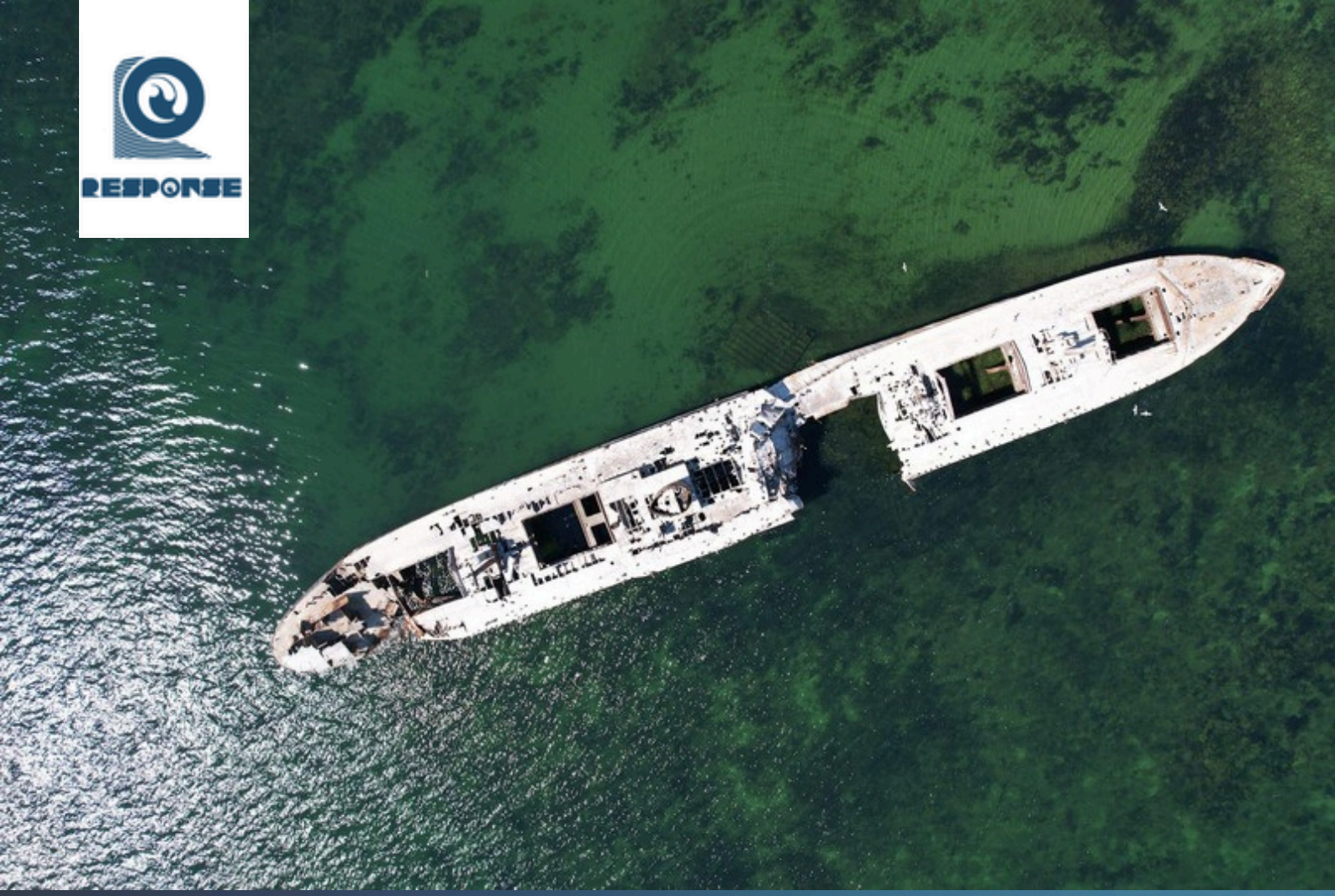


RESPONSE PROJECT

Building Response Frameworks under existing and new Marine Pollution Challenges in the Black Sea

LAYMAN'S REPORT
September 2026

www.response-project.com

Co-funded by the European Union



PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT ACRONYM	RESPONSE
PROJECT NUMBER	101124661
PROJECT TITLE	Building Response Framework under existing and new Marine Pollution Challenges in the Black Sea
PROGRAMME	European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)
TOPIC	EMFAF-2023-PIA-FLAGSHIP-2-BLACK
START DATE	Oct 1, 2023
DURATION	37 months
COORDINATOR	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTh), Greece
PROJECT PARTNERS	Black Sea NGO Network (BSNN), Bulgaria Institute of Market and Ecological Research (IMEER-NASU), Ukraine Black Sea Branch of Ukrainian Environmental Academy of Sciences (BSBUEAS), Ukraine National Institute for Marine Research & Development 'Grigore Antipa' (NIMRD), Romania Greens Movement of Georgia / Friends of the Earth (GMG/FoE), Georgia

Co-funded by the European Union

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I. WHY IS THIS PROJECT NEEDED?

RESPONDING TO NEW MARINE POLLUTION CHALLENGES

THE BLACK SEA
A UNIQUE ECOSYSTEM

The Black Sea is facing a number of environmental threats that require urgent and coordinated action from its bordering countries. Pollution from land-based sources has a significant impact on the Black Sea. Due to its vast drainage basin and lack of oxygen at great depths, substances carried from land can significantly affect the local ecosystem. The Black Sea collects water from over a third of Europe's land mass. The water quality of the Danube and the rivers in the north-western Black Sea region largely defines the ecological status of the western Black Sea basin.

Rivers carry large amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus from agriculture, leading to eutrophication.

Solid waste and plastic that washes up on beaches originates from urban runoff, tributaries carrying untreated wastewater, and local tourism activities and adjacent areas.

Toxic chemicals, pesticides, heavy metals, and persistent organic pollutants accumulate in sediments and marine organisms, directly affecting biodiversity and fish stocks.

Oil and chemical spills resulting from maritime traffic, offshore activities, and industrial accidents are among the most severe forms of pollution.

Due to its nature as a nearly enclosed sea, persistent pollutants accumulate over time and severely affect the Black Sea’s oxygenated surface layer. Oil forms a film on the water’s surface that blocks oxygen and is extremely toxic to marine life.

Pollution caused by armed conflicts is one of the most complex and challenging threats to the Black Sea. It combines multiple sources of contamination, is unpredictable, and has long-term effects on the marine ecosystem. The impact is not limited to the conflict zones but can affect the entire Black Sea via marine circulation. Ammunition and explosives can remain active for years or even decades.



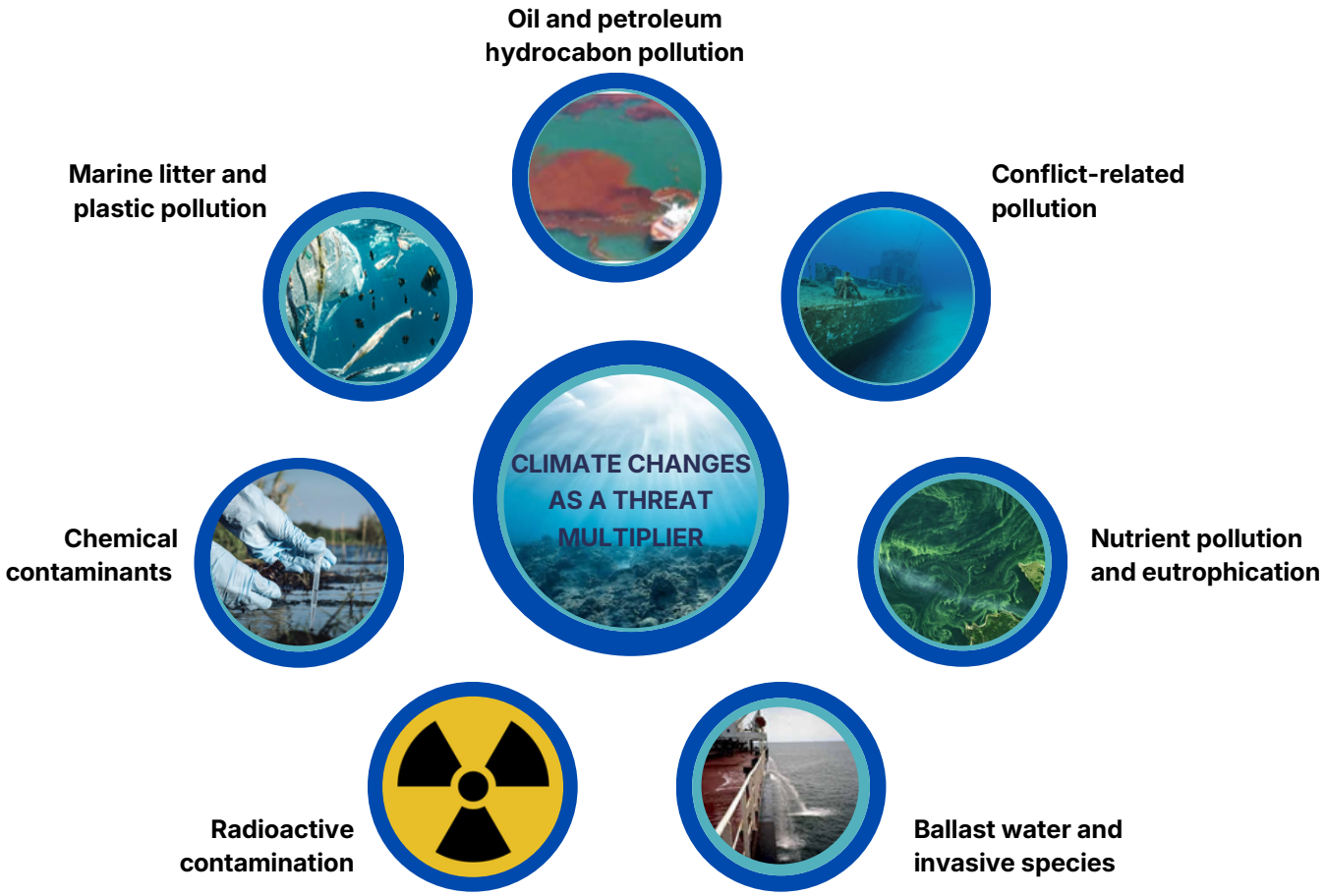
A SHARED SEA, A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Despite international agreements and monitoring programmes, a significant gap remains: those responsible for responding to marine pollution incidents often lack practical, standardized and up-to-date training.

Response protocols vary from country to country, and most training programmes do not yet address emerging types of threat, such as those caused by armed conflict.

The absence of coordinated training and functional cooperation between riparian states hinders the response to environmental ncidents, escalating local pollution events into regional disasters that are challenging to control.

Currently, each Black Sea country has its own emergency response systems for marine pollution, but these differ significantly and are often not aligned with one another, which limits the region's collective response capacity.



The main marine pollution sources identified in the Black Sea

PARTNERS INVOLVED

SIX PARTNERS FROM FIVE COUNTRIES

The Black Sea is one of Europe's most valuable marine ecosystems. Protecting it requires more than scientific knowledge or national efforts alone. Because pollution crosses borders, effective preparedness depends on cooperation, shared expertise and coordinated action among all Black Sea countries.

Recognising this need, the RESPONSE project brought together research institutions, academia, authorities, practitioners and environmental organisations to build a common framework for marine pollution preparedness and response.

Protecting the Black Sea requires a shared vision and knowledge, as well as coordinated action across national borders. Implemented under the EMFAF Programme, the RESPONSE project combined scientific expertise, practical training, digital innovation, and policy development in order to support a more coordinated and resilient regional approach to pollution prevention, preparedness, and emergency response.

These objectives were achieved through close cooperation between organisations with complementary expertise from across the Black Sea region, who came together as part of the project consortium:

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTh) is the lead beneficiary of RESPONSE project.

AUTh is the largest university in Greece, with a solid track record in the European Research Area, as well as in training and networking with various public authorities and stakeholders. The AUTh team has been involved in numerous projects, including, for example, the Horizon 2020 project INCENTIVE on the establishment of citizen science hubs and FutureMARES on the impact of climate change on marine ecosystem services and biodiversity.

Black Sea NGO Network (BSNN)

BSNN is a regional network of environmental organisations based in Varna, Bulgaria, with observer status at the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution and a record of accomplishment of successful projects in the region. It has worked with four of the other organisations, either as a coordinator or as a partner in joint projects.

The Institute of Market and Economic & Ecological Researches of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (IMEER NASU)

Located in Odesa, Ukraine IMEER NASU is a public institution, part of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. It is an active research institute with expertise in natural resource governance from a social science perspective.

PARTNERS INVOLVED

The Black Sea Branch of Ukrainian Environmental Academy of Sciences (BSBUEAS)

Odesa-based NGO with a team of professional researchers. Their expertise ranges from marine ecology and oceanography to economics, stakeholder analysis and citizen science. Team members have participated in regional environmental projects within the Black Sea Basin Programme (MARLITER, BSB-CIRCLECON).

The National Institute for Marine Research and Development "Grigore Antipa" (INCDM – NIMRD)

Located in Constanta, Romania, NIMRD stands as a prominent research institution in the Black Sea basin. It actively engages in numerous regional projects focusing on marine environmental monitoring and pollution assessment, and is a reliable partner in Horizon 2020 projects such as BS CONNECT, DOORS, and BRIDGE.

The Greens Movement of Georgia / Friends of the Earth (GMG/FoE)

NGO, part of the international environmental network, and an active player in the country's civil society. It implements projects funded by European governmental cooperation agencies and team members take part in Horizon Europe funded projects focusing on the state of the BS ecosystem.



II. FROM CHALLENGE TO ACTION

UNDERSTANDING CHALLENGES TO PREPARE FOR EMERGENCIES

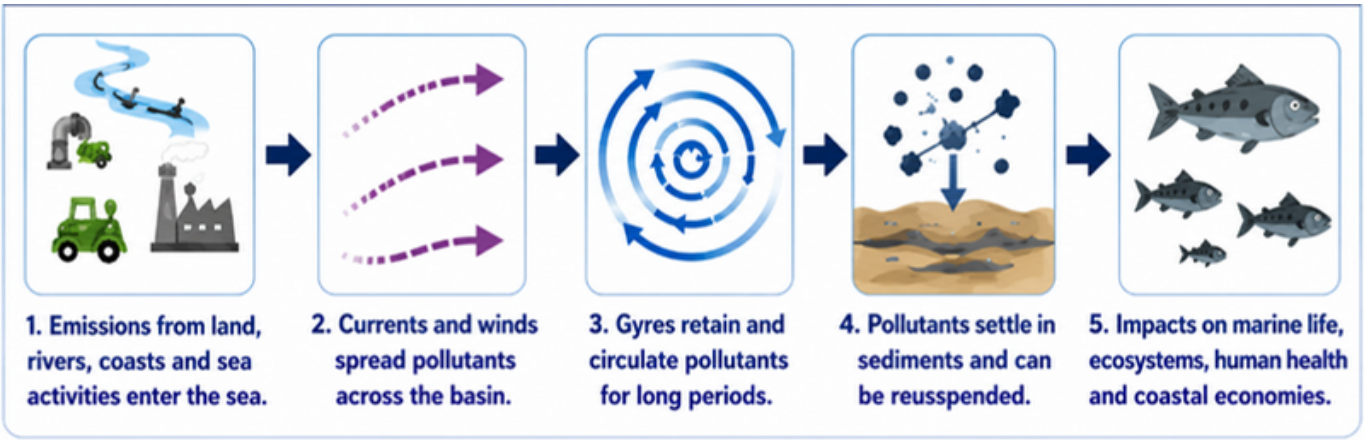
MARINE POLLUTION KNOWS NO BORDERS

Marine pollution emergencies require more than just technical expertise. An effective response depends on well-trained personnel, clear operational procedures, and strong cooperation between institutions at national and regional levels.

Emergency response systems across the Black Sea region have evolved independently, resulting in differences in training approaches, operational procedures, and institutional capacities. These differences can hinder coordinated responses during cross-border pollution incidents.

At the same time, the growing complexity of marine pollution, driven by climate change, increasing maritime activity, and emerging risks associated with armed conflicts, highlights the need for modern, flexible, practical training programmes.

The RESPONSE project was developed to address these challenges by creating harmonized training methodologies, practical learning resources, and collaborative mechanisms that strengthen regional preparedness, support a more coordinated response to marine pollution emergencies, and bridge potential gaps.



How pollution travels across borders

RESPONSE AT A GLANCE

SIX KEY STEPS COMPLETED

RESPONSE was designed as an integrated capacity-building project. Scientific knowledge, practical training, digital tools, regional cooperation, and policy development were combined into a single framework capable of improving preparedness for marine pollution emergencies throughout the Black Sea Basin.

Through six interconnected working steps, RESPONSE followed a logical pathway from identifying regional needs to delivering practical solutions.



The key steps of the project and the corresponding results

SIX INTERCONNECTED KEY STEPS SPECIFIC OUTCOMES

1. UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

An effective solution begins with a clear understanding of the problem. Therefore, the RESPONSE project brought together scientists, public authorities, emergency response teams, educators, and environmental organizations from across the Black Sea region to identify the most pressing marine pollution-related challenges.

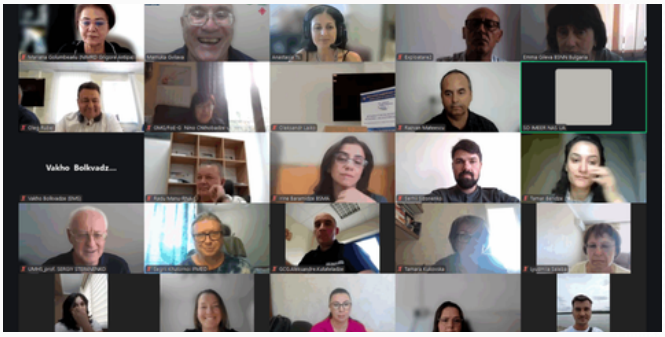
Through an in-depth assessment process, the project reviewed existing scientific knowledge and analyzed current training programmes. Practical experience was also gathered from organizations directly involved in preventing and combating pollution.

This first key step established a common knowledge base to guide all subsequent activities, ensuring the training framework developed by RESPONSE would address real operational needs rather than theoretical assumptions.

Key results included identifying the main marine pollution threats affecting the Black Sea, mapping stakeholders and existing training capacities, analyzing over 435 scientific publications, and consulting with over 200 organizations across the region.

2. DESIGNING BETTER TRAINING TOGETHER

RESPONSE has adopted a collaborative approach, bringing together experts, public authorities, universities, research institutes and operational organisations to design new educational programmes reflecting the realities faced by those responsible for preventing and combating marine pollution.



National and regional co-creation workshops gave stakeholders the chance to share their experiences, pinpoint shared goals, and contribute directly to the development of up-to-date, flexible curricula. This collaborative process ensures the training programmes are practical, relevant and adaptable to different national contexts. The outcome is a new generation of training materials combining scientific knowledge and operational experience to support continuous professional development across the Black Sea region.



SIX INTERCONNECTED KEY STEPS SPECIFIC OUTCOMES

Key results of this step included four national and one regional co-creation workshops, over 20 proposals for customised study programmes and a monitoring and evaluation framework for future training activities.





3. TRANSFORMING KNOWLEDGE INTO DIGITAL RESOURCES

Knowledge has the greatest impact when it is easily accessible and shareable. For this reason, RESPONSE has transformed its scientific findings, educational materials and practical guidelines into free digital resources, making learning accessible to all.





The RESPONSE Digital Toolkit is an open platform that brings together training modules, guidance documents, learning materials, best practices, and support resources. Designed for educators, practitioners, and decision-makers, the toolkit ensures that the project's knowledge remains accessible long after the project has ended.

Key results included developing the RESPONSE Digital Toolkit, creating open-access educational resources, and establishing a digital archive of training materials and practical guidelines.

SIX INTERCONNECTED KEY STEPS SPECIFIC OUTCOMES

4. FROM KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION

Training alone is not enough to improve preparedness. Knowledge must be translated into practical actions that organizations can implement in their daily work. To facilitate this process, RESPONSE has developed a structured methodology for creating national operational plans for marine pollution training.

Through regional consultations and cooperation among experts, the project has created practical guidelines to help countries organize training activities, coordinate stakeholders, and establish long-term capacity-building programmes.

A dedicated 10-step operational planning framework has been developed to support institutions seeking to replicate the RESPONSE approach within their own national contexts.

Key results included four national operational plans, a regional consultation workshop with over 125 participants, and the 10-step operational planning framework.



The 10-step operational planning framework

SIX INTERCONNECTED KEY STEPS SPECIFIC OUTCOMES

5. TESTING THE RESPONSE APPROACH

Before a training programme can be adopted on a large scale, it must be tested. Therefore, RESPONSE organised pilot training sessions at national and regional levels to evaluate the effectiveness of the newly developed curricula and teaching materials. These pilot courses provided valuable feedback from participants and trainers, enabling the project team to refine the educational content and enhance the learning experience.

At the same time, the RESPONSE Digital Toolkit was introduced to support both in-person and online learning. The testing phase confirmed that the RESPONSE methodology is flexible, practical, and suitable for various organizational and national contexts.

The key results were four national and one regional pilot training programme, the introduction of the RESPONSE Digital Toolkit, and the evaluation and refinement of the training programmes.



Testing the response approach:
Pilot training sessions were conducted in each partner country to evaluate the effectiveness of the newly developed curricula and teaching materials







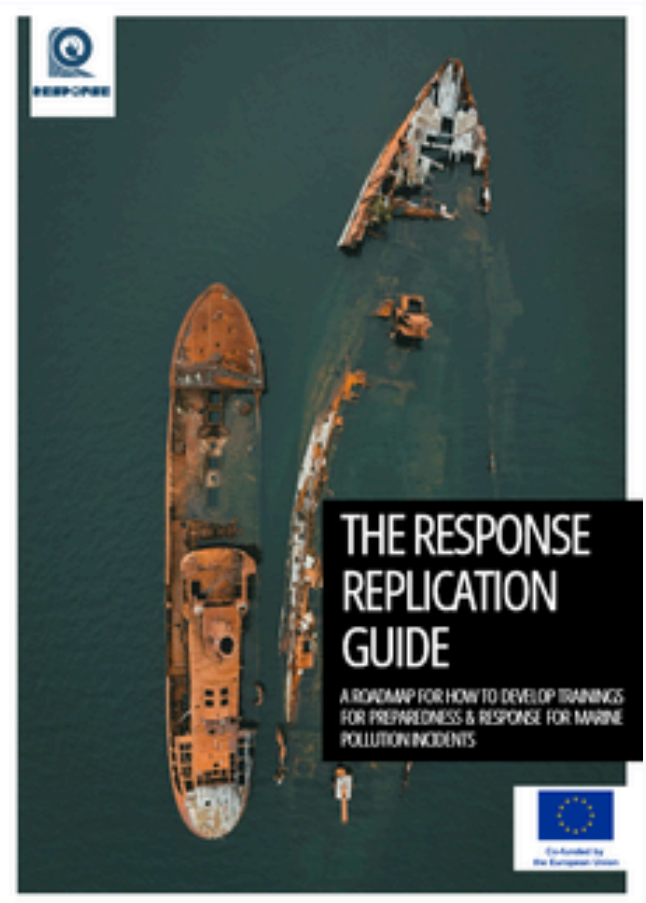
SIX INTERCONNECTED KEY STEPS SPECIFIC OUTCOMES

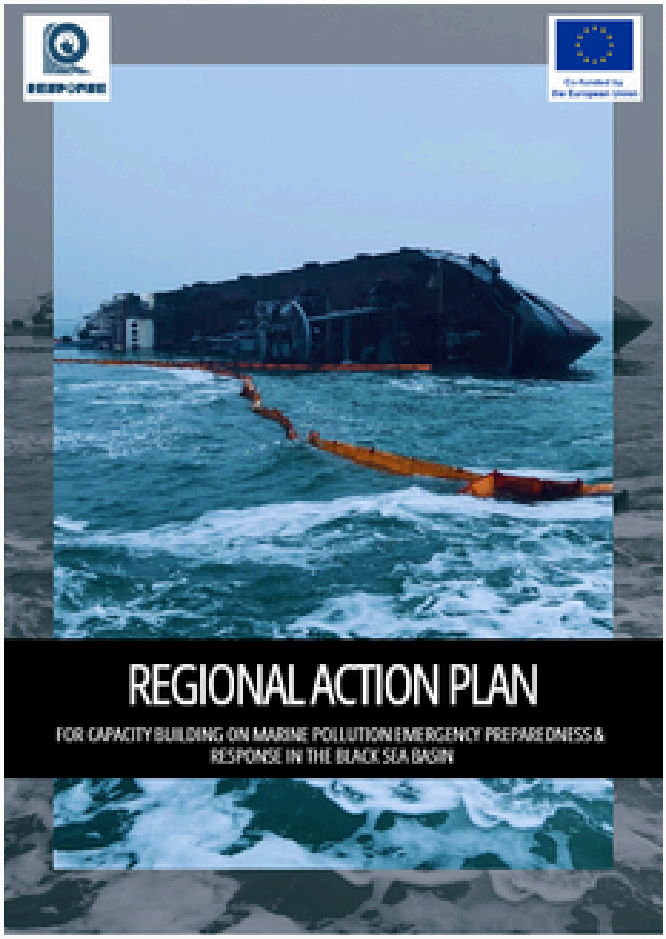
6. TAKING RESPONSE FORWARD

The true success of the RESPONSE project is measured by both its achievements during implementation and its ability to inspire future initiatives.

To maximise its long-term impact, the project has developed policy recommendations, a Regional Action Plan and a Replication Guide, enabling other organisations and countries to adopt and adapt the RESPONSE methodology.

By sharing practical tools, training resources and operational experience, the project strengthens a regional network dedicated to marine pollution preparedness and response.





RESPONSE therefore leaves behind a sustainable framework that can continue to strengthen environmental resilience throughout the Black Sea region and beyond, providing much more than just project outcomes.

Key results include the Regional Action Plan, Policy Recommendations, the Replication Guide, the Long-Term Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, and a strengthened regional cooperation network.



III. PROJECT OUTCOMES

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

TOOLS, KNOWLEDGE AND LASTING IMPACT

One of the most valuable achievements of the RESPONSE project is the development of an integrated framework that combines knowledge, practical tools and implementation guidance. RESPONSE addresses these three dimensions through three complementary outputs: an open-access digital toolkit, a practical replication framework and a regional action plan for building capacity in marine pollution emergency preparedness and response in the Black Sea basin. Together, these resources empower organizations to translate knowledge into action, bolster institutional capacity and guarantee the long-term sustainability of project outcomes.

The Digital Toolkit serves as an open-access knowledge hub, bringing together training materials, educational resources, and practical guidance developed throughout the project.

The Replication Guide provides a structured roadmap that enables organizations to design, implement, and continuously improve their own marine pollution training programmes. Working together, these two components transform scientific knowledge into practical action, supporting harmonised training, stronger institutional cooperation and more resilient marine pollution preparedness across the Black Sea region and beyond.

Regional Action Plan is one of the most significant achievements of the RESPONSE project for Capacity Building on Marine Pollution Emergency Preparedness and Response in the Black Sea Basin. It provides a common strategic framework to strengthen regional preparedness among Black Sea countries and support the long-term development of harmonised training systems for marine pollution emergencies. It is the result of an extensive process involving scientific analysis, assessment of regional needs and close collaboration with national authorities, experts and stakeholders from across the Black Sea region.



From knowledge to impact, the three main RESPONSE outputs

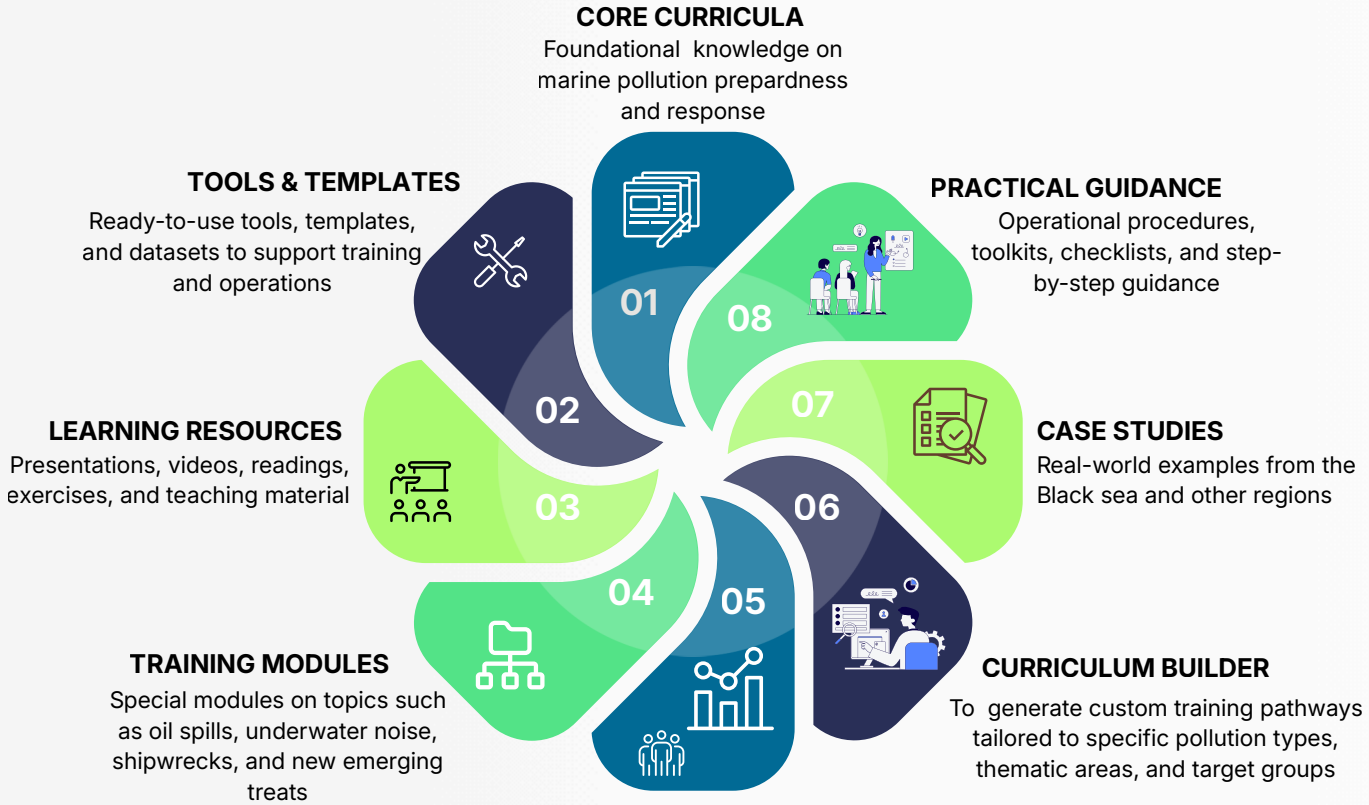
RESPONSE DIGITAL TOOLKIT

The RESPONSE project developed a user-centred platform – the RESPONSE Digital Toolkit (www.response-toolkit.com) – to equip stakeholders across the Black Sea region with the resources needed to effectively prepare for and respond to marine pollution incidents.

The digital toolkit was developed through an extensive co-creation process involving public authorities, researchers, emergency responders, NGOs, and other key stakeholders from across the Black Sea region.

The Toolkit provides a portfolio of modular training programmes that can be adapted to different operational contexts, institutional requirements and target audiences.

By providing free, easy access to high-quality educational resources, the digital RESPONSE toolkit enables organisations to develop their own training activities. It promotes knowledge sharing and harmonised training approaches, contributing to the development of a stronger community of professionals prepared to respond to marine pollution incidents.



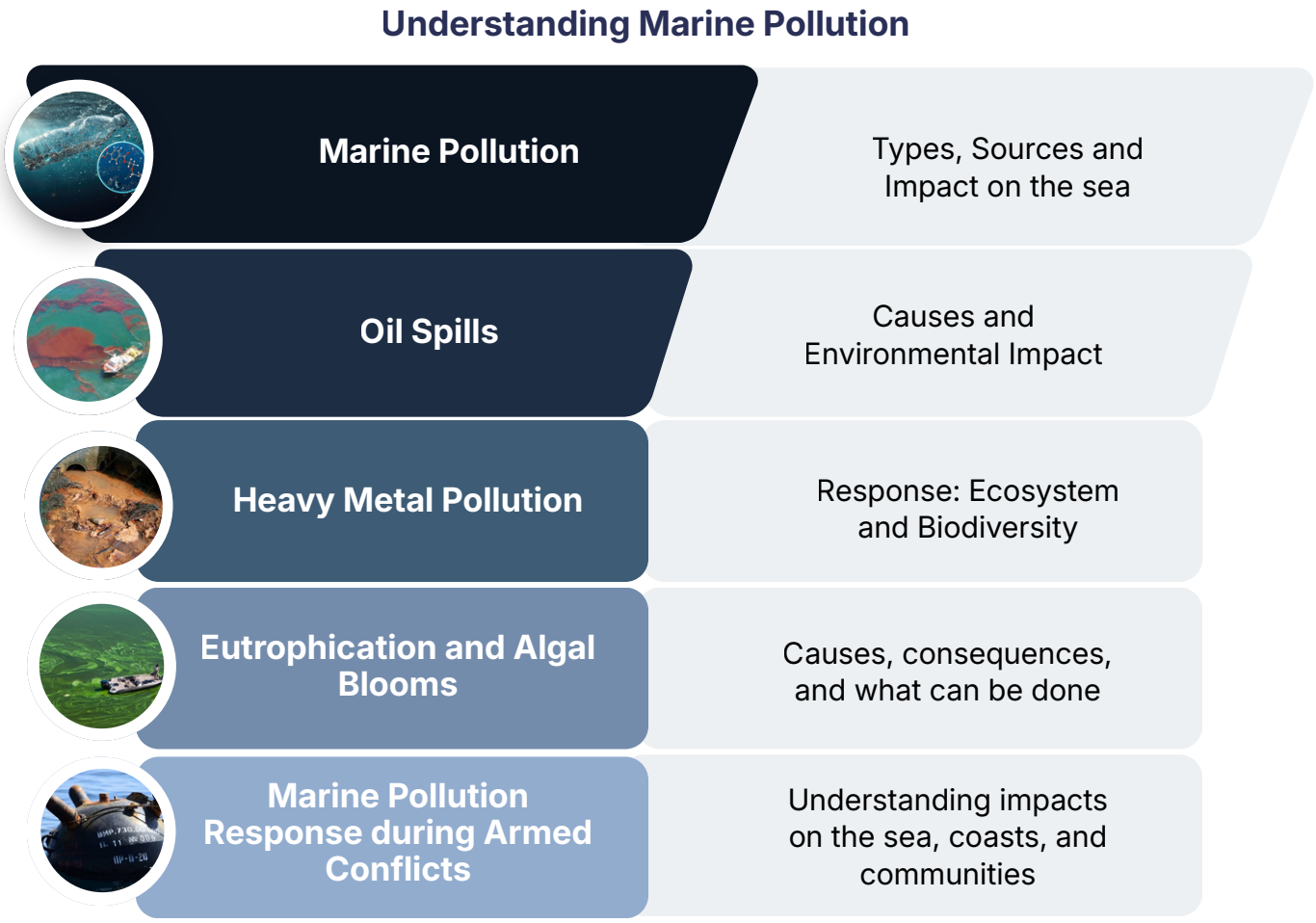
The main elements of RESPONSE Digital Toolkit

EXPLORE → CUSTOMIZE → RESPOND

RESPONSE DIGITAL TOOLKIT

The RESPONSE Digital Toolkit offers three core features:

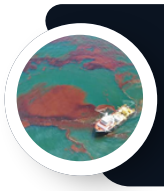
- **The Core Curricula:** A comprehensive library of ready-to-use curricula spanning diverse pollution types, thematic areas, and stakeholder profiles — available for download and adaptation for national or regional training purposes.
- **The Curriculum Builder:** An interactive tool that allows users to generate tailored training programmes based on specific pollution scenarios, topics, and target audiences.
- **The All Courses Library:** A collection of individual courses and training materials covering various topics related to enhancing preparedness and response to marine pollution incidents. All resources are open-access, downloadable, and editable.



Examples of pollution types covered in the Digital Toolkit materials

RESPONSE DIGITAL TOOLKIT

Supporting Community Response

 **Oil Spill Response**	Basic actions to support clean-up and protect biodiversity
 **Shipwreck Response**	Protecting ecosystems and biodiversity around shipwrecks
 **Marine Pollution during Armed Conflicts**	Understanding risks and safe volunteer engagement
 **Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution**	Reducing and removing marine litter
 **Eutropification & Algal Blooms**	Identifying blooms and reporting incidents
 **Wildlife Protection & Rescue**	How to protect, rescue, and support marine wildlife and habitats

Examples of thematics covered in the Digital Toolkit materials for the general public

RESPONSE DIGITAL TOOLKIT

Strengthening Operational Capacity

 **Monitoring & Assessment**	Collecting and interpreting environmental data
 **Earth Observation**	Using satellite data and technology to detect and monitor pollution
 **Operational Response**	Strategies, equipment and field operations
 **Incident Management**	Planning, coordination and decision-making
 **Shipwrecks & Marine Hazards**	Assessment and response to submerged threats
 **Armed Conflict Pollution**	Advanced understanding of risks, impacts and response options
 **Oil Spills**	Advanced response techniques and environmental protection
 **Wildlife Protection & Rescue**	How to protect, rescue and support marine wildlife and habitats
 **Marine Contaminants**	Chemicals, heavy metals and emerging pollutants

Examples of thematics covered in the Digital Toolkit materials for professionals & specialists

RESPONSE REPLICATION GUIDE

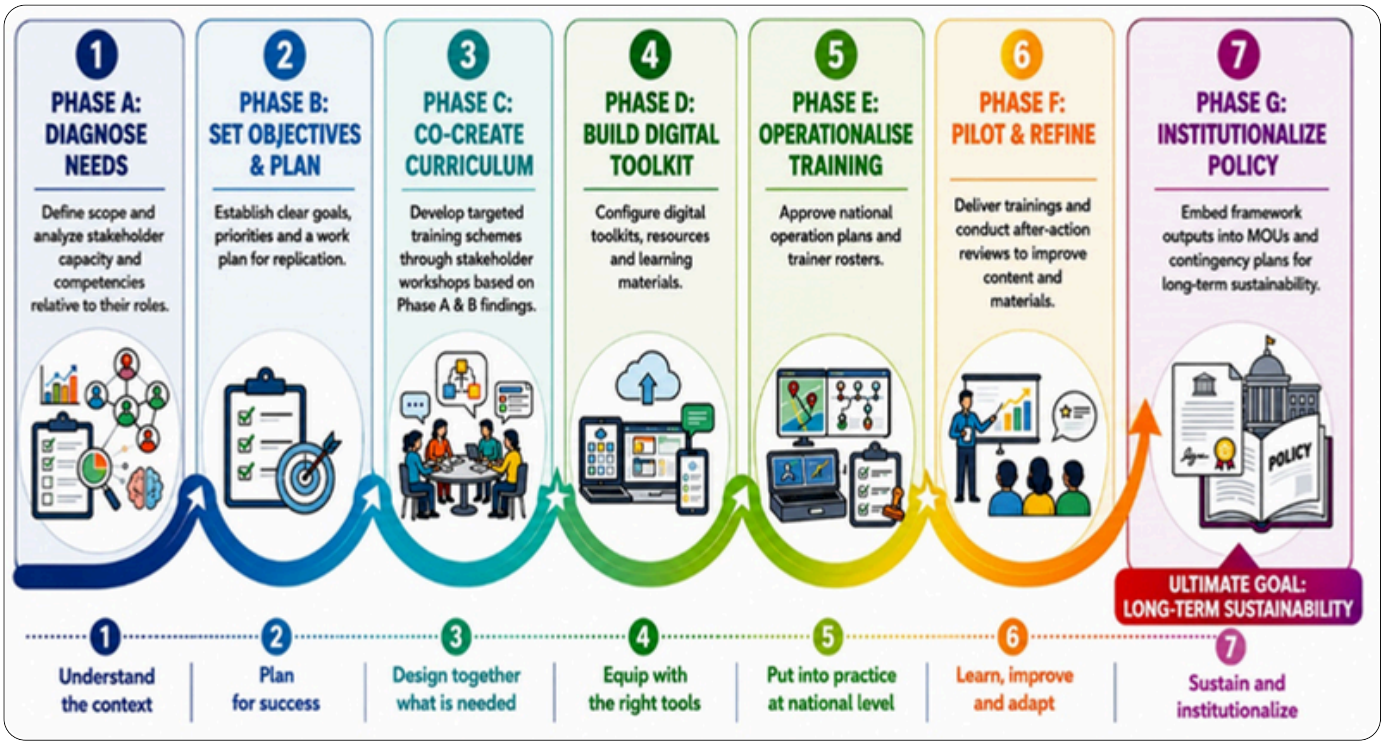
Marine pollution is a challenge that transcends national borders. Recognizing that countries have different institutional structures, environmental conditions, and training needs, the RESPONSE consortium has developed a practical guide to help organizations adapt the RESPONSE methodology rather than simply adopting it.

The guide provides a flexible framework that can be adapted to local priorities while maintaining the fundamental principles of collaboration, scientific excellence, and long-term sustainability. It is designed to be used by organizations of all sizes and in all sectors.

The Replication Guide is a seven-step roadmap that translates the experience gained during the RESPONSE project into a clear implementation path that any interested organization can follow.

Comprising seven interconnected steps, it supports the development of modern training programmes in the field of marine pollution, from the initial assessment of local needs to long-term institutional integration.

The Replication Guide enables organizations to move from isolated training activities to a structured, sustainable capacity-building system.



Seven-phase roadmap of the Replication Guide

RESPONSE REPLICATION GUIDE

By following the seven-step methodology, institutions can develop training programmes tailored to their own environmental, legal, and organizational contexts. Thanks to its flexible nature, the framework can be applied not only in the Black Sea region, but also in other European sea basins and maritime regions facing similar environmental challenges.

Phase A: Preparation and alignment, has as its main objective understanding the local context, identifying key stakeholders, and ensuring that the proposed initiative is aligned with existing policies, institutional priorities, and available resources. This creates the necessary conditions for effective collaboration from the very beginning.

Phase B: Needs assessment addresses organizations' need to first understand their current situation. In Phase B, existing capacities are assessed, knowledge gaps are identified, and the competencies needed to strengthen preparedness and response capacity are analyzed. The results provide the evidence needed to define clear priorities for action.

Before designing a training program, organizations must first understand their current situation. This phase assesses existing capabilities, identifies knowledge gaps, and analyzes the competencies needed to strengthen preparedness and response capacity. The results provide the evidence needed to define clear priorities for action.

Phase C: Design and co-creation aims to make training programmes more effective. These programmes become truly effective when they are designed in collaboration with the people who will use them.

Through collaboration with public authorities, researchers, emergency responders, and other stakeholders, this phase develops training programmes that reflect real operational needs and regional priorities.

Phase D: Configuring the Digital Toolkit brings together training materials, practical guidelines, and support resources within the RESPONSE Digital Toolkit, ensuring that knowledge can be easily shared, updated, and reused. Once the educational content has been developed, it is transformed into an accessible digital learning environment.

Phase E: Operationalization and implementation focuses on preparing organizations to deliver the training. This includes developing operational plans, organizing training activities, and establishing the governance and coordination mechanisms necessary for successful implementation.

Phase F: Pilot testing and refinement provides an opportunity to test the curriculum under real-world conditions. Feedback from participants and trainers is used to improve educational materials and teaching methods, ensuring that the training program effectively meets its objectives.

Phase G: Policy institutionalization is the final phase, which focuses on integrating the training framework into institutional practice. By incorporating the methodology into policies, educational programmes, and organizational procedures, the RESPONSE approach can continue to evolve and support preparedness for marine pollution long after the project has ended.

RESPONSE REGIONAL ACTION PLAN

The Regional Action Plan is structured around two complementary strategic objectives: strengthening regional capacity and enhancing regional cooperation.

Strengthening regional capacity involves developing a highly skilled network of institutions and professionals capable of preventing, preparing for and responding effectively to conventional and emerging threats to the marine environment. Key priorities include ensuring harmonised training programmes and modern learning resources based on digital tools, developing joint exercises and improving operational readiness, with the aim of strengthening technical and institutional capacities and preparedness for emerging environmental risks.

Strengthening and enhancing regional cooperation among the countries of the Black Sea region through the exchange of knowledge and the coordination of plans, with a view to creating a sustainable regional framework for preparedness and response to marine pollution, prioritises cross-border collaboration aimed at adopting common methodologies and standards, exchanging expertise and best practices, and coordinating policies to support the long-term sustainability and replicability of the project's results.



The two complementary strategic objectives of the Regional Action Plan

RESPONSE REGIONAL ACTION PLAN

The Regional Action Plan provides a practical roadmap for future actions. By establishing common priorities and promoting consistent training methods, it helps countries in the Black Sea region develop a more coordinated, resilient, and forward-looking preparedness system capable of addressing current and emerging marine pollution risks.

The Regional Action Plan was developed through five structured stages:

1. Assessment of current threats related to marine pollution.
2. Identification of gaps in training and capacity building.
3. Consultation with stakeholders at the national and regional levels.
4. Analysis of institutional needs.
5. Defining practical priority actions for the region.



The five stages on which the Regional Action Plan was developed

RESPONSE REGIONAL ACTION PLAN

This evidence-based approach ensured that the proposed actions reflect the real challenges faced by organizations responsible for preparedness and response to marine pollution.

Responding to emerging challenges, the Regional Action Plan addresses both traditional and emerging threats related to marine pollution. It considers a wide range of environmental pressures affecting the Black Sea, including:



Oil spills and hydrocarbon pollution



Hazardous and chemical contaminants



Nutrient pollution and eutrophication



Pollution related to the conflict in Ukraine

MAIN ENVIRONMENTAL PRESSURES

AFFECTING THE BLACK SEA

Marine debris and plastic pollution



Radioactive contamination



Ballast water and invasive species



Climate change as a factor amplifying environmental risks



By integrating these ever-evolving challenges into a single strategic framework, the Regional Action Plan provides guidance that reflects current environmental realities and future preparedness needs.



IV. RESPONSE BEYOND THE PROJECT

BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

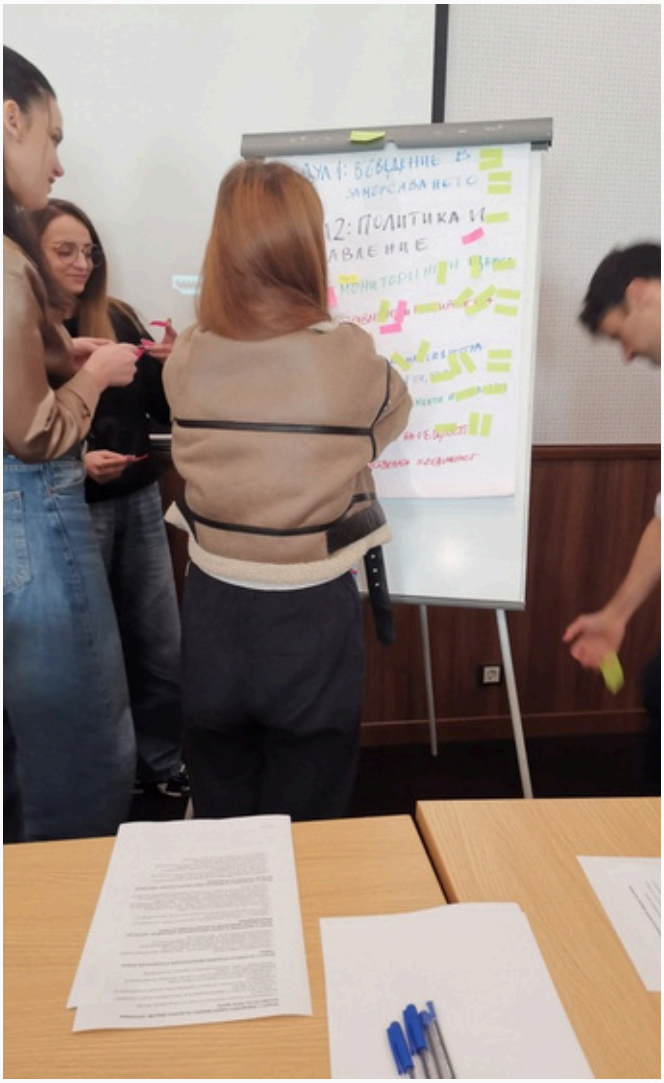
RESPONSE's success was built on more than scientific results and innovative training tools. Continuous dialogue and collaboration with stakeholders across the Black Sea region were equally important in shaping the project's activities and ensuring its results reached the organisations and professionals who could benefit.

Throughout its three-year implementation, RESPONSE maintained an active communication, dissemination and stakeholder engagement programme, creating opportunities for knowledge exchange, co-creation and networking. Through workshops, conferences, scientific meetings, pilot trainings, networking events, strategic collaborations and digital communication channels, the project brought together organisations and professionals involved in marine pollution preparedness and response. These activities helped build an active regional community of practice committed to strengthening cooperation and building capacity for more effective marine pollution preparedness and response across the Black Sea.

1. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND CO-CREATION

Stakeholder participation was a defining feature of the RESPONSE project. National and regional workshops provided a platform for authorities, researchers, non-governmental organisations, emergency responders, universities and maritime organisations to collaborate in the design, review and validation of the project's training materials, Digital Toolkit and Regional Action Plan. Key activities included four national co-creation workshops in partner countries and one regional, a regional online stakeholder workshop on operational planning, regional consultation workshops in Varna, and an interactive World Café session for validating the Regional Action Plan.

These participatory events ensured that the project's outputs reflected real operational needs, while also strengthening cooperation among Black Sea institutions.



BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

2. TRAINING, PILOT ACTIONS AND CAPACITY BUILDING

A major dissemination objective was transforming knowledge into practical skills. The consortium organised pilot training programmes, seminars and practical exercises involving public authorities, civil protection organisations, emergency responders, students, volunteers and environmental professionals.

Training activities addressed conventional marine pollution, pollution related to armed conflicts, wildlife protection, emergency management and operational decision-making. Student and volunteer participation helped broaden the project's long-term societal impact.









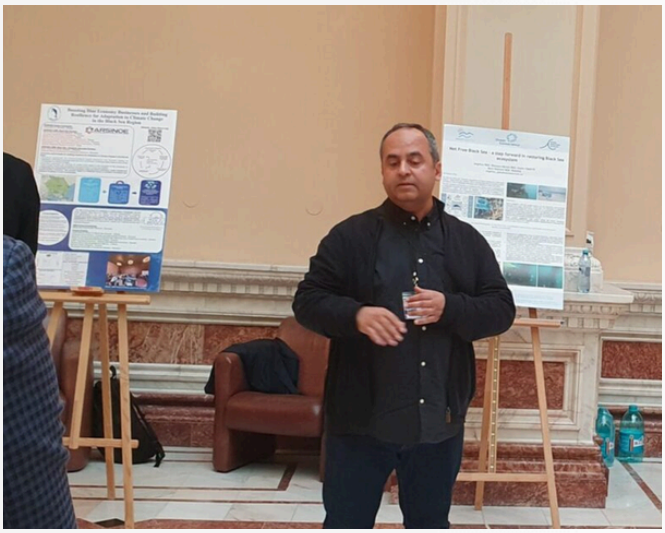


BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

3. REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

RESPONSE maintained a strong presence at major events in the Black Sea region and across Europe. These events provided an opportunity to share project results, exchange experiences, and engage new stakeholders. The most important of these were the Black Sea Common Maritime Agenda Stakeholder Conference in Constanța, the Black Sea 2030 Conference in Burgas, regional consultation workshops in Varna, national seminars and information meetings, scientific conferences, and thematic workshops organised throughout the project.









BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

4. BUILDING SYNERGIES

RESPONSE actively collaborated with other regional initiatives beyond its own activities. Particular emphasis was placed on creating synergies with MARMAPS, the Black Sea Common Maritime Agenda, BS-SEOS and other EU-funded projects supporting marine environmental protection and maritime governance. These collaborations helped maximise project impact, avoid duplication of efforts, and promote knowledge transfer across initiatives.







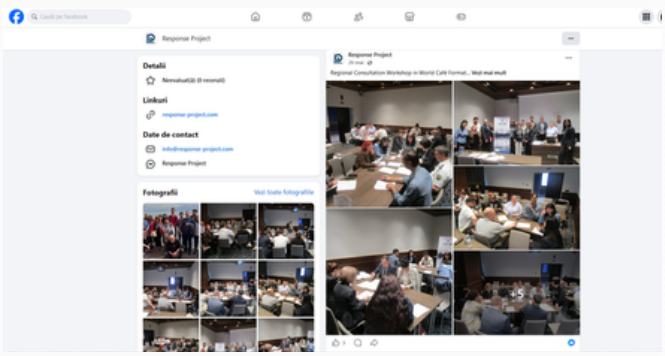
5. DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

Every workshop, conference, pilot training and networking event contributed to improving the project outputs, strengthening institutional cooperation and expanding the regional network of professionals dedicated to marine pollution preparedness and response. By connecting organisations, experts and communities across the Black Sea, RESPONSE has created a lasting foundation for future cooperation and capacity building.

Communication extended well beyond physical events. Throughout the project, dissemination was supported through the RESPONSE website, project news articles, social media channels, public deliverables, and newsletters.

These tools ensured continuous engagement with stakeholders and facilitated broad access to project outputs, including the Digital Toolkit, Replication Guide and Regional Action Plan.





CONCLUSIONS

The RESPONSE project strengthened the knowledge base, practical tools, and framework for cooperation available to organisations involved in marine pollution preparedness and response across the Black Sea region. By bringing together scientific institutions, public authorities, environmental organisations, practitioners and other relevant stakeholders, the project fostered an environment of collaboration for sharing experience, identifying shared requirements and developing practical solutions.

A key achievement of the project is the set of complementary tools and frameworks developed throughout its duration. These include training schemes and core curricula, specialised training materials, the RESPONSE Digital Toolkit, an operational framework for preparedness and response, the Replication Guide, and the Regional Action Plan. Together, these resources provide organisations and institutions with practical materials to support training, preparedness planning, knowledge transfer, cooperation and adapting RESPONSE approaches to different national and regional contexts.

A notable aspect of the RESPONSE project was its participatory and collaborative approach. Stakeholders were engaged throughout the project's various phases through consultations, co-creation activities, training sessions, pilot actions, workshops, and regional exchanges. This helped to ensure that the tools and frameworks developed by the project reflected the practical needs, existing capacities and diverse institutional contexts of the Black Sea countries.

The project also addressed both established marine pollution pressures and emerging challenges, including those associated with armed conflicts. Through training, knowledge exchange, practical exercises, and regional dialogue, RESPONSE strengthened capacities and encouraged greater cooperation among organisations dealing with marine pollution preparedness and response.

All RESPONSE outputs and results are available for organisations and institutions to use, adapt and replicate according to their specific needs and responsibilities. Although these tools and approaches have not yet been formally adopted or integrated into official procedures, they provide a practical basis for future training activities, preparedness initiatives, cooperation mechanisms and policy development.

RESPONSE therefore provides more than just a collection of individual project outputs; it offers a coherent set of practical resources and tried-and-tested collaborative approaches that can continue to support capacity building, knowledge sharing, and regional cooperation. The future value of these resources will depend on how organisations, institutions and stakeholders choose to use, adapt and further develop them in the Black Sea region.



FIND OUT MORE

To learn more about the RESPONSE project, access official reports, or get in touch with the project team:

- Project website: www.response-project.com
- The RESPONSE Digital Toolkit: www.response-toolkit.com
- Facebook: facebook.com/responseblacksea
- YouTube: @RESPONSEproject-t4b

All official reports, Milestones and Deliverables, are freely downloadable from:
www.response-project.com/index.php/resources/

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All project reports are publicly available on the project website and on the European Commission's official project results platform. This ensures full transparency and accountability to European citizens and taxpayers.