



The Black Sea NGO Forum 2011

"Building a common vision"

**6th - 8th of October 2011,
Bucharest, Romania**

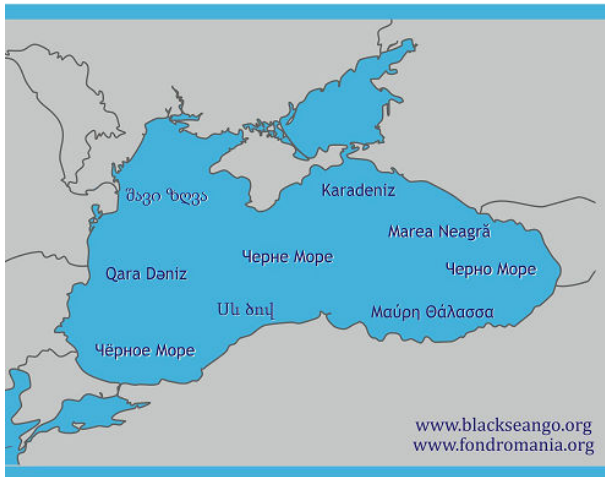
Conference Report

www.BlackSeaNGO.org
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The Black Sea NGO Forum 2011, 6th-8th of October, Bucharest

"Building a common vision"

General information



The 4th edition of the **Black Sea NGO Forum** took place on **6th - 8th of October 2011** in **Bucharest, Romania**. During the event, around **250 participants** from various countries (among which **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Republic of Moldova, Turkey, Ukraine, Russia**) debated on the main regional issues and tried to find common solutions to the current local and regional problems.

The event was organized by the **Romanian NGDO Platform (FOND)**, with support of the **Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, the **Representation of the European Commission in Romania** and the **Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation**.

The forum was attended by NGO representatives, experts and donors from region, Governments, other EU member states active in the wider Black Sea region, embassies, mass-media.

The Black Sea NGO Forum reiterates the importance of the Black Sea as an area of collaboration and interaction beyond the barriers and explores similarities and opportunities for joint action between countries in the Black Sea. The quality of governance, democratization, regional cooperation models, lessons learnt from the transition period, environmental issues, child protection, education, building leadership were some of the themes addressed in this edition.

The Forum aims at increasing the level of dialogue and cooperation among NGOs in the wider Black Sea Region, building links and common projects in the region.

The Black Sea NGO Forum is complementary to and entails different objectives from other regional initiatives (for instance the recently launched Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum). It looks for creating synergies, avoiding overlapping activities and making full use of the civil society potential in the region.

Our **vision** as civil society is that, historically, the Black Sea has been rather a cooperation medium than a barrier. Naturally it has allowed for communication and exchange (either cultural or economic).

Non-governmental organizations in the region are very similar, in terms of origin, path and challenges they are facing. There are numerous **lessons learnt and expertise** which are worth sharing. Non-governmental organizations have the vocation to act jointly to bring **positive social change** for both their countries and for the region as a whole.

The Black Sea NGO Forum was launched in 2008 by **FOND** with the support of the **Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs** and the **Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation** in the framework of the **Black Sea Synergy**.

Opening Session

The session was moderated by **Olivia Baci**, President of the Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND.

One of the main objectives of the Forum is to increase the level of dialogue and cooperation between NGOs and other stakeholders in order to influence the policies in the region.

The Forum remains that unique space where NGOs from all the Black Sea countries and from all fields gather each year to share their concerns, experiences, ideas and solutions. The region needs a vision and we are very well equipped to contribute to shaping it. The Forum is a platform open to all organizations in the region.



Staffan Nilsson-President of the European Economic and Social Committee

*The European Union is one of the major actors and the EU enlargement offered a lot of activities for the region, and also an impulse. **Black Sea Strategy**, **Danube Strategy** and **Eastern Partnership** are the most important documents, entities for the region but we need to create coherence.*

NGOs can have an added value in key sectors such as energy, development, transport and environment. The region faces many common challenges in all these sectors and requires coordination both at European and national level. Civil society and NGOs must be involved in all the processes related to the region and the Government representatives from all the countries have the responsibilities to involve them.

***Black Sea Synergy** offers more possibilities, but they are not sufficiently used. Civil societies know the needs and they are able to build partnerships and to create projects and there are many good examples in this way.*

There is a need to adjust the rules for funding the projects implemented by civil society and make them less bureaucratic. We must encourage the partnerships between private sector and civil society.

Doru Costea- Secretary of State - Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

*The European Strategy for the Black Sea is a long process and we should strengthen the **connection** between **synergy** and **strategy**. There are positive signals for implementing some of the parts of the Strategy and we should look at the half filled part of the glass. Pressing the Government is good but not good enough. We should do things together with the Government.*

*Ten years ago the main aim was to put Black Sea on the NATO's map. It's quite hard to say which are the main characteristics of the Black Sea, the proper word to define now is **interface**. Although there are many challenges such as crisis, illegal trafficking, there is also a potentially positive trend.*

Three guiding lines to be followed in forums like this are: to prioritize the things to be done - use resources more efficiently because good projects bring to life other projects, to stay focus, follow-up.

We must turn this area into that focal area - if we do this, we have done quite a lot for us but also for people far away.

The Black Sea NGO Award for Excellency in promoting regional cooperation in the Black Sea

The Black Sea NGO Award for Excellency in promoting regional cooperation in the Black Sea region is a joint initiative of **the Representation of the European Commission in Romania** and **the Romanian NGDO Platform (FOND)** which aims to become a tradition for the region, now reaching its second edition.

The goal of the award is to enhance the profile of the Black Sea Synergy and its role in proposing a regional, cooperative approach in the region as well as the multilateral dimension of EU external policies.

The initiative aims to promote regional NGO cooperation in the Black Sea region, to promote concrete good practices of NGO cooperation in the region among and for NGOs and to raise the general public's awareness of existing initiatives of NGO cooperation in the Black Sea region.



This year the **Black Sea NGO Award** was shared by two organizations which have been working individually and in partnership to promote regional cooperation and the European values in the Black Sea region and in their own countries - **the Analytical Centre on Globalization and Regional Cooperation from Armenia** and **the ARI Movement from Turkey**. The initiative that has brought the two organizations together is the South Caucasus Young Leaders Summit, which was held for the first time in 2010 in Istanbul and again in 2011 in Tbilisi.

DAY I

The Black Sea Region in 2011 - The State of Affairs

The Black Sea region continues to remain a region with strong differences and various levels of political, economic and social development. While globalization influence a region situated at the crossroads of the Europe and Asia, geopolitics continues to have a decisive weight in the degree of cooperation and regional integration.

The session aimed to review the main political, economic and social developments in the region over the past year, from the civil society perspective.

The session was moderated by **Dimitrios Triantaphyllou** - *Center for International and European Studies at Kadir Has University (Istanbul)*

Discussants:

- *Sergiu Celac, Center for Sustainable Development (Romania);*
- *Traian Chebeleu, Deputy Secretary General, Black Sea Economic Cooperation (Turkey);*
- *Suat Kiniklioglu, AK Party Deputy Chairman of External Affairs (Turkey);*
- *Boris Kuznetsov, Center of International and Regional Policy (Russian Federation);*
- *Alina Inayeh, Black Sea Trust (Romania).*

EU promotes us through its values - the impact of the South is interesting and inspiring. The interest of the EU is for South and not for East. All EU issues are linked; we need to change the paradigm and to think in terms of **trans-region** as well as to keep the interest for the region alive. It's up to us to get the EU involved, to inspire EU to be interested because EU contributes significantly to our cooperation.

The 2020 vision for the Black Sea region recognize the importance of the EU in moving the process along, the most of recommendations can only work if the EU is behind, to push for the process. We need to have a clear, coherent vision on the region.

Has the BS region become more stabile?

Now we have a mixed picture, different from the one of 20 years ago, with **advantages (+)** and **disadvantages (-)**:

- **Positive aspects:** There is a common future for this region to create framework for operation of CS organization, a different geopolitical reality and new political entities. *"Organized civil society is beginning to count a lot in Black Sea region and its regional policies".*
- **Negative aspects:** Frozen conflicts in the region (e.g. the events in August 2008: Russia – Georgia war showed that military force still counts in regional policy); the development of institutions (that depends from region to region); the region identity remains a difficult subject discussed for more than 20 years; the collaboration between civil society and Governments (the major concern of EU should be to find the ways to sustain the civil society initiatives, to help NGOs in this times of crisis).

Sergiu Celac, Center for Sustainable Development (Romania);

Black Sea Economic Cooperation¹ is a complex organization that has an affiliated bank and many working groups. Over the years, BSEC has approached common states of affairs in different domains and has worked for the new **Economic Agenda for future**.

BSEC's main merit is that it brings together at the same table countries that have problems and conflicts among them (transport development in the region is one of the BSEC projects). BSEC has certainly a future because of its potential for dialogue and in organizing a real strategy followed by concrete steps. The major task is to increase the relevance of the organization for all the member states and to find a common ground.

The main problem in this region is the **regional identity**. The frozen-conflicts are slowly melting, making the issue more complicated.

Traian Chebeleu, Deputy Secretary General, Black Sea Economic Cooperation (Turkey)



Three power centres in the BS region: **EU, Russian Federation, Turkey;**

- There are actors in the South who are expecting Turkey to take important steps and finding itself overwhelmed;
- There is the need for an **inter-regional thinking about the Black Sea** – linking Black Sea with the Mediterranean.

Suat Kiniklioglu, AK Party Deputy Chairman of External Affairs (Turkey)

In **Russia** there is not only one single Black Sea strategy - Russia considers the BS region as an area of influence and this is why it focuses on it.

Russia has good relations with Armenia and Ukraine. The relation with Romania and Bulgaria is based on the Black Sea (seen as a new route of fuel for Europe). The relation with Turkey is a very close economic relationship (Turkey is seen as a significant player in the BS region).

Russia is not very much interested in Civil Society, still their interest is increasing. It's very important to bring Russia closer to South Caucasus, Transnistria and the Republic of Moldova.

Boris Kuznetsov, Center of International and Regional Policy (Russian Federation)

The region is very diverse and complicated.

There are **4 main features of the civil society**: the civil society is victim of geopolitics, NGOs are weak as a sector, difficulty in making their voice heard and have poor relations with the Government.

The dynamic between Russia and US will influence the relations in the region.

One very important and positive feature is that NGOs have implemented **cross border and regional projects**.

We need to focus on the main issues and not so much on identity – we need to find regional solutions to regional problems and not the regional identity. We must **build network** among NGOs in order to make them stronger, even if this process is very slow.

Alina Inayeh, Black Sea Trust (Romania)

¹ www.bsec-organization.org

The European Neighbourhood Policy, its Eastern dimension and regional cooperation at the Black Sea. What impact does civil society have in the programming process?

How effective has been the consultation with CSOs on the ENP mid-term review and the ENPI programming? What impact have CSOs' recommendations had on the final documents of the EC/ EEAS? What have been the challenges of the consultation process? Is there any coordination among various national processes?



The session was moderated by **Simon Stoker, Eurostep (Brussels)**.

Discussants:

- Antonella Valmorbida, Association of the Local Democracy Agencies (Strasbourg);
- Dirk Lorenz, Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Moldova (EU);
- Tamar Khidasheli, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (Georgia);
- Erik Gyulazyan, Enterprise and Parliamentary Dialogue International (Armenia).

How can we recognize a civil society? Does our European society promoting social changes? How is the civil society engaged to the cooperation? Does Governments recognize civil society and their role? What is the impact on the EU policies? How the civil society can have an input in policy making? How can we help to improve the collaboration between NGOs and Governments and between NGOs and political parties?

- Civil society goals can't be achieved only with the help coming from Governments' cooperation.
- The civil society has been seen as an instrument for democracy.
- We need to facilitate the dialogue between NGOs and the Governments and to create capacity building for NGOs.

Simon Stoker, Eurostep

- Civil society has an important role in the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern dimension;
- Society changes cannot be achieved only through cooperation with Government or public administration, there is the need to develop partnerships both with societies and Governments;
- There has to be a dimension of cooperation with civil society in every action taken – the Arab Spring demonstrated that the authority can sometimes be the obstacle to reform;
- Is not easy to work with civil society organizations. The organizations are fragile and sometimes caught up in the bureaucracy;
- The main difference now is that is not just about financing the activities, but also about helping them to be more connected and to extend the relations between the NGOs and the Governments of their countries, it's about capacity building;
- The EU is very involved in dialogue with civil society organisations from partners' countries.

John O'Rourke, Head of Division for European Neighbourhood Policy, European External Action Service

In the **Republic of Moldova** there are 2 main issues: the dialogue for human rights and the cooperation work.

- ➔ The Human rights issue – dialogue, developing informal consultations. The Republic of Moldova is an important partner of the EU;
- ➔ The cooperation work: what would be in their vision (civil society) the way for collaboration and how should the Government act in order to facilitate the collaboration with the civil society.

Dirk Lorenz, Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Moldova (EU)

The civil society is frequently consulted: “what is your opinion on this topic...?”, civil society is an important stakeholder for consultation, there is a dialogue with the EU delegation, on a trilateral basis – civil society, Government, European Union.

It is difficult for the NGOs to participate in the decisional process. It requires financial and time resources.

- Participatory democracy is not institutionalized;
- At this moment, the civil society - NGOs have the UE's moral and financial support - this is an advantage;
- There is a structured dialogue among main actors;
- There are think tanks which are influencing decisions;
- Civil society organisations (CSO) bring fresh ideas, solutions;
- Strong political support for Civil Society Forum;

Antonella Valmorbida, Association of the Local Democracy Agencies (Strasbourg)

In **Georgia** the policies are not very consistent and human rights are still violated, though the situation is better than two years ago.

- Structured dialogue with Government representatives – it's a very positive step;
- EU should demand more reforms;
- Civil society recommendations are taking into consideration;

Tamar Khidasheli, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (Georgia)



In **Armenia**, the perception of cooperation is different. The governments can say “yes, we are cooperating”, but for NGOs this may not be enough.

- NGOs don't have the internal capacity to exist without donors,
- A civil expertise is also very important in this moment for Armenia,
- Civil society has a lot to offer, a lot of expertise but it's not enough to push Government to do something, we need to work together, to share responsibility.

Erik Gyulazyan, Enterprise and Parliamentary Dialogue International (Armenia)

Other comments:

In **Ukraine**, the NGOs do not have financial sustainability, being very dependent on donors' grant.

In **Azerbaijan**, civil society is not invited to discussions. UE should organize more seminars, roundtables - for disseminating information. EU should be the bridge between the Government and public.

The Black Sea Region's place in the European Union's regional cooperation

Which are those existing common interests and successful instruments with the highest potential to become a foundation for increased regional cooperation? Which are the challenges and how can they be overcome? Based on other EU regional policies and the experience of the initiatives in the Black Sea region, what are the lessons learnt and alternative approaches with a potential to make an EU integrative approach for the region work?

The session was moderated by **Philipp Fluri, DCAF Geneva (Switzerland)**

Discussants:

- *Traian Ungureanu, Member of the European Parliament (Romania);*
- *Mihnea Constantinescu, General Director, Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs;*
- *H.E. Serge Smessow, Ambassador for the Eastern Partnership and the Black Sea, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France (France);*
- *David Bartels, Head of section for EU External Relations with Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia, German Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*

In 2011 the European Parliament adopted the report called **“A new strategy for the Black Sea”** which is about the need for the EU to implement a new real strategy for the Black Sea region. *“Black Sea is not about fishing, is about strategy, security and energy”*. Currently, EU suffers from a lack of visibility in the area from 3 sources: policies (slow implementation), funding sources, a lack of strategic perception regarding the East.

The main problem in the region is the absence of a coherent, visible, well structured set of policies for the Eastern partners. Even though there are things that are still moving in a structured, coherent manner – environment policies and civil society participation.

Black Sea region is the most important area for Europe, EU, Parliament, European Commission have to commit, there is the need for more initiatives and credibility that could bring the East closer to EU.

Traian Ungureanu, Member of the European Parliament (Romania)

There are 2 dimensions regarding Black Sea – from the strategic point of view and the need for a renewed partnership. New challenges create new opportunities and invite us to look at the Black Sea region with a more open mind because:

- Black Sea could become the necessary regional map for providing to South-Mediterranean and Middle East neighbourhood the merits for democratic, sustainable development;
- Economic and security trends in the enlarged Black Sea area could reach a positive maturity in a short term, bringing a new sense of responsibility.



There is the need for more coordinated synergy among all the initiatives and one of the most important reason to do this is in order to support cooperation, as to have a more effective access to the EU funding and to work together in order to create a responsible climate.

Mihnea Constantinescu, General Director, Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Despite the EU perspective and interest, the reforms in the region will continue because is in the interest of these countries to contribute. There is a clear interest – the economic integration and they are willing to go in this direction. The areas for cooperation are very numerous: **energy, transport, education, health, mobility/migration** and it's not necessary to have a regional identity to cooperate.

One of the main problems is the lack of political will where there are limited results, the regional conflicts and the difficulty to switch from a **bilateral relationship** to **multilateral**. Progress has been made in terms of visa procedures and this must continue.

H.E. Serge Smessow, Ambassador for the Eastern Partnership and the Black Sea, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The **Black Sea Synergy** was launched as an initiative of the German Presidency in order to contribute to stability and fostering cooperation in the region. This Synergy is about the **values** and not about the tools. There are many possibilities and many areas of cooperation, but we need to start with small projects (*See Eastern Partnership*).

Black Sea Synergy is about bringing the countries and civil societies closer, fostering mutual cooperation. The big initiatives must to come from countries in the region and they should find alliance (speak with the Government, make concrete proposals, learn how to use the tools that they already have).

David Bartels, Head of section for EU External Relations with Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia, German Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Other comments:

Most of the regional conflicts have been here for a long time and despite the efforts, we don't have a progress in this way. Regarding visa procedures, it's very difficult to obtain it for a long period, but the trend in positive.

There is a strong need to have a transfer of know-how between the countries, permanent links and communication. EU is needed in the region because is a source for prosperity and stability.



DAY II

Parallel thematic panels

A.1 Where are the leaders? Civil Society Leadership for the Black Sea region

As civil society represents the most forward and key bond for the region, civil society leadership has the potential to transform the region. Over the past few years, a series of initiatives to create and support civil society leadership at national and regional level were carried out by NGOs in several Black Sea countries. Does civil society in the region grow and support leaders? What are the objectives of the existing initiatives? What is their impact? What else is needed? How can civil society leadership be developed in the region?

The session was moderated by **Ionut Sibian**, Civil Society Development Foundation (Romania).

Discussants:

- *Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze, Yalta European Strategy (Ukraine);*
- *Ghia Nodia, Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (Georgia);*
- *Ciprian Stanescu, Aspen Institute (Romania);*
- *Vahan Asatryan, The International Center for Human Development (Armenia);*



In **Ukraine** the situation is not very encouraging, but the civil society has contributed in producing some changes. From the beginning of the presentation, a clear separation has been made between Leadership from Management Skills. There is a certain level of mistrust in the civil society (due to media's ignorance) and a suspicion on the absorption of funds. Also, the legal framework would produce more results if it would be better organized. The purpose of NGOs in this matter should be to build a private-public partnership and to increase the level of leadership by developing competences. There is however a positive trend, there is a growing number of legitimate and competent leaders.

Ivanna Tsintsadze, Yalta European Strategy (Ukraine)

The leadership in the NGO sector in **Georgia** has seen a spectacular development, as it has entered the Governance and the opposition, but despite this positive outcome the civil society is still dissatisfied and critical towards public institutions. The Rose Revolution is seen by some to be a "civil society revolution", as a result the new political leadership comes from civil society, having an NGO background. Other NGOs chose to be part of the opposition and act as watchdog for the current Government. NGOs are seen as "agents of change"/ "agents of innovation" promoting a more effective government, a "user-friendly state" and fighting against corruption, but they are not an "agent of democracy"/ "agent of pluralism" as the Freedom House's ratings on democracy in Georgia show (democracy ratings are not higher). There also is a paradox of influence and expectations from the NGOs, which have become a small elite group or "the new aristocracy" and this is not necessarily because power corrupts but because NGOs are not membership based, they don't represent groups of people (although they try to reach out to citizens and listen more to society). So, at this moment, we can't structure the change, but we can embrace the strengths of the NGO sector: innovation, new ideas, defending values.

Ghia Nodia, Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (Georgia)

Romania has had a problem of communication between the Government and the Civil Society, but also among themselves. Therefore, NGOs and Government should discuss more about common problems and common solutions. There is almost no official or permanent dialogue/ cooperation between civil society entities in the region. There is more than the seaside to unite the countries in the region - the common problems in the region and finding common solutions to find an identity for the region. In recent years, the Romanian Civil Society is stronger, although due media intolerance, it is no longer recognized as an agent of change. A part of the media when recognizing the merits of NGOs, they politicize their success.

A solution to grow leadership is to invest in competences of the NGOs as to have convincing leaders.

A new leader should be able to bound with the past and with the future in the same time and convince others to do so. There is the need to reconfigure the core values, because without them, the vision will not be sustainable.

Ciprian Stanescu, Aspen Institute (Romania)

There is a new kind of leadership, especially those leading social media, after its boom worldwide. So, new technology affects the dynamics of the new leaders. In **Armenia**, a network of public leaders has established a platform for 150 young leaders from the NGO sector (Momentum Network). So, social media leaders are able to attract more supporters faster than usual. Civil society is facilitating the dialogue and mobility with leaders across different sectors. There shall appear a new kind of leadership, “transformative” leadership due to a more enabling environment.

There is a need of a generation shift among leaders - new generation of leaders thinks and acts differently; they are more energetic and more confidence. The old generation is still very present in the political arena, and they are seen as instrumental from the new leaders, who themselves also lack confidence of being the faces of political and social sectors. In Armenia there is a great interest from the politicians, businessmen and media people in the civil society especially because NGOs provide and facilitate a space for dialogue among the leaders from the different sectors.

Vahan Asatryan, The International Center for Human Development (Armenia)

A.2 East meets South

Transitions to democracy

2011 has seen a wave of “jasmine” revolutions across Northern Africa and the Middle East. Civil society has been at the forefront of the movements throughout the region. A difficult transition period to democracy is expected to follow, as it happened in the post-communist countries from Central and Eastern Europe.

What has been the role of civil society in the democratic movements across Northern Africa and the Middle East? How can the experience of transition to democracy in post-communist countries serve to newly emerged democracies in Northern Africa and the Middle East? What prospects for East-South civil society cooperation does the new context offer? What are the priorities of civil society in Northern Africa and the Middle East and how do they connect to the ENP and other regional strategies?



The session was moderated by **Daniela Diaconu**, National Democratic Institute, Egypt Office.

Discussants:

- *Ahmed Galai*, League for the defence of Human Rights (Tunisia);
- *Arda Batu*, ARI Movement (Turkey);
- *Cristian Pirvulescu*, Pro Democracy Association (Romania);
- *Philippe Jahshan*, Solidarité Laïque (France) ;
- *Daniela Diaconu*, National Democratic Institute, Egypt Office

The 14th of January in Tunisia, was the so called Jasmine Revolution, which didn't reflect the reality of the Tunisian revolution. The appellation “jasmine revolution” is more a touristic name, used to express the events in the North Africa. In this concern it is necessary to keep a pragmatic and a regional approach to this context, having in mind that each revolution has its own particularity: Egyptian revolution, Syrian revolution, Tunisian revolution etc.

In Tunisia, **2 directions** could be seen:

- The axe of human rights infringement during the two dictatorial and repressive regimes (the corruption became the image of the entire country);
- The fight of the population against the oppression of the dictatorial regime.

The difficulties and challenges in Tunisia from the local to regional level: the existence of an unequal welfare, false numbers in the economical reports, the instable security climate, lack of an electoral law based on equality between men and women.

As regards the relation with the European Union - the revolution opened the path towards a Europe which showed its solidarity (with a neighbourhood policy based on human being and human solidarity); from the economic point of view, for Europe, Tunisia was considered to be the “good student” of North Africa.

The civil society can play an important role against the progress of any kind of dictatorship. Unfortunately, the European system was an alibi for the Egyptian, Libyan and Tunisian dictators. From a geopolitical point of view, Tunisia has as neighbours a violent Algeria and an unpredictable Libya. In this context of instability, the free circulation from one country to another is difficult.

Ahmed Galai, League for the defence of Human Rights (Tunisia)

Why the Arabian spring came up? - There were problems related to economical freedom, political freedom, fights against corruption. The strong anchor with the European Union - what the EU did was to push forward the regulation/normalization of the relation between the civil and military. It took out the military from politics. Helsinki (1999) was a turning point for Turkey and the reforms were pushed relatively fast. In the 2000, Turkey coped with the 21 century democratic notion. Tunisia can be a good example for Turkey.

Turkey should not turn his back to the east.

Arda Batu, ARI Movement (Turkey)

Stereotypes are sometimes similar, Tunisian revolution is a spontaneous revolution and France was an important country in the process. The situation was quite complicated for revolutionaries who didn't have a political approach with the West and the USA policy (seen as an ambiguity because on one side it refuses to validate the Palestinian state, but on the other side it tries to sustain the Arab revolutions).

There are many types of transitions, the easiest/ most stable one involves several steps for democratization. *Liberalization*: the transfer of power to groups less attached to dictatorship (Morocco and Jordan are good examples because this process began under the influence of Tunisian revolution).

Tunisia is the only country with a cleavage between secularism and religiosity. The effects of Government policy have ensured economic stability but in the same time the social tensions have deepened. In Tunisia there is no party to take the majority.

Electoral law is one of the most democratic because it provides the distribution (women, men, small parties) and the basis for democracy. This law was negotiated in the Council where participated representatives of the League for Human Rights. Egypt has very small chance for democracy, in the context where Muslim Brotherhood dominates the political life. It remains crucial to strengthen the civil society in these areas.

Cristian Pirvulescu, Pro Democracy Association (Romania)

Some of the common challenges for both the North and for the South are: the Arab countries are almost all of them young countries (they have 50-100 years of existence and independence), and therefore identity questions arise; the socio-economic integration, access of the work market; access to citizenship, democratic debates and democratic expression. In the Mediterranean partnership, Tunisia was considered to be an economic success, the "best student" from the Southern countries.

The European Union should reconsider its position about the vision of the common space, because in the end the development concerns us all. The European societies should reinforce the civil movements, the citizenship and democratic movements. The civil society in Tunisia will become a real control and vigilant organ in the transition process. From a socio-economic point of view: there is the need to reduce inequalities and to make investment in the developing of the poorest territory in the transition countries in order to avoid extremism risks.

The United Nations realities today remind us that we will have to take together the option to help the peace reinstall in the region, in the Near East, especially in the Israel - Palestinian region. If not, the extremist movements will have a lot to gain from these crises. At European level, there is a discourse full of paradoxes: on one side there is support for the democratic process and on the other hand EU stays completely blind to a conflict situation which unfortunately will be still nurtured if the identity conflict between the Occident and the Orient is not solved.

Philippe Jahshan, Solidarité Laïque (France)

One element of success in all the transitions countries is maybe an adequate mechanism for social dialogue, which includes relevant voices that have something to say about relevant areas for reforms in the society. Meaningful public participations in the reform process, in identifying solutions, priorities, ways in which different countries can relate to different experiences from other countries should be on our list of challenges.

Daniela Diaconu, National Democratic Institute, Egypt Office

A.3 Does social matter? Monitoring and advocacy in the social field

While for most of the Central and Eastern European countries the economic crisis hit at a moment of growth and successful political and social transformations, for many of the countries in the Black Sea region the crisis overlapped with the never ending transition process and incipient reforms. As the international community attention is generally set on macroeconomic and political changes, monitoring and advocacy in the field of social policies lies often at the bottom of agendas throughout the region.

What are the existing initiatives and instruments to support monitoring and advocacy in the field of social policies in the region? How can they be strengthened? How can the coordination at regional level be increased?

The session was moderated by **Ancuta Vamesu, Civil Society Development Foundation (Romania).**

Discussants:

- *Victoria Stoiciu, Friedrich Ebert Foundation (Romania);*
- *Doina Crangasu, Caritas Confederation (Romania);*
- *Rada Ivanova Elenkova, The Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation (Bulgaria);*
- *Kenan Aslanli, Public Finance Monitoring Center (Azerbaijan)*



Friedrich Ebert Foundation is a German political social democratic foundation who is very much concerned about social issues. Starting with 2007, Romania had a huge economic grow, the economical dynamic was positive, but in spite this, inequality increased - the social problems were there, but nobody did anything for them. The situation changed, especially since the crises had occurred. The change came from a different direction, the ones who started to push ahead the social issues, the politicians from the governmental party, the right wing popular party, had started to attack the social issues when they had to reduce the public deficit and to implement the so-called austerity measures imposed by the agreement with International Monetary Fund.

Statistics show (Eurostat etc,) that Romania is spending very few money on social protection, the last place in the EU. E.g. for a long time the Government was stating that we have in Romania 12 mil assisted persons. Romania has 20 mil populations. How do they get to this number? They have included the pensioners and all other forms of social protection, not social assistance. This issue will be brought on the public agenda by the politicians of oppositions.

Victoria Stoiciu, Friedrich Ebert Foundation (Romania)

Caritas Romania represents the ten Caritas organizations active in Romania (is a member of Caritas Europe and Caritas International). Caritas Romania has developed over 200 public partnership contracts and almost 27% of the national budget represent subsidies from the state and public funds, based on public competition.

Caritas started the work in Romania, after 1989, as a charity organisation. In time, in 1993, when the confederation was created, there were developed well structured social programmes; currently Caritas provides social services for the children in need from rural areas, Roma families and communities to elderly. In Romania Caritas works with people who need social assistance, being the most exposed persons to poverty, to social exclusion, because for a physical disability, living in the remote area, they are excluded from a social normal life.

It is not sufficient to provide qualitative social assistance respecting the standards, the rights of human being, but the most important is communicating what is happening from the grassroots to the decision making level. Is very

important to share ideas with other NGOs within Europe or from other part of the world in order to have a common voice. The main direction followed is the social inclusion and combating the poverty. The Caritas Europe agenda shapes somehow the agenda of the EU.

Doina Crangasu, Caritas Confederation (Romania)

The popularity of the social field in **Bulgaria** and in the Black Sea region is not well developed and many people cannot benefit from it, the bureaucracy is a burden or there is insufficient knowledge about the options. In Bulgaria the social field is characterized by insufficient annual budgeting, shading paper work and few opportunities for the young people. Another problem consists in the lack of an adequate legislation. There is no law on volunteering - social services should be connected with volunteering; no law on gender equality, with a right perspective in the domestic sphere. The capacity of NGOs to provide advocacy and policy work is not well developed. A positive aspect is when the NGOs belong to a network, they are stronger and the emergence of more and more networks is increasing the individual NGO capacity.

Rada Ivanova Elenkova, The Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation (Bulgaria)

Civil society sector should play the crucial role in social policy and all three phases of this policy - in opinion-making phase, in policy-making phase and decision-making phase. Especially in this period of economic crisis, additional political will is needed and the role of the civil society can reinforce this pressure to Government to demonstrate some additional political will.

Annual report on social issues: last year topic was about the economic fall, Millennium Development Goals and the need of a new deal². These organisations put forward a lot of indicators. In order to monitor the social policy, we need some principals, dimensions, indicators. The most effective advocacy work for social policy is the evidence and research based advocacy.

From 2006, there has been created national budget group in **Azerbaijan**, the first professional budget group and budget analyses in the post soviet area. They monitor the infrastructure and the social policy which are financed by the state budget: report on education policy, health policy and targeted social assistance. There is an initiative to continuing the alternative budget - first sectors will be the social sectors: health, social assistance and education with partners from Bulgaria, Philippines and the United States.

The US Department of Social and Economic Affairs suggested four directions: social impact; cost of effectiveness; Governmental issues; sustainability and affordability.

Kenan Aslanli, Public Finance Monitoring Center (Azerbaijan)

Comments:

- In Romania when we talk about social services or social field is social, gender very rarely appears on the agenda (the social field is very feminized);
- The women are involved in what we call the direct provision of services and less in the management level;
- There is the need to have a strong network/platform on the social field;
- Networking is a new and innovative tool to act in these fields;
- Trade unions are important social actors in this field.

² More about the reports on the www.socialwatch.org.

A.4 Child protection policies and cooperation in focus

Too many children in the Black Sea region are trafficked, exploited or abandoned in crumbling institutions. Caring for children is not only a human concern: gaps in child protection systems cause profound challenges for long-term prosperity and inclusive growth. Civil society organizations and coalitions can have a fundamental role in calling governments and other national and international stakeholders to develop, fund and implement appropriate national laws, policies, regulations and services for the vulnerable children living in our region.

What are the existing NGO coalitions for children's rights and protection? Do they need to be reinforced? Should we think about regional level coordination at a time when the European Union, one of the biggest influencers in the region, intends to reinforce its partnership with the region's societies'?

The session was moderated by **Mirela Oprea, World Vision International (Romania)**

Discussants:

- Nabil Seidov, NGO Alliance for Children's Rights (Azerbaijan);
- Bogdan Simion, The Romanian Federation of NGOs for Children (FONPC);
- Zino Kore, Albanian BKTF Coalition;
- Mariana Ianachevici, NGO Alliance in the Field of Child and Family Social Protection (Republic of Moldova);
- Mira Antonyan, Child Protection Network (Armenia);
- Sasa Stefanovic, Network of Child Focused CSOs (Serbia);
- George Bogdanov, National Network for Children (Bulgaria)



“Today's children are the citizens tomorrow, of tomorrow's world. Their protection and development is the prerequisite for the future development of the Black Sea member countries. Empowerment of the younger generation should be a primary goal of national development”.

Recommendation 41 from 1999 of the Black Sea Economic Organization: the legal framework for child protection in the BSEC member countries.

When Romania applied for membership to the EU, many positive transformations occurred in the child protection system. Basically, the EU was very instrumental in promoting the Child Welfare reform – Child Protection reform – in this country. Can we use the sort of influence that the EU can have in a country to the benefit of the children in this region? Can we learn something from this, and given that we have other countries in the region that are now candidate countries like Serbia or Albania here represented, or countries in the region that fall under the Eastern Partnership Program like Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan, Moldova, Ukraine and so on.

Mirela Oprea, World Vision International (Romania)

BKTF Coalition was founded in 2001, by nine NGOs working in the field of anti-trafficking of human being (27 members in 2011). In **Albania** are three coalitions for child protection: Child Alliance (130 members, founded by UNICEF); Children Education Network; United for Child Care and Protection Coalition. BKTF Coalition's vision is a society which respects the children rights and is responsible for their protection and wellbeing. The coalition's field activities are: advocacy and lobby for the elaboration and implementation of laws, policies and strategies for the protection of vulnerable children in Albania; strengthening and promoting the child protection system through

institutions mechanisms, models and practices which address child protection issues in Albania as well as through exchanging information expertise and experience; contributing to the promotion of social inclusion of children and communities in the development and improvement of the situation in relation to child protection; contributing in capacity building of children, civil society and communities on child protection. There is a very weak child protection system in Albania with a new Children Rights law³.

Zino Kore, Albanian BKTF Coalition

In **Armenia** the major problem is the high number of institutionalized children: 4100 children. Other issues include: lack of preventive and early intervention services; lack of alternative services; high member of refugee children, living in inadequate conditions; increasing number of abandoned children; insufficient budget for social issues but particularly for child protection issues; no system to support children who are victims of different kinds of violence. **Child Protection Network** promotes children rights, capacity building for members, advocacy activities on many levels. It has elaborated a protocol of cooperation with the Government and has no membership fee; everything is done on voluntary basis.

Mira Antonyan, Child Protection Network (Armenia)

There are common issues in this field in Albania, Armenia and Azerbaijan. There are many common players and stakeholders in the region of the Black Sea, including the European Union, United Nations and Council of Europe.

NGO Alliance is more an advocacy organisation, a policy promotion organisation than a watchdog. The NGO Alliance and its 85 members have already organised 3.000 courses and seminars in all the region of the country.

Nabil Seidov, NGO Alliance for Children's Rights (Azerbaijan)

Bulgaria started working on child protection with nearly ten years delay, so the Parliament ratified the convention in 1991 - that means the adoption of the Bulgarian Child Law took place only in 2000. The main problems in this field: large scale institutions where are still living many children (nearly 7000 children are living in institutions), poor case management in child protection departments in Bulgaria. **National Network for Children's** objective: to unite the NGO sector and to create a sector much more influential in the policy level.

George Bogdanov, National Network for Children (Bulgaria)

In **Republic of Moldova** children represent vulnerable groups: children left behind, abused and neglected children, children in institutions, disabled children, Roma children, children from rural areas, children from Transnistria region, etc. NGO's response is to provide services to most vulnerable groups. Also, there are joint advocacy actions: on law on social services and law on adoptions; strategy on child care reform; child protection system reform⁴.

Mariana Ianachevici, NGO Alliance in the Field of Child and Family Social Protection (Republic of Moldova)

The FONPC (**The Romanian Federation of NGOs for Children**) aims to be the main interlocutor of the state specialized in developing and redefining policies for child welfare of a child rights perspective using and developing a coherent and comprehensive experience and expertise of its members.

Founded in 1997, FONPC exists along with and for its members, more than 100 NGO s for the benefit of children and communities. The strategic development directions of FONPC include the following areas of action: promoting

³ See the Power Point presentation, www.fondromania.org.

⁴ See the Power Point presentation, www.fondromania.org.

children rights on the public policy agenda and the involvement in the public policy development projects, by including the children rights in all public policies.

In 2006, there were 78.000 children living in institutions or family type care. In 2010 there were still over 72.000 children deprived by the parental care. Taking into account the reduced number of children borne over the past 20 years; the percentage has increased since the 1989. The prevention component within the child protection system is still a challenge to be addressed. There is a need of balance between the sectorial and intersectorial services, preventive and restorative services, financial support and social assistance, medical services and psychosocial services, family center services and supported solutions outside the family, centralized and decentralized services.

In terms of human resources issues, there is an insufficient number of qualified staff, poor professional training and a lack of coordination and collaboration between the professional working in various fields, an insufficient level of governance, lack of participatory processes. The NGOs have a significant role in building and developing the social community, which are critical for a fair functioning of democracy and marketing economy.

Bogdan Simion , The Romanian Federation of NGOs for Children (FONPC)

In **Serbia**: there are serious problems regarding poverty, exclusion of children and the phenomenon of invisible children. **Network of Child Focused CSOs** started to work together as a cluster of civil society organizations.

The added value for regional cooperation is to cooperate with network and organizations in order to increase the visibility and to improve the status of children.

There is a need for raising visibility and influence, building credibility and the capacity for advocacy, maintain activities, develop expertise, and open for other civil society organizations in Serbia and for regional cooperation and networking with related networks.

Sasa Stefanovic, Network of Child Focused CSOs (Serbia)

Other comments:

In **Georgia** – there are some small networks, working groups that work on particular issues together with the government, but the process is not very structured. Georgia shares the same problems: street children, children with disabilities and deinstitutionalization.

In **Armenia** - the necessity of having child protection came from the *fragmentation* of relations between NGO and Government.

There is the need to have a regional coalition bringing all national level coalitions together that will speak with one voice about this region.

Next steps: work together for creating this regional coalition, to encourage BSEC to update the recommendations that were given in 1999.



B.1 Democratization in the Black Sea region: the renewed great expectations

A vibrant civil society is essential for democracy and civil society organizations are natural allies in supporting and triggering reform. Both the ENP review and recent political developments demonstrate a need to move beyond partnerships with governments towards partnerships between societies. These are, however, issues that require more agile support mechanisms and higher levels of human resources than the usual co-operation programs. The need for stronger values-based activities to support and sustain democratic transformation and a broader outreach to civil society and population is visible in the Black Sea region.

The session was moderated by **Ilona Mihaies, Euroregional Center for Democracy (Romania).**

Discussants:

- *Vira Nanivska, International Centre for Policy Studies (Ukraine);*
- *Tamar Arveladze, International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (Georgia);*
- *Ulvi Ismayil, USAID Azerbaijan;*
- *Ion Manole, PromoLex, Republic of Moldova;*

What changes are to be expected? What are the challenges for civil society? What are NGOs priorities and needs? What are the most recent lessons learnt? How can NGOs prepare, cooperate and strengthen their work throughout the region?

Democratization entails several key principals: limit and control the power of the state, monitoring the activity (lobby), monitoring the elections; public participation by educating people; erase tolerance and promote respect for each other and moderation, develop programs for democracy citizenship, retrain teachers; “new leaders” are so much needed, provide a training ground for leaders; provide new forms of participation; Civil Society can help to inform on the importance of public issues and bring them in front of the authorities.

Ilona Mihaies, Euroregional Center for Democracy (Romania)

The main obstacle of **Ukraine** when referring to the efforts made by civil society to promote democratization is the total desovietization of public institutions. This obstacle could be overcome by a revolution in the public sphere. While in Georgia, there should be developed partnerships between NGOs at local level, more efforts to improve civic education and also a different approach in the area of elections.

Vira Nanivska, International Centre for Policy Studies (Ukraine)/Tamar Arveladze, International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (Georgia);

In **Azerbaijan**, one of the most important needs in order to strengthen the efforts of civil society is to train the leaders and have more ownership. Also, in Azerbaijan there are special funds allocated to develop the regional NGOs, by reaching out NGOs and trying to bring together communities as to encourage larger national structures, which have to be more proactive.

Ulvi Ismayil, USAID Azerbaijan

There is a practical vision on democracy. Democratization includes expertise and it's impossible without civic participation. In the Black Sea area there are regions in which the Human Rights are violated, like in Transnistria and these facts put in a bad light the values promoted by democracy. The mentality and the attitude of the citizens in those areas are being hurt by these processes.

Ion Manole, PromoLex, Republic of Moldova

B.2 Policy thinking for policy shaping in the Black Sea region

Is there a community of policy thinking in the Black Sea region? How effective are think tanks or higher education organizations, experts, other forms of advocacy NGOs in the region in influencing and shaping national or regional policies? What is the impact of ideas generated by experts and organizations from the Black Sea region and to what extent and how do they reach the agenda of the major capitals of the world [Bruxelles, Washington, Moscow, Berlin, Paris, London]?

The session was moderated by **Igor Rekunov, Expert European projects (Russian Federation)**.

Discussants:

- *Jeff Lovitt, Policy Association for an Open Society (Prague);*
- *Hrant Kostanyan, Centre for European Policy Studies (Brussels);*
- *Cristian Ghinea, Romanian Center for European Policy (Romania);*
- *Jana Kobzova, The European Council on Foreign Relations (London);*
- *Niyaz Yagubov, Economic Research Center (Azerbaijan);*
- *Radu Dudau, University of Bucharest (Romania).*

PASOS is a network of 50 different independent policy centres spanning basically the former communist world, so Central-Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Its main goal is to strengthen independent think-tanks to ensure the lessons of transition are understood, shared, and applied, set out its values, short-term and medium-term objectives, and strategic approach.

PASOS focus on projects on visa liberalization (Western Balkans), as well as Euro-Atlantic integration and EU external relations, in particular EU relations with the Eastern Neighbourhood, Russia and Central Asia, and the European integration of South-East Europe and Turkey. Its activities include: policy focus and monitoring, expertise in different areas, communication, seminars in understanding the EU policy making. Also, PASOS, as member of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum's Steering Committee, is linking the interests of its partners from the EAP with the policy makers in Brussels, promoting a more policy focused projects together with monitoring.

Jeff Lovitt, Policy Association for an Open Society (Prague)

The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) is one of the major think tanks in Brussels specialising in EU affairs. It is divided into ten different departments, one of them focusing on EU Foreign and Security Policy and the Neighbourhood Policy.

CEPS has always participated in initiatives, such as the Black Sea Forum and tried to bring its impact on the policy shaping within the region. In June 2006, CEPS has published a policy brief, **"Synergy for Black Sea regional cooperation"**, and right in 2007 the Commission came up with a document that was titled "Black Sea Synergy" and the similarity you can see also in the content. Though, most of the points mentioned by the Commission were not implemented. What CEPS promotes is to focus on those issues that are implementable and real. One of the issues on CEPS is researching revolves around the relation between Black Sea Synergy and the Eastern Partnership.

Hrant Kostanyan, Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS)

The mission of the CRPE, founded in 2009, is to promote Romania as an influential leader in the development of EU agendas and policies. Another mission is to advance the Europeanization processes in Romania and to promote the European citizenship by providing expertise in various fields and by initiating or participating in public debates.

The Romanian Centre for European Policies worked extensively on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, on corruption issues (paper on the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism – criticizing the Government's position) and on the relation with the Republic of Moldova (research on the Romanian policy granting citizens to people from the Republic of Moldova).

Cristian Ghinea, Romanian Center for European Policy (Romania);

The ECFR, founded in 2007, does not see itself as a think tank as it focuses more on advocacy work rather than writing policy briefs and reports. As part of its Council, the ECFR has numerous members which had or still occupy important positions such as prime-ministers or foreign affairs ministers. These members are the main supporters of the centre's advocacy work, by efficiently promoting their reports in their own countries.

The main issue is how to turn the presence in the region into power, how to influence the things that are going on, the development, how to foster the change that the EU and its partners in the region would like to see with fewer resources and much less political attention

Jana Kobzova, ECFR (UK);

The Economic Research Centre from Azerbaijan is a policy research oriented think tank, founded in 1999. There are several obstacles for think tanks in Azerbaijan, such as: the national legislation governing NGOs, problems regarding the Soviet legacy and also funding the think tanks. The problems of NGOs in Azerbaijan stands from the lack of an appropriate legislative framework for their activities and constraints of implementation of existing laws and a conservative attitude of the Government especially towards NGOs working on human rights and freedom of expression. There is the need for more EU involvement especially institutional support for initiating more comprehensive projects and activities.

Networking between Black Sea region think tanks would be better for the their activities at local, national levels, but this depends first of all on the funding opportunities and tools of EU and Black Sea region in particular in terms of improving capacity of local NGOs to organise thematic forums and platforms for NGOs to share their views.

Niyaz Yagubov, Economic Research Center (Azerbaijan);

Early this year, prof. Dudau, together with a couple of colleagues started a think tank, Romania Energy Centre, dedicated to analyses in the energy policy field. The goal of this think tank is not so much to aim at influencing European institutions' policies, but to be relevant for the decision making environment in Romania regarding energy policy, to have a qualified opinion in the debates involving the private sector and the Government about the effects of energy policy. This kind of initiatives, such as the Black Sea NGO Forum, are important for new think tanks to network and explore opportunities to collaborate on common interest projects with other similar NGOs in the region.

Radu Dudau, University of Bucharest (Romania).



B.3 Education is the key?

Alternative education initiatives to complement and support the formal education systems in the Black Sea countries are extremely important to overcome marginalization of vulnerable categories of children and youth who, because of poverty, conflicts and discrimination are excluded from the benefits of an effective and empowering education. NGOs have been at the forefront of providing alternative education services for these categories (particularly for children and youth in rural areas, for those belonging to minority groups, refugees and IDPs).

What is the level of priority that Governments and international actors/donors give to youth and education in the region? Do existing cooperation programs have a positive impact? What else is needed? What good practices should be promoted at regional level?

The session was moderated by **Gabriela Alexandrescu, Save the Children (Romania)**.

Discussants:

- *Nurdan Şahin, Education Volunteers Foundation (Turkey);*
- *Leslie Hawke, Ovidiu Rom Foundation (Romania/USA);*
- *Sargis Grigoryan, Centre for Leadership Development (Armenia);*
- *Corina Mighiu, expert in the Foundation for Civil Society Development (Romania.)*

This session focused on NGOs work and initiatives in the field of education - whether it is complementarily in the form of education systems or in cooperation with schools or with the state authorities in order to overcome the marginalization of vulnerable categories of children and youth. Also, it brought into discussion how can NGOs cooperate effectively with local and central Government.

Education Volunteers Foundation (Turkey) provides non-formal education to children and supports them to become individuals who are responsible, active citizens against any kind of discrimination and who celebrate diversity.

The Foundation is in all parts of Turkey, implementing 17 standard programs in the area of personal development and social values, language, arts and communication and cognitive and intellectual area. In addition to that, these are all developed by academicians, but also with support from their own education department. One of the great added values of the foundation is working with a large basis of volunteers (around 50.000 people), encouraging so active citizen participation. Also the foundation does not own any endowments, relying mostly on public fundraising – so far the foundation has managed to receive donations from more than half million donors/individuals. This can be considered to be a best practice which could be transferred also in other countries of the Black Sea region.

Nurdan Şahin, Education Volunteers Foundation (Turkey)

After previous experiences and research, one of the main findings when trying to prevent school abandonment is that programs are much more successful if the children start earlier with the learning process and they get some intellectual stimulation before they're six years old. So, preschool has been demonstrated in many studies to be linked to reduced school abandonment, less unemployment and lower crime rates. This also represents one of the main activities of **Ovidiu Rom Foundation**. In implementing their projects they first approach local authorities for support, then train teachers in child-centered educational methods (especially in rural areas) and involve parents in education programs. The basic beliefs of the foundation are that most disadvantaged children can't succeed in

school without sound early education and incentives to parents to change habits and induce the children's daily attendance. Also, the foundation makes all the efforts to stay in the communities they're working in, as long as needed, in order to have a sustainable contribution to those communities. The success of this program has determined the foundation to start advocating for its introduction in the public education policies.

Leslie Hawke, Ovidiu Rom Foundation (Romania/USA)

The **Centre for Leadership Development** has as main priority to meet adaptive challenges for young leaders to support Armenia in the community through education, pro-bono legal services for refugees, children, including dissymmetry cases and to provide knowledge-based activities and tools for local communities and state authorities to think and to work in the field of child protection. The centre has a positive experience working with task forces within the local communities, with entities which are responsible for the provision of legal services. After working with the state authorities on different levels, the Centre came to the conclusion that the best practical tool is to train young leaders, young lawyers, while studying at the universities, or graduating from the university, to work within those task forces.

The goal of the Centre for Leadership Development is to provide life-changing tools for young students to support local communities on those issues and act further on behalf of their deepest values and to maximize the chances of success and minimize the chances of being taken out of the action. The Centre for Leadership Development supports a strategy development in terms of education, and promotes strategic thinking in the government, which is very crucial for the governments which are in transition.



Sargis Grigoryan, Centre for Leadership Development (Armenia)

Since 2005, **Civil Society Development Foundation** has initiated a project called "Children and youth, promoters of civil society". The project aims to support children and youth 7 to 20 years old to develop skills and abilities to be able to take part in the life of the community as citizens. It was an innovative project at that time because it aimed to develop life skills in all categories of children, not only institutionalized children as it was the case before.

It started from the fact that the Romanian former school system is based on transmitting a lot of information to the pupils, but it does not help them to develop skills, to fully act as persons in the society. The children when they first come to school, they come from different environments, some of them don't have the preschool experience, and therefore, sometimes they have basic needs - they lack basic skills, like even communication. Through the project, trainers trained around 185 professionals, not only NGO people, but also educational staff so that they can be able to develop in their turn other life skills programs. Within the same project, small grants were given to small organization or institutions at local level in order to develop project at local level in order to respond to this need of the life skills program. This initial project was followed by a more ambitious project, called "Innovative methods in training educational staff for developing life skills for children", aiming at introducing in the official school curricula life skills classes, as part of the formal school classes.

Corina Mighiu, expert in the Foundation for Civil Society Development (Romania)

B.4 Towards a Green Black Sea region

The panel aims to explore the current situation of environmental NGOs and NGO networks in the Black Sea region, the main challenges faced by environmental movements and to identify commonalities for further regional coordination and cooperation.

The session was moderated by **Csibi Magor, WWF (Romania)**.

Discussants:

- *Emma Gileva, Black Sea NGO Network (Bulgaria);*
- *Kakha Bakhtadze, Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (Georgia);*
- *Costel Popa, Ecopolis Centre for Sustainable Policies (Romania)*

The declining state of the Black Sea environment is a obvious fact, especially in the recent years, and the amount of effort and commitment not only from societies in the region but also for the regional governments is very much needed. The main challenges identified are: regional conventions do not tackle very well the regional political challenges, unreformed legal instruments, different regional status (two EU members, some partner countries...) which reflects in fragmented funds; lack of access to information and transparency and accountability of governments in all countries; cooperation with the governments remains difficult and sometimes limited and lack of financial, institutional resources. Also, there is a reduced public participation, especially among the young people who are less engaged in NGO work. In order to overcome some of the challenges out forward there is the need for: more capacity building in this sector, improved coordination/ networking among NGOs for joint regional activities and campaigns, more flexible funding from the European Union for networks active in the region.

Emma Gileva, Black Sea NGO Network (Bulgaria);

Underlining the need for a common regional vision the Black Sea is sometimes used as a regional identity, more recognizable in certain cases than national identity. Among the main problems in the region as seen by the representative from Georgia are: pollution, which is affecting all countries in the region and in terms of EU funding – the management of the projects belongs mainly to European organizations, and not to local NGOs. There is also the need for more mobility of NGOs in the region and a platform for dialogue and cooperation among environment NGOs as to engage in common initiatives. Environment is a neutral subject which can be tackled even by countries that are experiencing tensioned relations.

Kakha Bakhtadze, Caucasus Environmental NGO Network, Georgia

The last presentation of the session was about the environmental movement in **Romania**, including the citizens' perception, the organized movement, as in NGOs as well as in political organizations. Different surveys presented have showed what studies have for a long time: that environmental issues are coming to the public's attention as long as their own security of life is ensured. The NGOs have created in 2009 a Romanian Environmental Coalition which is a working coalition now. It has 69 members and the aims are: improving the capacity of the NGOs, for increasing the awareness of the citizens and generally to become stronger in dealing with the authorities. Other similar initiatives include: the Natura 2000 Coalition and the Environmental NGOs' National Forum (restarted to be organized in 2009). On the whole, citizens are sensitive to environmental issues but not sure about their priorities and how to promote them. As regards the NGOs, they are quite well organized and have a good capacity to coalition building and to react on various issues, but on environmental issues, they lack leadership and are incapable of influencing governmental decisions (Green parties are almost inexistent in Romania).

Costel Popa, Ecopolis Centre for Sustainable Policies (Romania)

DAY III

Donors and institutional actors' perspectives on the region

The session was moderated by **Holger Dix, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (Bucharest)**.

Discussants:

- *Bobbie Traut, National Endowment for Democracy, (USA);*
- *Dinu Toderascu, Black Sea Trust for Democracy, (Romania);*
- *Ovidiu Voicu, Open Society Foundations (Romania);*

The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) is a private, nonprofit foundation dedicated to the growth and strengthening of democratic institutions around the world. Grants are available for projects that promote **free and independent elections, HR, rule of law, independent media**. In the Black Sea Region, NED collaborates with countries such as **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova and Russia**.

There are many problems in the region. Many of the countries have semi-authoritarian regimes and are facing problems such as: the absence of the rule of law, the absence of NGOs monitoring the election process and a free media. It is very important that these countries have a civil society open to generate reforms on election process, independent media.

- Armenia and Azerbaijan – the main problem here is the absence of rule of law and the Government control on media, the limitation of NGOs in monitoring the elections;
- Georgia – in 2012 there will be Parliament elections, the major problem here is the electoral code; civil society must to encourage general reforms, monitoring electoral process;
- The Republic of Moldova – is the only country whose democratic reform improved – the electoral process is much more free and fair and the coalition Government has made important progress; civil society organizations are very concentrated in the capital, there are many problems in Transnistria; NED is not working in this region, but is developing cross-border projects;
- Russia – has an important role in the region, but problems here are related to democratic reform.

Bobbie Traut- National Endowment for Democracy

The Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation is a project of the **German Marshall Fund** and operates in: **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine, and Russia**. It promotes **regional cooperation and good governance** in the **Wider Black Sea region**; transparent, and open Governments; strong, effective civic sectors; independent and professional media.

BST has four main programs: civic participation, cross-border initiatives, eastern links and confidence building. The solutions envisaged by BST as to enhance cooperation in the region include: more platforms for regional dialogue, people-to-people contacts, involve the region's youth and media in overcoming stereotypes and share experience/best practices/lessons learned.

Dinu Toderascu, Black Sea Trust, (Romania)

The East East: Partnership Beyond Borders Program supports international collaboration among civil society and nongovernmental organizations to share experiences, expertise, and knowledge to advance principles of open society internationally. The East East: Partnership Beyond Borders Program is implemented by Soros Foundations in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Ukraine, and with partners in Slovenia, Russia, Croatia, Lithuania, and Hungary.

Ovidiu, Open Society Foundations, (Romania)

CONCLUSIONS

WHERE WE ARE:

The main problem is the absence of a coherent, visible, well structured set of policies for the countries in the wider Black Sea region.

The region faces many common challenges and requires more coordination both at European and national level. There is a strong need to have a transfer of know-how between the countries, permanent links, mobility and communication.

Currently, the European Union suffers from a lack of visibility in the area from three sources: slow implementation of its policies, no coherent funding and a lack of strategic perception regarding the East. **The Black Sea Synergy** could offer more possibilities, but they are not sufficiently used.

Civil societies know the needs and they are able to build partnerships, create projects and there are many good examples in this way.

Civil societies know the needs at local, national and regional level and they are able to build partnerships, create projects and there are many good examples in this way.

WHAT WE CAN DO:

The Black Sea could become the necessary regional map for providing to South-Mediterranean and Middle East neighbourhood the merits for democratic, sustainable development. The major initiatives of the Black Sea Synergy must come from countries in the region.

The main difference now is not just about financing the activities, but also about supporting civil society to be more connected and to extend the relations between the NGOs and the Governments of their countries - it's about capacity building. NGOs must be involved in all the process related to the region and the Government representatives from all the countries have the responsibilities to involve them.

Donor coordination is needed in the region especially considering the current situation - scarce funding and fragmentation - which does not support a sustainable development and capacity building of civil society in the region.

We must **build a network** among NGOs in order to make them stronger, by providing relevant expertise, lessons learnt and know-how, in order to encourage more active citizen participation as a basis for advocacy and policy shaping in the region.

BSNGO Vth Edition?

When organizing such a forum three guiding lines should be followed: to prioritize the things to be done - use resources efficiently because good projects bring to life other projects; to stay focus; to follow-up. We must look carefully at the past four editions of the forum and understand its meaning and results as to put it in a new perspective for the future and make it better, more relevant and useful.

The Black Sea NGO Forum has proven to be a unique open space for NGOs from the region to share concerns experiences, ideas and solutions, whose tradition should be continued. The forum belongs to all NGOs in the Black Sea Region.

Acronyms' List:

- BS – Black Sea
- BSNGO – Black Sea NGO Forum
- BSEC – Black Sea Economic Cooperation
- CSO – Civil Society Organisation
- CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility
- EU – European Union
- FOND – The Romanian NGDO Platform
- GDP – Gross Domestic Product
- GNI – Gross National Income
- MFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- NGO – Non Governmental Organisation
- UN – United Nations

Resources:

- A 2020 vision for the Black Sea Region – A report by the Commission on the Black Sea, http://www.blackseacom.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Paper/A%202020%20Vision%20for%20the%20Black%20Sea.pdf,
- A new strategy for the Black Sea, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A7-2010-0378&language=EN>
- Black Sea NGO Forum website – www.blackseango.org
- The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, http://www.eeas.europa.eu/eastern/civil_society/index_en.htm
- The Eastern Partnership, http://eeas.europa.eu/eastern/index_en.htm,
- The European Neighbourhood Policy, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/index_en.htm
- The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, http://www.eeas.europa.eu/euromed/index_en.htm,
- FOND – The Romanian NGDO Platform, www.fondromania.org/en
- Social Watch, www.socialwatch.org