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The Protection of the  
Underwater Cultural Heritage

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## ROMANIA

### National Report on underwater cultural heritage

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*Romania is a State Party of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection  
of the Underwater Cultural Heritage*

Situated at the Eastern border of the European Union, with a 245 km long coastline at the Black Sea and 1,075 km of Danube River flowing from the Iron Gates to the Danube Delta, Romania also has a large number of other important inner or border rivers.

The Black Sea has always been a favorable environment for human settlements and trade relations between the native population and the ancient merchants at sea. Among the earliest data regarding settlements bordering the sea, those located in present lakes along the shore can be mentioned. Recent archaeological researches have identified such objectives in ancient bays at Tashaul and Techirghiol. This kind of pillar-dwellings was located around the Black Sea in places where conditions were proper. Even from the 7th century BC the Greek colonization process brought many groups of colonists from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Black Sea, who founded important cities here. Tyras, Olbia, Histria, Tomis, Callatis, Odessos, Sinope are only a few of them. As seafaring can sometimes be very dangerous in these waters, there are many ancient shipwrecks along the continental shelf. Apart from the information gathered until now accidentally about their cargo, few scientific excavations took place to valorize this underwater cultural heritage.



*Ancient ceramics in Tomis harbor area*

This is why Romania has signed the UNESCO Paris Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage, trying to coordinate common international efforts for specific research along its shores. Memorandums of understanding were signed with different Romanian, Bulgarian, Greek and Italian partners, aimed at promoting common projects on this matter. Romanian central and local authorities have also applied for European Union funding for common projects to study not only archaeological heritage, but also the geological and biological evolution in the Black Sea basin.

### **Prehistoric settlements**

More than any other areas, coastal areas have best recorded climate and geo-morphological changes produced over the millennia. The archaeological and geo-morphological research undertaken in the Black Sea basin in the last decades has shown that the prehistoric occupation of the Western Black Sea coast was more sensitive to climate changes (temperature, precipitation) than the mainland.

Found today in areas of lakes and marine lagoons, islands or in the Danube Delta, neo-Eneolithic settlements have enjoyed a more generous landscape in the 5th millennium B.C. Geomorphologic analysis showed that during the Quaternary ice ages, the Black Sea level was 150 m lower than at present, being fed by fresh water rivers. The link to Marmara Sea and indirectly to the Aegean Sea took place in the early Holocene. The moment, the causes and the formation of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits remain controversial. Assumptions have varied from a natural disaster scenario, like the biblical Flood, to a slow process over several centuries. Changes in sea level are corroborated with tectonic movements, visible in some areas on the SW Black Sea coast. First euryhaline (salt water specific) mollusks dating that have inhabited the flooded Black Sea area gives an important indication of salinity growth when the Mediterranean water entered. Also mud deposits were formed in the period from 10,000 to 6500 BP.



### **Greek, Roman and Byzantine times**

Greek colonization in the Black Sea basin began in the 7th cent. BC. Histria is one of the Milesian colonies, where a large area of the city is now flooded by Sinoie Lake. Research took place to map ancient streets and building remains. Development of trade relations resulted along the coast in a relatively large number of shipwrecks, only partially identified on the continental shelf. They need protection most.

During the period from 1962 to 1972 military diver Constantin Scarlat researched in ancient Callatis harbor. Although the original purpose was topographical and geographical submarine landscape research, archaeological materials have aroused interest mainly in the port basin. The only map trying a restitution of the ancient port was drawn by him. Constantin Scarlat claimed that only 15-20% of all existing archaeological remains under the sea were identified.

From 1994 to 1998 the Archeology Museum Callatis - Mangalia and the Metamauco association from Padua carried out underwater archaeological research in Callatis harbor. On this occasion numerous fragments of pottery and architectural fragments have been found. The results were published in Italy.

Other important heritage objectives are the remains of the bridge across the Danube, built at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. AD in Drobeta-Turnu Severin by Roman architect Apollodorus of Damascus before the Roman conquest of Dacia. They were researched by a joint Serbian-Romanian team and part of them identified in the river. A costly project to rebuild it was presented by a Romanian engineer.

In the vicinity of ancient Durostorum (today Silistra / Bulgaria) a fortress used by the Byzantines as a naval base in the 10<sup>th</sup> cent. is nowadays mostly submerged by the Danube River, as it changed its main course during the last millennium.



**PROGRAMS: Explorator.** Established by the Museum for National History and Archaeology Constanta with NGO OCEANIC CLUB, it has 4 major objectives:

- Study of coastal benthic epibiosys as a polyvalent indicator in the evolution of coastal marine area environment quality
- Establishing cooperative relationships between government institutions and NGOs from countries bordering the Mediterranean.
- Identify new areas that require law protection and the creation of a Mediterranean network of exchange between managers of protected underwater areas .
- Education training addressed the age-section of 15-25years old.

Since 1997 this program has developed an educational component, which has become a tradition. Training expeditions for students are organized annually, during which they get acquainted with diving techniques, organizing expeditionary missions, not least learn elements of oceanography, archeology and navigation.

**Arhe-Sub and XmeTi** are other two programs for the support and development of underwater archaeological research in Romanian coastal waters and for archaeological sites in Dobruja promotion.

**B-Watch** is a comprehensive scheme for monitoring biodiversity in protected areas of Dobruja and the influences of natural cycles of climate change on ecosystems of the region.

**PROJECTS** submitted by Romanian cultural institutions for European funding: **Submarine Archaeological Heritage of the Western Black Sea Shelf (HERAS)** and **Submerged Black Sea Cultural Landscapes**. **PARTNERS:** Restoring Ancient Stabiae Foundation – Italy, National Institute of Marine Geology and Geo-ecology - GeoEcoMar – ROMANIA – CONSTANTA Branch, Oceanographic Research and Marine Environment Protection Society “Oceanic-Club” – Constanta – Romania, Oceanographic Institute, Varna, (IO-BAS) - Bulgaria,

Historical Museum Kavarna – Bulgaria, Hellenic Centre for Marine Research – Athens – Greece, CE.FO.P. – Palermo – Italy.

At the Romanian Black Sea coast there are some institutions and NGOs implied in research and protection of not only history, but also biology underwater heritage: the history and marine museums in Constanta and Mangalia, GEOECOMAR Institute (Constanta branch) and NGOs working on the research and protection of marine life.

Apart from ratifying the Paris Convention in 2001, Romanian authorities are also interested in implementing practical measures to protect underwater heritage: there is a heritage protection department at the Constanta County Police Inspectorate, but also at all other county police inspectorates. Among their duties are of course specific actions to protect all heritage objectives by also cooperating with the above mentioned entities.

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