



“Participation and inclusion for responsible development”

**Vth Edition,
24th -25th of October 2012, Bucharest, Romania**

- Conference Report-

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Opening Session

Moderator: Ionut Sibian (Executive Director, Civil Society Development Foundation, Romania/ FOND)

Guest speakers: Luminita Odobescu, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Romania); Staffan Nilsson, President of the European Economic and Social Committee (EU); Nicolae Idu, Head of the Representation of the European Commission in Romania

The moderator started with a short review of the **Black Sea NGO Forum** and emphasized the fact that after five years, there is still a need for networking, partnerships, creating synergies and for institutions to support this fruitful project. Since 2008, the year when the forum was launched, more than **600 participants** for various countries have participated. This forum is also a place for donors' coordination and a space for sharing good practices from the region.



Staffan Nilsson - the President of the European

Economic and Social Committee stressed the vital need for CSOs to be active engaged and to mobilize all parts of societies to act together in this region, in order to find solutions and opportunities in this area, he also emphasized the idea of a new and innovative approach on how to take cooperation in the Black Sea region forward (especially to the political level). His participation was again a great opportunity to express the European Economic and Social Committee support for the NGOs initiatives. Regarding the external relations, the main aim of the Committee is to create and maintain links with civil society actors in non-EU countries.

"We all know that the Black Sea Basin is a very or rather complex region with growing geostrategic importance. There is a big diversity of economic conditions and political interests among the Black Sea states and they are all at various levels of global influence and interaction with international actors (...) Differences have potential to generate quality of actions and they may contribute to innovative solutions. But to unlock this potential, we need more interaction, more exchange between people, between us, more effective networks and the right mind-set, and last but not least the political will and determination. The Black Sea regional cooperation is a unique opportunity to overcome years, decades of division and to obtain results that were unlikely to be achieved through traditional political approaches and means. If this should happen it's a clear that it is needed political commitment, politically and government engagement."



Luminita Odobescu, State Secretary, Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will continue to support this event because the Forum has brought a substantial added value to the debates on policy issues relevant for the region. The Black Sea Region remains an important objective on the foreign agenda, and also for the Romanian development cooperation policy. She also stressed the role of the civil society in shaping and implementing development policies in this area.

"The Black Sea region remains a region with strong disparities and various levels of political, economic and social development which impact the level of

cooperation and regional integration. Currently the Black Sea region faces a series of challenges spreading from environment problems to illegal traffic, migration and needs help to tackle them. (...) There are also points of convergence, for instance the fact that the non-governmental organizations in the Black Sea Area are very similar in term of origin, path, challenges that are facing, and we consider it as an important point of convergence.”

The Black Sea Region is an area of great importance, both for Europe, for the European Union, and for the entire world. It is strategically positioned between Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East. In order to boost the development of society, there is a need to focus on stimulating economic growth, applying a bottom-up approach, by starting from local level with traditional, and create synergy with the national level. Both authorities and the Civil Society have to coordinate their efforts, to strenghten community involvement, and help communities organize themselves and become self-sufficient. Mrs. Obobescu also underlined that it’s really an important step forward, in putting the Black Sea very high on the agenda of the EU, and there is a political commitment from the Romanian side. The Black Sea European strategy should involve all the stakeholders from the region, including the representatives of the civil society, with a goal of identifying mutual areas of interests and cooperation.

Nicolae Idu, Head of the Representation of the European Commission in Romania emphasized that the process of globalization and European integration are driving the region into major political, economic and strategic change.

Practical cooperation is the EU’s main objective and is not just a matter of intent, it is about increasing economic benefits and social opportunities for people and insuring sustainable economic development and building trust (...). The Black Sea is important for the European Union, we want to play a constructive role in all the sea basins, that surround us and take up our responsibility in full.

Concerning the cross-border cooperation programmes, which enable citizens to have opportunities to interact at local and regional level, the 2007-2013 Black Sea Basin Programme has seen a budget increase from 7,5 million euro to 25,7 million euro. EU activities in the science and technology field are also relevant for the Black Sea region notably through the EU 7th Research Framework Program and its capacity work program for 2013. In the future the EU framework program for Research and Innovation, the name Horizon 2020 will continue to seek ways to working with partners outside the European Union.

Black Sea NGO Award

The aim of the award is to enhance the profile of civil society regional cooperation, 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 Representation of the European Commission in Romania awarded for the third time, the **Black Sea NGO Award for Excellency**. The winner is the **Black Sea NGO Network** from Bulgaria, a network dedicated to sustainable development, European politics, environment issues. The network brings together NGOs and experts in the area of environment from six countries: Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine. From



2001 the organization has the status of observer to the Black Sea Commission.

“I believe this award is a tribute to the efforts of all environmental activists and civil society activists, who dedicated a lot of time and effort in the development of Civil Society and in the improvement of the environmental state of the Black Sea. It is a symbol of the development and maturation of Civil Society which started in the mid 1990s and continues throughout the years up to the present day.” **Emma Gileva, Black Sea NGO Network**

Plenary Session 1 : Cooperation in the wider Black Sea Region. Looking back, moving forward. Five years of Black Sea Synergy: What comes next?

Moderator: **Hrant Kostanyan**, Centre for European Policy Studies – CEPS (Brussels)

Guest speakers: **H.E. Traian Chebeleu**, Deputy Secretary General, Black Sea Economic Commission (BSEC), **H.E. Iurie Renita**, Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova to Romania (Republic of Moldova), **Luminita Ghita**, Head of Unit, External Relations, Agreements and International Treaties, Ministry of Environment and Forestry (Romania), **Carmen Falkenberg-Ambrosio**, Deputy Head of Unit, DG Development and Cooperation, European Commission.

Wrap-up remarks: **Armand Gosu**, University of Bucharest (Romania).

“With the membership of Romania and Bulgaria to the European Union, EU acquired an official presence in the Black Sea in 2007. The new borders of the EU, encouraged the union to readdress its policies towards the wider Black Sea Region. To this end, the European Commission came out with the communication called Black Sea Synergy, exactly five years ago. (...) Black Sea Synergy focuses on regional aspects, and gives regional solutions to the regional issues. To my count Synergy prioritizes 13 areas of cooperation, democracy, human rights, trade, energy, culture, education etc. The Black Sea Synergy focuses on sectorial partnership, allows or provides a framework for cooperation between the states, institutions and regional organizations, on a different level and diverse formats.”

With this introduction, **Hrant Kostanyan, Centre for European Policy Studies – CEPS (Brussels)** formally opened the discussion panel that focused on the current state of the Black Sea Synergy, to reflect upon the constraints it is facing and on the dynamic between the various players in the Black Sea basin, but most importantly to conceptualize a vision for this important policy.

Carmen Falkenberg-Ambrosio, Deputy Head of Unit, DG Development and Cooperation, European Commission mentioned that the DG Development and Cooperation is quite active in the wider Black Sea Region, taking into account the various relations it has with the states of Black Sea and the variety of relations like EU member states, candidate countries, Eastern partnership and partnership with Russia.

“We are supporting NGOs at regional level and national level. With a variety of call for proposals, we want Civil Society in general to have a voice. In the region we are aware of the challenges and we want to support [...]. We also want to continue supporting activities in the area of environment, maritime policy [...] as one of the areas where we want to work on in the Black Sea, looking at integrated maritime policy.”

Mrs. Falkenberg also mentioned that they are looking at research and education networks (e.g. Erasmus and Tempus programs to which all the countries in the region participate). In the area of science they are also

working on bringing closer the countries in this region to built networks and priorities on cooperation in science and technology. In the view of the upcoming financial framework that the EU is due to adopt by 2014, Mrs. Carmen Falkenberg-Ambrosio has reassured that the new financial budget will not entail abrupt cuts or anything radically different than the already existing strategies. Further support shall be offered to established priorities such as the environment, maritime policies, research and education, transport and energy.

It was also stressed during the panel that the EU is not the only player in the region and that regional organisations such as the Black Sea Economic Commission (BSEC) provide important contributions to local development. Answering a question regarding his vision on the EU-BSEC cooperation and general future priorities, **H.E. Traian Chebeleu, Deputy Secretary General, Black Sea Economic Commission (BSEC)**, emphasized the need of continued development of the culture of dialogue and cooperation in the Black Sea region based on flexibility, freedom of choice, pragmatism and result oriented approach.

“Regional cooperation and confidence building among states in the region are strongly interdependent. Countries in the region should continue shaping a common vision, setting priorities, building up a common agenda based on a common understanding of problems and solutions and represent together their common interests in any given framework.”

Furthermore, he mentioned the importance of strenghtening the project-oriented dimension of regional partnerships - priority that is also stipulated in the newly adopted economic agenda of BSEC (adopetd at the 20th BSEC anniversary summit, Istanbul 26th of June 2012). It highlights comparative advantages of the regions, sets goals for 17 priority areas of action and provides recommendations for further strengthening the organization. Having a more stable, prosperous, secure and democratic Black Sea Region, is in the benefit of the entire European continent. BSEC is becoming increasingly important for the EU, in the context of its expansion and neighborhood policies. Actually all the BSEC member states which are not members of the EU, have bilateral relations with the EU, and the establishment of the regional framework of cooperation between EU and the BSEC should be seriously considered.



Luminita Ghita, Head of Unit, External Relations, Agreements and International Treaties, Ministry of Environment and Forestry (Romania), speaking on behalf of the Romanian Ministry of Environment and Forests, brought up the point of regional development to also be linked to a global development framework and she highlighted the importance of sustainable development agenda (presenting the document entitled „The future we want”, which triggers new international processes, with major role in post 2015 development agenda, adopted at Rio+20 conference):

“We consider the main environmental issues being environmental monitoring that still needs major improvement in the region, access to environmental information for the public and promotion of public awareness and participation, integration of environmental concerns into economic sectors strategies in promotion of sustainable development, protection of maritime and coastal environment, promotion of

innovative environmentally friendly and resource saving technologies.”

Regional networking and cooperation still remains an important instrument in itself, as was mentioned by the **H.E. Iurie Renita, Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova to Romania (Republic of Moldova)**. In his presentation, he stated that many problems can be better solved within a regional network and that the EU strategy in the Black Sea basin is an essential incentive for development processes. In addition, Mr. Renita expressed his support for further cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and the EU and for deeper involvement of the latter in the Black Sea region, which would bring along, from his point of view, regional stability and the development of European principles and values.

Armand Gosu, University of Bucharest (Romania), summed up in a comprehensive overview of the changes in the geopolitical realities facing today the Black Sea Region: “Black Sea Synergy should bring more added value than EU policies towards Russia, Turkey and Eastern Partnership countries. And these can be achieved only through better cooperation between the EU, Turkey and Russia in the Black Sea Region. Interests of these three main actors are the same or can be harmonized through open dialogue and promoting joint projects that can bring the well-being of the people in the region.”

Plenary session 2: Black Sea NGO regional Networks - Challenges, opportunities and models of engagement

Reports: 5 years of Black Sea NGO Forum / NGO networks in the Black Sea region **Alin Codrat Teclu, University of Liege**

Moderator: Valentin Burada, FOND/FDSC (Romania)

Guest speakers: Emma Gileva, Black Sea NGO Network (Bulgaria); Eduard Mihalas, Black Sea Youth Network /CNTM (Republic of Moldova); Mirela Oprea, ChildPact - Regional Coalition for Child Protection in the Wider Black Sea Area (Romania); Stepan Grigoryan, Analytical Centre on Globalization and Regional Cooperation (Armenia); Vugar Bayramov, Center for Social and Economic Development (Azerbaijan), Rilli Lappalainen, CONCORD/Kehys (Finland)

Civil Society organizations in the Black Sea region have a great importance due to their capacity to overcome the barriers and obstacles that the region might impose at a certain moment. The Civil Society is always able to communicate and cooperate, even though the states are in incapacity of working together. In this context the panelists were invited to engage in discussions which will bring up front the vibrant nature of these existing networks, the challenges met and how the work of the regional networks and platforms can be improved by acting together.

Alin Codrat Teclu, University of Liege, the researcher who evaluated the work of the Black Sea NGO Forum in the last 5 years, presented the report highlights, crossroads achievements and challenges of the Forum. The research had two aims: to provide up to date information about the participants, about their capacity, amount of the budget etc and secondly to understand the priorities and difficulties in regional cooperation. Also, the research aimed at reviewing the Black Sea Forum’s achievements with a focus on the impact on NGOs in the Black Sea region.

During the last 4 editions, more than 250 different Black Sea NGO organizations participated at the Forum, more than 30 NGOs from other regions of the world, mostly from the United States and North Africa, and more than 80 stakeholders and Embassies, academies and donors. The geographical repartition of the NGOs presents that

the most of the NGOs came from Romania, almost 30% (quite normal having in mind that the Forum was held each year in Romania and the access of the NGOs was easier), followed by the Republic of Moldova (17%), Armenia and Azerbaijan (around 9%), Georgia, Ukraine, Russia, Turkey – each of them has around 6%, Bulgaria 5%, Greece and Belorussia 1%.

After the Forums, the participants stated that the information received was feasible and they know better the context. Overall, the Black Sea Forum was evaluated as a good initiative.

In addition, in order to improve the next editions there are 4 key dimensions that have to be taken into consideration:

1. Better planning and real follow-up mechanism. The framework should be expressed in a medium term strategy, in this way after each edition, the aims should be identified, as each participant will evaluate the added value of his participation at the Black Sea Forum.
2. Revising the methodology for participants' selection, in order to be more dynamic. The participants could suggest partners, or potential partners that might be involved in existing or emerging networks.
3. A more interaction with the donors. At each Black Sea Edition, the last day, the donors presented their priorities and their opportunities and there is a need for the NGOs to present the donors, their ideas and the portfolio of the projects.
4. To enhance best practice sharing, by building a common vision and methodology for implementation. The common vision has not only a philosophical approach, but each sector should have a common vision taking into account the diversity of each country. It's not enough to present the best practice, but systematically to present ideas and possibilities to implement the best practice by country.

Emma Gileva, the Black Sea NGO network, (winner of this year's the Black Sea NGO award), presented the Black Sea NGO network, which came to existence due to the development process in the mid '90 related to the establishment of the Black Sea Environmental program. This was the first major donor intervention in the Black Sea region, which dedicated a lot of time and effort to the development of Civil Society. In this context and due to the obvious environmental problems that the region had faced, in all the countries aroused newly established democracies that were challenged to propose a common regional legislative framework for their development. The support of the civil society was focused on sustainable development of the Black Sea in terms of its environment and improvement of societies in the region.

The process started with the support of the program presented above and with further support from the Black Sea Ecosystem recovery projects 1&2. During 1997 – 1999/2000, the Netherlands Organization for International

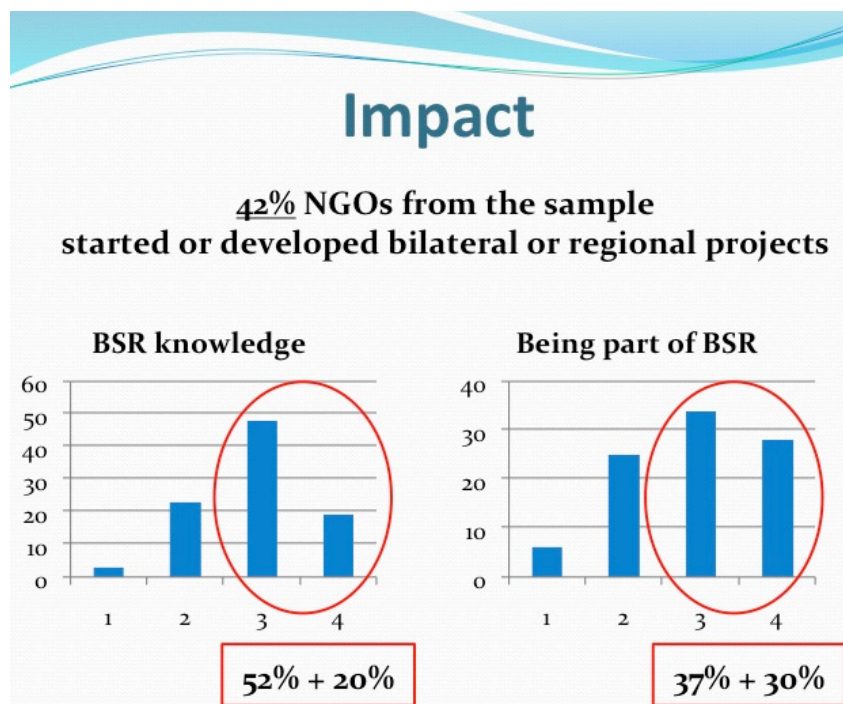


Chart 1. Impact of the Black Sea NGO Forum (2008 - 2011) in initiating bilateral/regional projects.

Development Cooperation (NOVIB) also supported the initial startup of the network. In the middle of the year 2000, NOVIB withdrew from the region, after boosting the NGOs and the network had to be financially independent. Even though it was a very young organization, registered less than a year after NOVIB pulled out as a funder, it had to develop projects to seek further support and communicate with its members on issues of interest. These issues were already outlined by the scientific community working on Black Sea Issues and developing projects; in important regional documents as for example the document from the Bucharest Convention, which remains to this day the only regional document related to the Black Sea Environment. The process became even easier when two more regional projects were drafted and supported by the UNDP and Global Environmental Subsidy and the EU accession of Bulgaria and Romania.

Concerning the funding sustainability for projects that outline the regional scope of the network, the 2 Black Sea ecosystem recovery project, phases I and II, from 2000 to 2007 are very important. The first Black Sea NGO Forum in 2008 hosted a working session for members and experts of the existing Black Sea NGO network, moment when they designed and developed a joint regional project, which is currently under implementation. Another opportunity is provided to the regional network with this second phase of the Black Sea Basin program 2007 – 2013. Donors like the Black Sea Trust for regional cooperation have also supported Black Sea NGO network for regional projects. To sustain the networking activities, there are national based projects which are implemented, both in Bulgaria and in all the other countries even though there is no co-funding for running the network.

In 2001, the Black Sea NGO network was approved as a permanent observer to the Black Sea Commission. The presence of the Black Sea NGO network at the Commission's sessions is not a straightforward story and not an easy process. While the Black Sea Recovery project was on the way, invitations were more or less regular.

"As for providing messages to the Commission, again it is not very easy but I believe that any prepared statement provided in a written form to the Commission can be incorporated in its records and archives and we remain hopeful that with the development of the political situation in the area, with concrete steps towards a new regional Black Sea Synergy strategy and hopefully putting Black Sea higher on the priority issues of the European Union, things may little by little improve. Thanks to a new founded project, the network prepared a statement to the Ministerial Conference which tried to revise the Black Sea Synergy."

One of the essential things for the effective working of a network is the possibility to sustain participation and policy work at regional level which unfortunately in the region is missing. The existing networks can have platforms, but they don't have policy officers that could be employed and used at all times that can follow the political processes and that can be there to make statements on behalf of the members.

Eduard Mihalas, the National Youth Council from Republic of Moldova.

In 2005 until 2009, the Council from Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia started collaboration in the Youth field with the support of the Swedish National youth Council and in 2010, the Black Sea Youth Council met at the Forum to discuss about youth policy in the Black Sea region. In November 2011, a new project regarding the collaboration in the Black Sea Region started with 9 partners from the region: Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania and Belarus, who is not part of the Black Sea Region, but is a strong partner of youth council from this region.

In 2011, the discussions regarding the youth issues, policies and problems encountered started with the public institutions. In February 2012, another meeting took place to improve the networking, to meet the responsible for the youth policies from different countries, ranging from youth councils to youth ministries. As a result of these discussions, each country organized an internship programme, for youth representatives from different

countries with the purpose to find out which are the best practices, the experience of each country on youth policies and methods of improving the collaboration in the region. One of the mission of the interns was to organize workshops on youth policies in order to present their experience on youth and what kind of activities have the youth councils or youth organizations from different countries. For the first time in the region, there was a report regarding the situation of Youth in the Black Sea area.

On 16th October there was a conference concerning the youth policy in the Black Sea Region with the participation of youth councils and public institutions responsible for youth. During this event a common vision concerning the Black Sea region was envisaged (the way the youth see the future), methods of improving the collaboration in the region, the problems encounter in different countries and sharing experience in the future. The donors who supported the activities are the Black Sea Trust, the United Nations Fond for Population (UNFPA). At the European level, one of the partners is the European Youth Forum and all of the youth councils from this region are members of this Forum. From now on the engagement is towards the policy level and to the youth activities. From the study mentioned, the public institutions have the engagement to organize events for youth each year, to share experience and to improve the collaboration in the Black Sea region.

Mirela Oprea, Secretary General of the Child Pact regional coalition for Child protection in the wider Black Sea Area, which is one of the youngest coalitions in the region, established in 2011 during the 4th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum. Even though before there were different initiatives in the Black Sea region of a child protection coalition, the opportunity given by the Forum, in building trust between the members, made the Child Pact possible.

Three important factors contributed to the sustainability of the Child Pact:

1. Coalitions first of all are about trust.

“You can have any number of online data bases, websites and all sorts of instruments for communications like that but if you cannot trust and if you don’t meet your partners in person, and if you don’t build that deep feeling that you can really trust these people for their missions, for their visions, you cannot build anything substantial. So meeting here at the Black Sea NGO forum was very important.”

2. Coalitions are the cheapest advocacy mechanism as they are built on logic of collective impact. This is probably the most convenient way to change a system. The Forum, as a foreign infrastructure and traditional event, helped Child Pact to build a solid base, as in the Black Sea Region there are huge demographic problems, fewer children which they live in increasing difficult circumstances. In spite of all the alternative measures, there are still orphanages and it’s proved that for each 2,7 months that a child spends in an institution, a child falls behind one month of normal growth.
3. The members are national coalitions from the Black Sea Region. There are no individual NGOs as members and Child Pact represents almost 500 NGOs, when actually it has only 8 members. This makes the process of contribution and participation easier.

Vugar Bayramov, Center for Social and Economic Development in Azerbaijan and leading representative of the Azerbaijan Eastern partnership Civil Society Platform. The Civil Society Platform became legal in 2012 and one of the challenges faced is manly the lack of impact on the formalization of the policy in the partner countries. The Platform is one of the main stakeholders in the Eastern partnership program and so far it has a role in the formalization of the policy in each partner country: each partner country has statements, but the recommendation to the assessments are not been taken into consideration by partner countries. The working platform on economic

integration, covers 6 partner countries: Armenia, Georgia, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova and also the EU. The last meeting was in Brussels in July 2012 with the participation of the representatives from the partner countries, EU and the European Commission. Regarding the economic integration between partner countries and EU, Mr. Bayramov stressed the fact that 2 countries from the Eastern partnership: Azerbaijan and Belarus are not members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and they cannot start the negotiations with Brussels.

“There is also the problem in the challenge of economic integration between partner countries, and we are now actually working to produce an economic integration index to assess how Eastern Partnership’s program impacts integration between partner countries. The Eastern Partnership program is not only to support integration between partner countries and EU, but also to promote integration between partner countries.”

The platform organized a number of events where stakeholders, including the Azerbaijan Government were engaged. In Azerbaijan, the dialogue between Civil Society and the Government is difficult, but the EU delegation in Azerbaijan is a very important stakeholder and maintains a good relation between Civil Society organizations and the Government.

Stepan Grigoryan, Analytical Center on Globalization and Regional Cooperation, Armenia, focused his presentation focused on the good results and positive regional cooperation in Armenia, which came out within the framework of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. The Analytical Center on Globalization and Regional Cooperation started to deal with the issues regarding the visa facilities when the Black Sea initiative started to have conferences in the region. That was the moment when the authorities of Armenia immediately reacted in Yerevan and facilitated the process of obtaining the visa.

One of the challenges that the NGOs have to face in Armenia is that they need to be more independent.

“Our readiness to cooperate with the authorities and to invite the representatives of the authorities to our events is very important and the level of cooperation is very high. We don’t have different ideas from our Governments, but we have to make the link between the independent NGO and the Government of Armenia.”

Rilli Lappalainen, CONCORD board member and Kehys Finish platform’s Secretary General.

CONCORD is the European Confederation of Development and Relief, the network of all the EU member states platforms and also 20 other international networks, representing more than 18.000 NGO’s working in Europe on development and relief. Mrs. Lappalainen is representing CONCORD in the relations with different international organizations like the Council of Europe’s North South Center and is a board member of the International Forum of National NGO Platforms, which covers the Global Civil Society.

At the Rio meeting, last July, one of the outcomes was the role of the Civil Society as an important global actor. In order to help the civil society to be better informed, different instruments already exists: access to the United Nation’s system through ECOSOC¹, Special UN Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly and association, who highlights the current challenges this right faces all over the world. Another important meeting which envisaged the importance of the Civil Society was The High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, in Busan 2011, when the Civil Society was at the same table with the OECD representatives. The Arab Spring is a way of the Civil Society to express their concerns about what the decision makers are doing, by building the coalition’s democratically and

¹ <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/>

geographically with the neighbors. Even though we have all these instruments, the civil society meets different challenges, from legislation, funding to access the work together with international organizations.

“ But I would also add another challenge, somehow we have a lot of established networks and Civil Society organizations in different parts of the world, but at the moment, we have a lot of social movements and a new kind of activism coming and I think that is also the challenge of some kind of old type of NGO's that we need to challenge each other, and ourselves as well. Are we really representing the citizens when we are doing the work?”

The United Nation's Millenium Development Goals will end in 2015. Another outcome at the Rio +20 Summit was to focus on sustainable development goals as universal goals, not something which is happening only in the South, something that only African or Asian NGOs should do.

“So this is the time if we are clever enough, if we work together, if we find the synergies and using our resources in the best way, I think we can make the revolution here. We can really put our ideas, the things what we want to be in the global agenda. After 2015 there is huge potential and I am encouraging us to use this, cause then it means that we have the power to influence in the national progress, national development in the regional level, global level. “

As steps in working together, Mrs. Lappalainen recommends to share the experience that we already acquire and find bigger coalitions and synergies, by building the Civil Society on Global level.

“I am asking all of us to go back to the values. Why do we believe that our work is important? Why do we believe that we need to have the better future for our children, and for our children's children. We really need to take care of our planetary boundaries, what we all know exactly in theory, and you all know in Black Sea Region what the situation of the environment is.[...] we definitely need to work through the democratic system, we have to respect human rights and we have to really work on the equity of all the human beings in this world.”

As Secretary General of the Finish Platform, Mrs. Lappalainen stated that they are opened to work together with the Civil Society representatives from the Black Sea region as the platform had had cooperation before with the Mediterranean and Baltic Sea NGOs. In the future they would like to build a stronger cooperation between the 3 seas (Black Sea, Baltic Sea and Mediterranean Sea).

Plenary session: Funding Initiatives in the Black Sea Region. Latest developments and trends.

- **Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme**
- **Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation**
- **IREX**

Serban Sergiu, Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme, presented the Joint Operational Programme for 2007-2013 which is a programme under the European Neighborhood & Partnership Instrument (ENPI) of the EU. It aims to contribute to: “a stronger and sustainable economic and social development of the regions of the Black Sea Basin”. The programme’s three specific objectives are: promoting economic and social development in the border areas; working together to address common challenges; promoting local, people-to-people cooperation. In the programme, those who can apply are local and regional administrations, NGOs and agencies active in local development, environmental protection and conservation, cultural and social areas, fields of business promotion, research & higher education and cultural & educational institutions etc from Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia and Rep. of Moldova.

For more information see: <http://www.blacksea-cbc.net>.

Martins Murnieks, Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation (BST). The Black Sea Trust was created in 2007 from a public and private initiative and financed by German Marshall Fund of the United States but also by USAid, Romanian Government, Latvian Government, Bosch Foundation and others. The BST promotes regional cooperation and good governance in the Wider Black Sea region; accountable, transparent, and open governments; strong, effective civic sectors; and independent and professional media. It involves four programs: Civic Participation, Cross-Border Cooperation, Program Eastern Links and Confidence Building offering grants to civil society organizations (non-profit bodies and non-profit projects). To respond to the rapid shifts in the region, the BST staff regularly consults with regional experts and aim to sharpen the program’s grantmaking strategy in order to more effectively achieve the its goals.

<http://www.gmfus.org/grants-fellowships/grantmaking-programs/black-sea-trust/>.

Angela Nicoara, IREX, an American organization, founded in 1965, working both as a donor and as an implementer in aprox 100 countries (including Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia). The grants offered are for short-term projects (2-3 years) orientated towards civil society strengthening, conflict resolution, education, gender, media development, technology for development and youth. Recently, IREX engaged in projects in Azerbaijan where it provided free wifi in five universities, internet infrastructure, community information centers and trainings etc.

<http://www.irex.org/>