cultural identity, shared heritage, and European values. Whether conducted in-person or online, trainers are encouraged to create a relaxed and open atmosphere using small group discussions, open-ended questions, or digital tools e.g. Google Forms.

*Suggested reflection prompts for participants:*

Painting the Black Sea help you explore your personal or regional identity?

- Did you notice any emotions, memories, or cultural stories emerge while painting?
- What do you think the sea represents in the context of Europe – connection, separation, nature, heritage?
- Which EU values (e.g. unity in diversity, sustainability, cultural heritage), were reflected in this activity?
- How do you see your role as a creative citizen in your local or European community?

*Informal feedback questions:*

- What part of the workshop did you enjoy the most? Why?
- Was there anything that surprised or inspired you during the activity?
- How easy or difficult was it to express yourself through this medium?

*Trainer assessment tips:*

- Observe participant engagement during the painting and discussion phases
- Encourage participants to share their work and interpretations to gauge depth of reflection
- Collect digital photos of artworks (with permission) and accompanying participant statements as informal evidence of impact.

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