

Black Sea NGO Forum, XIth edition
“Building a More Resilient Civil Society in the Black Sea Region”
12th-14th of November 2018, Brussels

The **Black Sea Synergy** was launched in 2007 as a European policy framework fostering regional cooperation focusing within the region, and between the region as a whole and the European Union. It set out to be a flexible and inclusive policy, aiming at enabling regional dialogue and building trust. One year later, in 2008, the Black Sea NGO Forum was initiated under this policy framework, reflecting the need and potential for regional cooperation among civil society in this region. The forum aimed at creating an open space for debate, sharing mutual knowledge and understanding, communication and cooperation among civil society representatives, governments, international organizations and donors active in the Black Sea region.

Ten years later, **the Black Sea NGO Forum is a driver of change in the region, reuniting more than 1000 participants from 11 countries:** Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, the Republic of Moldova, Turkey, Ukraine, Romania and Russia. The Forum has enabled the participants to share expertise and best practices on a diversity of themes of regional interest (democracy & human rights; local development; youth; children rights; environment; citizen participation etc.), encouraged multi-stakeholder dialogue and facilitated partnerships, thus, contributing to building trust and joint projects, identifying common challenges and opportunities and addressing them together.

The evaluation of the Forum, launched last year during the 10th edition¹, confirmed the effectiveness and potential of the Black Sea NGO Forum’s approach: that **dialogue and networking** leads to joint initiatives and projects, which in turn builds **trust and cohesion**. An overall conclusion of this evaluation emphasized that **the Forum is more relevant and necessary than ever before**, as problems associated with a lack of resilience across the region together with diminishing space and funding for NGOs points to the need for a ‘common vision’ for civil society.

This is the background for the 11th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum, which will be held for the first time in Brussels (Belgium), having as main aim to bring **more visibility on the importance of the Black Sea Synergy** as a policy framework both for the European level, as well as for civil society from this region, especially in the current context of Romania’s Presidency of the European Union Council due to start in the first semester of 2019.

More specifically, the Black Sea NGO Forum 2018 will address the **following objectives:**

- *To gather input from the participants on the main issues and support mechanisms for strengthening regional cooperation among civil society to be addressed by the Black Sea Synergy;*
- *To discuss the role of CSOs in fostering society resilience at the local community level, national and regional level;*
- *To present different monitoring initiatives on enabling environment for CSOs at regional and international level and to explore potential new regional mechanisms which could contribute to supporting a more enabling environment for CSOs;*
- *To explore the relevance of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for supporting regional cooperation (including within the Black Sea NGO Forum, as a regional priority).*

¹ The Black Sea NGO Forum a decade on. Evaluation, impact and perspectives (2017): <http://www.blackseango.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/The-Black-Sea-NGO-Forum-a-decade-on-Evaluation-Impact-and-Perspectives-2017.pdf>