“Building Sustainable and Effective Regional Cooperation”

Black Sea NGO Forum – 6th Edition

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Bucharest

Conference Report

www.blackseango.org

www.fondromania.org
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DAY I
4th of September 2013
OPENING SESSION

Moderator: Olivia Baciu, President, Romanian NGDO Platform (FOND) / Executive Director, Partners Foundation for Local Development (FPDL)

Guest speakers:
- Radu Podgoreanu, State Secretary, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Romania
- H.E. Niculae Idu, Head of the Representation of the European Commission in Romania
- H.E. Ambassador Traian Chebeleu, Deputy Secretary General of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation

Olivia Baciu, President of the Romanian NGDO Platform (FOND) / Executive Director, Partners Foundation for Local Development (FPDL)

The 6th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum, was opened by the president of FOND, Olivia Baciu, who emphasized that the vision of the Forum is a space for multiculturalism, cultural diplomacy, an opportunity to find new partners or donors and to meet other people that share the same interests and views. Moreover, Ms. Olivia Baciu, highlighted the fact that for the first time, the Forum has brought its message from regional level to European level through the organization of a debate at the European Parliament in June 2013, as a follow-up of the previous edition of the forum.

Radu Podgorean, State Secretary, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Romania

Mr. Podgorean underlined the importance of the Black Sea NGO Forum (BSNGO Forum), a regional brand event, which led to substantial added value on regional debates and the creation of various NGO networks. As concrete results, in the past 5 years, 18 bilateral and 19 regional partnerships were initiated or further developed at the Black Sea NGO Forum. For Mr. Podgorean, the Forum represents a “successful and valuable contribution to the Black Sea Synergy” and a strong example of sustainability and effectiveness.

H.E. Niculae Idu, Head of the Representation of the European Commission in Romania

H.E. Niculae Idu emphasized the strategic location of the Black Sea, namely at the confluence of Europe, Middle East and Asia. According to Mr. Idu, the Forum has the potential to contribute to a full, long-term cooperation between its participants leading to economic development and trust building. Therefore, the EU recognizes and supports the key role of civil society in this respect. At political level, the EU will try to enhance
cooperation in the Black Sea region by maximizing collaboration among member countries and in the future the Black Sea Commission, part of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)\textsuperscript{1}. Mr. Idu reiterated **EU’s commitment to foster the Black Sea agenda**, as proven by the European Commission’s support for the organization of this year’s edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum.

**H.E. Ambassador Traian Chebeleu, Deputy Secretary General of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)**

**H.E. Ambassador Traian Chebeleu** presented BSEC’s latest agenda\textsuperscript{2} adopted in June 2012 in Istanbul, which highlights the **comparative advantages** of the region and sets 17 goals for the forthcoming period, amongst which: transportation, trade and economic development, energy, communication, health care, science and technology, agriculture, banking and finance, combating organized crime, culture and tourism. This agenda promotes **innovative technologies**, with the main purpose of ensuring **sustainable economic development**. BSEC believes that involving the NGOs in the development of the region will lead to more **efficient solutions** with **relevant results** for the regional cooperation.

H.E. Traian Chebeleu described the Forum as **a place for dialogue, cooperation and communication** that builds **sustainable and efficient regional cooperation** between civil society and governments. In addition, H.E pointed out the fact that BSEC is “far from being used to its real potential”, situation which could be improved through NGO participation.

**PLENNARY SESSION 1**

**Sharing experiences and good practices on regional cooperation: The Baltic Sea – The Mediterranean Sea – The Black Sea**

**Moderator: Hrant Kostanyan, Research Associate Fellow, Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS)**

**Guest speakers:**
- Rilli Lappalainen, Secretary General, The Finnish NGDO Platform to the EU (Kehys)
- Darja Akhutina, General Director, Association for Cooperation with Nordic Countries "NORDEN", Organizer of the Baltic Sea NGO Forum
- Valentin Burada, Program Manager, Civil Society Development Foundation (FDSC), Romania

There are several processes of regional cooperation at the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean Sea similar to the Black Sea region, which have acquired several years of experience, valuable insights and lessons learnt. This session aims at fostering experience sharing and identifying useful good practices for the Black Sea civil society, as to foster collaboration among the three seas.

**Rilli Lappalainen, Secretary General, The Finnish NGDO Platform to the EU (Kehys)**

Ms. Rilli Lappalainen emphasized the importance of having in mind the European dimension when we talk about the Black Sea region. According to her: “working together is very relevant, because the cooperation and affiliation to partnerships brings a relevant and crucial common understanding between people.” Building on this statement, in Ms. Lappalainen’s opinion democracy means that we have to share responsibilities

\"We help the people to find each other and learn from each other the best practices and techniques.\"

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\textsuperscript{1} Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) : [http://www.bsec-organization.org/Pages/homepage.aspx](http://www.bsec-organization.org/Pages/homepage.aspx)  
and ideas, among civil society, mass-media, researchers, that will be very helpful to move on.

But before doing that, we should know each other, both people from the Baltic Sea and Mediterranean Sea. It is necessary in this sense to facilitate dialogue and build civil society in the regions, as well as making partners from these areas. Thematic cooperation is the key and we should take concrete steps to build this cooperation.

Darja Akhutina, General Director, Association for Cooperation with Nordic Countries “NORDEN”, Organizer of the Baltic Sea NGO Forum

“We should try to gain from this diversity. We should make common efforts. [...] Now is the time to go from good instruments to real actions”.

Ms. Darja Akhutina presented the Baltic Sea NGO Forum3, an initiative that is seen as “the bigger sister” of the Black Sea NGO Forum. The Baltic Sea NGO Forum is an annual event organized with the support of national platforms, with the participation of almost 300 representatives from very different countries in the region. This year’s edition was dedicated to tolerance and cultural diversity. Amongst the themes discussed were: the human dimension of the Baltic Sea Region, youth cooperation and financial and legal frameworks for NGOs in the countries part of the Council of Baltic Sea States.

The Baltic Sea cooperation has been seen as a successful initiative, because it managed to diminish risks, to settle a good neighbourhood and because people have understood that they should work together in order to support and strengthen regional cooperation. The challenges of the Baltic Sea area are the lack of joint and strategic action in the region, which comprises countries with old democratic traditions, as well as states that were part of the former Soviet Union. In this context, the Baltic Sea NGO Forum is trying to work on the synchronization of strategies from countries in the region and introduce a free-VISA regime for all Baltic States. In this way, the economic growth in the region will be facilitated and the collaboration among people increased.

Valentin Burada, Program Manager, Civil Society Development Foundation (FDSC), Romania

Mr. Valentin Burada began by mentioning that, in the light of current events, an important step towards cooperation among the Baltic, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea Regions is to establish an open dialogue between Governments. A first step in this direction would be to increase the cooperation among the civil societies here. In this sense, a proposal for the European Union would be to support the communication between these three regions, as they share many common aspects, but also have their particularities.

Firstly, the Baltic Sea is the most homogenous, has a better infrastructure, more resources and a clear set of policies. As the history shows, the Baltic Sea was the first region that got involved in EU activities.

Secondly, the Mediterranean region is the most diverse, more challenging and it is more interesting to become engaged in. It has the potential of finding interesting solutions and bringing closer the three regions. The only problem would be a physical one: the distances, which make more difficult the work in the region.

Thirdly, the Black Sea region is very diverse, shares the same political views, but it is still perceived as a region of conflict (energy issues and geopolitics) and has a weak infrastructure.

As far as the Black Sea NGO Forum is concerned, the idea behind this initiative is to share good practices and create a space for joint actions. The main result has been the creation of thematic networks of NGO’s with the purpose of having more impact in the region. The main topics of interest for the Black Sea NGO Forum are those related to social, environmental and youth issues. Establishing these first steps will hopefully lead to a spillover effect. A good example in this sense is the coalition ChildPact who is constantly involving political decision-makers to create a mechanism for child protection in this area.

3 The Baltic Sea Forum 2013: http://www.bsngoforum.net/
The purpose for connecting the Black Sea region with the other two regions is to achieve an increased awareness about the particularities of the region. Over the last year, there has been an unexpected mobilization of citizens abroad, showing that there is a new wave of civic enthusiasm. It is important to remember that the voice of the citizens is more and more heard and listened to and transparency is increasing.

PLENARY SESSION 2

The Complementarity between the Black Sea NGO Forum and the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP - CSF): fostering dialogue and collaboration between the two initiatives

Moderator: Valery Pandzharov, Chair of Enlargement, Pre-accession and Neighbourhood (EPAN) Working Group, CONCORD & Board Member, The Bulgarian Platform for International Development (BPID)

Guest speakers:

- Carmen Falkenberg Ambrosio, Head of Section, Regional Programmes Neighbourhood East DG Development and Cooperation, European Commission
- Ion Manole, Director Promo-LEX, Republic of Moldova
- Paul Ivan, Policy Analyst, European Policy Center, Brussels
- Mikayel Hovhannisyan, Europe Program Manager, Eurasia Partnership Foundation, Armenia / Director, Secretariat of the CSF Armenian National Platform
- Răzvan Rusu, Director General for Regional Affairs, The Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum was launched in 2009, one year later than the Black Sea NGO Forum, having similar geographic priorities. Although the two civil society forums are organized within two different European Union Neighbouring Policies (The Black Sea Synergy and the Eastern Partnership), they both support civil society engagement from the same region. This session provides an opportunity to explore ways of collaborating among the two forums, while avoiding duplication, making stronger the voice of civil society from the Black Sea region.

Răzvan Rusu, Director General for Regional Affairs, the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Răzvan Rusu highlighted the fact that the Black Sea is an area of great importance from a strategic and security perspective. Moreover, countries in this region are rich in natural resources, their markets are expanding and they represent hub of energy and transport flows (a topic of increasing importance on the current agenda of the region).

There are three pillars that stay at the basis of the initial construction of the Black Sea region:

- **BSEC**: of which Romania is a founding member. During the Romanian membership, for the first time ever, a civil society dialogue was initiated under the umbrella of BSEC. The BSEC-EU interaction has a significant role, but its potential has not been properly used especially in accordance with the resources and political realities.

- **Black Sea Synergy**: of which Romania is one of the main promoters, as it puts at work all the resources in the area of transportation, energy, infrastructure and economic reform. But a clear set of strategic initiatives are still necessary to offer a possible solution for the “frozen conflicts” (such as Transnistria).

**Eastern Partnership**: The upcoming EaP Summit will be held in Vilnius. Civil society has to play an important role not only in the summit, but also in the follow-up process, by disseminating the values of the partnership. To this view, the most important values promoted by Romania is the respect for human rights, good governance, democracy and the rule of law that connect to the EU identity, but still have to be defined and well routed.

Furthermore, Mr. Rusu stated that the interaction among these initiatives could be intensified. There is still room to enlarge initiatives such as BSEC, Black Sea Synergy and EaP – CSF, as they present an increasing potential.

Carmen Falkenberg Ambrosio, Head of Section, Regional Programmes Neighbourhood East DG Development and Cooperation, European Commission

According to Ms. Falkenberg Ambrosio, the complementarity between the Eap CSF and the BSNGO Forum is reflected by the fact that both focus on dialogue and cooperation between NGOs in different regions (e.g. the Eastern Balkans), namely by sharing lessons learned and expertise based on common democratic values such as human rights and the enhancing towards increasing local ownership. At the level of policy impact, BSNGO Forum looks at common strategic visions using different thematic networks, whereas EaP looks at political dialogue in these countries.

For the European Commission, central and local authorities are important actors for the development of the Neighbourhood region. In this sense, an important Europe-Aid programme for this region is the Non-State Actors - Local authorities Thematic Programme. Also, youth cooperation is viewed as highly important. In this domain, progress has been made especially by implementing in higher education programs such as “Erasmus” and “Erasmus Mundus”, two of the few programs at which all the countries taking part in this Forum can participate.

Ion Manole, Director Promo-LEX, Republic of Moldova

As a participant in the both forums, Mr. Ion Manole raised a question regarding the necessity of these two events: “Do we correctly understand the purpose of these forums? Are they indeed necessary?”

> “Do we correctly understand the purpose of these forums? Are they indeed necessary?”

Mr. Manole argued that a forum does not produce instruments that solve the problems of the region over night, but it is rather a means to communicate, change ideas and experiences and an instrument to motivate, support and develop civil society.

In his opinion, having these two initiatives is very beneficial for every participating actor. Each has its advantages and their success depend equally on the communication between the organizations, their involvement and commitment.

An important aspect is that EaP has been institutionalized straight from the beginning and at that time, the participating NGO where consulted, in this way ensuring a democratic and transparent procedure. In this sense, Mr. Manole believes that the Black Sea Forum should be institutionalized, following the EaP model. Through this, the members of the BSNGO Forum could be able to shape their own proposals for cooperation. He sustained his position by saying that civil society in the Black Sea Region needs consolidation and solidarity, which can be achieved through a well-organized and institutionalized structure.

Paul Ivan, Policy Analyst, European Policy Center, Brussels

Mr. Paul Ivan highlighted the fact that the CSF-EaP has a multilateral approach due to the thematic panels and it focuses on the bilateral relations, while the Black Sea Synergy is a regional policy.
The EU is interested in supporting these initiatives, especially since the Black Sea Synergy has put the region on the EU map. Furthermore, in 2011, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the EU strategy on the Black Sea.

The reasons why the progress and cooperation are limited in the Black Sea region, are amongst others: financial – the economic crisis in the past years, an increased euro-skepticism in the region, conflict persistence and a clear lack of political will.

Mikael Hovhannisyan, Europe Program Manager, Eurasia Partnership Foundation, Armenia/ Director, Secretariat of the CSF Armenian National Platform

Mr. Hovhannisyan considers that the EaP is a unique initiative, because it grants civil society the possibility to act as a third party in the dialogue between the EU and EaP members. Developing the EaP is an ongoing process, but a considerable problem resides in multilateral cooperation. There is a need to develop a common regional identity, both at the level of BSNGO Forum and EaP. Therefore, the cooperation between the two forums is not only complementary, but necessary. Another important aspect is the synchronization of the agendas in order to avoid the duplication of efforts and to increase the effectiveness of the activities.

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5 European Parliament resolution of 20 January 2011 on an EU Strategy for the Black Sea
Financial instruments for supporting civil society cooperation initiatives in the Black Sea Region: opportunities and challenges

Moderator: Daniela Buzducea, Board Member, The Romanian NGDO Platform (FOND) / Advocacy Director, World Vision Romania

- Bianca Baumler, Outreach and Knowledge Management Officer, European Endowment for Democracy
- Angela Nicoară, Chief of Party, IREX, Azerbaijan
- Doina Doroștei, Head of Development Assistance Unit, Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Carmen Falkenberg Ambrosio, Head of Section, Regional Programs Neighbourhood East DG Development and Cooperation, European Commission
- Dinu Toderașcu, Program Officer, Black Sea Trust

For Ms. Daniela Buzducea, the donor influence, together with the country’s legislative framework and the willingness of the citizens to participate, are critical factors that shape the life of civil society in a country. Inevitably, donors are very important because their agenda influence NGOs’ agendas to a great extent. However, in many cases there is no dialogue between NGOs and donors and the communication needs to be strengthened.

Following these ideas, Ms. Buzducea raised several questions for the panelists and the participants:

- “To what extent can the dialogue between the NGOs and the donors shape the donors’ and NGOs’ agendas?”
- “How can we, as NGOs with knowledge and experience from the field, help donors shape adjust the financial instruments to serves people’s needs?"

Both the governments and the NGOs are looking at the question - how can we serve the people better? How the financial instruments need to be shaped, is a common responsibility. The NGO must create alliances and help the governments develop adequate financial instruments.
Doina Doroftei, Head of Development Assistance Unit, Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ms. Doina Doroftei presented the functionality and financial instruments implemented by the Official Development Assistance (ODA) Unit within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The Romanian MFA has a small unit of 4 persons which is in charge of coordinating the official development assistance policy. Romania contributes to this field at an international level with about 100 mil. Euro. Most of the money goes to the budget of the European Commission and other international organizations (more than 80 mil.), 15 mil. Euro go on scholarship programs (mostly in the Republic of Moldova).

In 2012, the specific MFA’s ODA budget line was of 2 mil. Euro, it was launched a public call for proposals from which 8 -7 NGO projects were financed, including the Black Sea NGO Forum. The Romanian MFA encourages partnerships between NGOs.

Bianca Baumler, Outreach and Knowledge Management Officer, European Endowment for Democracy (EED)

Ms. Bianca Baumler presented the EED structure together with the eligibility of application for funds. The EED is a young international organization with a young team that fosters and encourages democratization. Also, it encourages a bottom-up approach, meaning that the actors should stay in contact with EED in order to communicate the important issues for them. The applications are received on an on-going basis and the EED supports especially organizations which cannot receive funding from other donors. The priority countries are from the Black Sea Region (Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia) and MENA, in total 15 countries.

The added value of EED on the donor’s arena is that they are willing to fill in the gaps, by being rapid in response and flexible, supporting support non-registered NGOs, representing an alternative to state support and complementing the European democracy support system. The support varies from funding civil society initiatives to core & institutional funding (seed funding, bridge funding), supporting political leadership and providing technical expertise.

Chart 2. EED Application Route

The eligible structures to apply are the ones from civil society, movements and people who:

- Foster & encourage democratization and deep & sustainable democracy;
- Promote democratic values and work in favor of a pluralistic multiparty system in the “neighborhood”.

Angela Nicoară, Chief of Party, IREX, Azerbaijan

Ms. Angela Nicoară presented IREX as an international NGO, with USAID funds, that supports education, independent media and strong communities. They have a double role, of a donor and of an implementer. As a donor, their rules and regulations are similar to those of USAID and the grants are dedicated not only to implementing project, but also to capacity building. One of the problems that they face is related to regional projects, as IREX cannot fund a project such as The Black Sea NGO Forum.

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6 For more information regarding the Romanian ODA, ongoing and finished projects, please visit: www.aod.ro
7 The Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: www.mfa.ro
8 European Endowment for Democracy(EED): www.democracyendowment.eu
9 IREX: http://www.irex.org/region/azerbaijan
In order to find out more about donors' work, Ms. Nicoara encouraged the participants to use new media. As a recommendation, she proposed to the organizers to create a Facebook group dedicated to sharing funding or partnerships opportunities.

**Carmen Falkenberg Ambrosio, Head of Section, Regional Programs Neighbourhood East DG Development and Cooperation, European Commission**

Ms. Falkenberg Ambrosio stated that, at the level of the European Commission, civil society organizations (CSOs) are recognized as development actors, but there are several challenges in a changing environment that they should be aware of:

- The increasing number and diversity of citizen actions;
- The rise of internet & social media;
- The limited dialogue with the state;
- The shrinking space for CSOs and restrictive measures;
- CSO internal challenges (governance, capacity & access to funds).

In this context, the EC promotes the dialogue with the state and encourages a supportive environment for civil society. In this sense, Ms. Falkenberg Ambrosio stated that the Commission supports capacity development, as they see civil society as a living organism which develops over time and has different needs from when it was funded.

**Chart 3. EU Support: towards a more strategic engagement with CSOs**

The Neighbourhood East Civil Society Facility is a programme developed under the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) to boost support to civil society in the region. This programme aims at:

- Creating a stronger engagement with CSOs in the implementation of bilateral cooperation;
- Supporting civil society as a crucial partner in policy dialogues, local development through sector support programmes and budget support.

Local calls for proposals are launched by EU Delegations. Regional call for proposals (€ 3.4 million) are expected to be launched in early 2014 for all the countries in the Neighborhood East (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine).

The proposed activities within this Facility programme are: training for CSOs, exchange of best practice, support to CSO projects, support to networks of CSOs, CSO twinning, and capacity building for public authorities on how to better involve CSOs in policy-making.

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Dinu Toderașcu, Program Officer, Black Sea Trust (BST)\textsuperscript{11}

The Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation (BTS) is a program of the German Marshall Fund that promotes regional cooperation and good governance in the wider Black Sea region. Its goals are to support: trust in public institutions, citizen participation in the democratic process, stronger links between state and society and the development of regional and cross-border ties.

BTS will continue to fund both regional and in-country projects in the nine countries from the wider Black Sea region: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine and Russia, focusing on four programmatic areas:

- Confidence Building (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Turkey, Russia, and Moldova);
- Cross-Border Initiatives (any country in the region);
- Eastern Links (any country in the region);
- Civic Participation (civic participation projects are in-country projects and Romania, Bulgaria and the Republic of Moldova are NOT eligible for this program).

The eligible structures for BST funds are: NGOs, think tanks, local and regional governments, educational institutions, media organizations. Individuals and political parties are not eligible.

The projects are financed for duration of 12 months, with grants between $16,000 – $19,000. An exception is represented by confidence building projects which are financed for 10 months, up to $35,000 (25,000 EUR). For Romania and Bulgaria, only the cross-border initiatives, eastern links and confidence building projects are eligible.

How to apply:

- Only via email at: BlackSeaTrust@gmfus.org;
- No deadline – on-going basis;
- For Confidence Building – call for applications, via email at: confidencebuilding@gmfus.org;
- Decisions are usually taken in 4 - 8 weeks (projects under $25,000);
- More information is available at: www.gmfus.org/blacksea or BlackSeaTrust@gmfus.org.

\textsuperscript{11} Black Sea Trust For Regional Cooperation (BST): http://www.gmfus.org/grants-fellowships/grantmaking-programs/black-sea-trust/
THEMATIC PARALLEL WORKSHOPS – PART I

WORKSHOP 1: Building a regional cooperation mechanism for child protection
(Facilitator: Regional Coalition for Child Protection in the Wider Black Sea Area - ChildPact)

Moderator: Mirela Oprea, Regional Coalition for Child Protection in the Wider Black Sea Area - ChildPact
Guest speakers:
- Codrin Scutaru, State Secretary, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection of Romania
- Turid Heiberg, Council of Baltic Sea States
- Vladimir Pesic, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Policy of Serbia
- Davit Hakobyan, Advisor to the Minister of Labor and Social Issues of Armenia
- Farid Adilov, State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs of Azerbaijan
- Petya Dimitrova, State Agency for Child Protection (SACP) of Bulgaria
- Mamuka Machavariani, Deputy Head of Social Service Agency, Ministry of Labor, Health and Social affairs of Georgia

The first part of this workshop began with a presentation of the ChildPact Initiative, followed by interventions from guest speakers on the subject matter: government representatives coming from countries where ChildPact is present, CSOs members of the ChildPact coalition and resource persons who have substantial experience and best practices to share in the field of child protection.

The Child Pact Initiative

Child rights and protection issues remain a serious concern in the wider Black Sea area. Comprehensive reforms are required towards building effective child protection systems in the BSEC Member States to prevent child abuse and exploitation and respect children's social and economic rights. ChildPact believes that the next level of success in child protection reform in our region is only possible by means of regional cooperation.

ChildPact is a regional coalition of 600 NGOs in the wider Black Sea area, working with approximately 500,000 vulnerable children, which advocates for the creation of a regional cooperation mechanism for child protection (RCM) in order to facilitate:

- Exchange of experience (professional exchange meetings, study visits, training programs, capacity development, etc.);
- Implementation of joint programmes and projects;
- Joint research on regional child protection issues;
- Monitoring the progress of child protection system reforms;
- Bi- and multi-lateral cooperation on child protection issues.

According to ChildPact, following examples from other regions, while taking into consideration the specificities of our own region, the following dimensions could be envisaged for establishing a regional cooperation mechanism for child protection: inter-governmental dimension; civil society dimension; academic dimension; and inter-parliamentary dimension.

Guest speakers’ interventions

Codrin Scutaru, State Secretary, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection of Romania, provided the welcoming word, congratulating the cooperation between governments and NGOs on such an important matter as child protection is. In his speech, he provided an overview of some recent developments in the Romanian
system of child protection, with a special focus on the new law on child protection which provides more rights for the children whose families work abroad.

Furthermore, speaking as a sociologist, which is his background formation, Mr. Scutaru stated that child poverty is the most dangerous form of poverty. In this respect, governments together with NGOs have the duty to find adequate measures to reduce this risk in Romania, but also in the region.

Turid Heiberg, representing Council of Baltic Sea States, presented two examples of best practice concerning child protection from other regions of the world:

- **The Children’s Unit of the Council of Baltic Sea States**, established in 2002, that addresses the issue of children at risk, with a special focus on the fight against sexual abuse and exploitation of children. The success of the Children’s Unit lays in the training of professionals that are working directly with children, but there are also challenges such as the scarce resources and the lack of personnel. The Children’s Unit needs also to raise more attention at the highest political level.

- **South Asian Initiative to End Violence against Children**, an inter-governmental initiative, where children are represented and encouraged to participate. Here the challenges are related more to financial sustainability.

Ms. Heiberg highlighted the success factors of such regional initiatives for child protection: the importance of the ownership of governments; the support of the wider society; the regularity of meetings; the respect of certain rules (implementation, follow-up, monitoring progress, ensuring accountability); involving all stakeholders.

Vladimir Pesic, Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Policy of Serbia offered a presentation on the existing framework for child protection in Serbia, as well as the progress made across the years in this domain.

First of all, the legal framework, which is seen by Mr. Pesic as a precondition for protecting children’s rights, is defined by the Constitution and other 80 pieces of special legislation, the most important beginning Family Code 2005 and the Social Affairs Law (which recognizes children who have been victims of trafficking as beneficiaries of this law).

In terms of reforms concerning the child protection system, the most important is the de-institutionalization reform begun in 2001, following the belief that children are entitled to grow in a natural environment. At the core of this reform was the development of foster care and adoption systems, in the detriment of institutionalization, with a special focus on preventing the institutionalization of children with disabilities. Since then, the number of children placed in foster care have almost doubled. Moreover, the development of community-based services (such as daycare centers, house help etc) was encouraged, resulting in 450 such services existing in present-day Serbia. Last but not least, is the support given to families in crisis (financial and otherwise) as a means to prevent the family dissolution.

Other extremely important issues addressed by the Serbian government were child abuse and neglect, child trafficking and child labour, for the prevention of which operational instruments were set in place.

At the end of his presentation, Mr. Pesic stated that exchanging experience and sharing the best practices is of key importance for the wider Black Sea region: “We should establish bi- and multilateral cooperation for child protection in our countries”.

Davit Hakobyan, Advisor to the Minister of Labor and Social Issues of Armenia, mentioned some of the achievements of the Armenia’s government in the past years, among which: the adoption of the new law of children’s rights, the regulation of the child protection laws, the right of children to live in a family, the creation of foster homes that replace orphanages and day-time organizations/homes. As he stated, their main goal is that each child benefits from a connection with the society. Mr. Hakobyan pointed out an important result achieved by the Armenian government, namely the fact that each year, around 40 children are going back to their families. One of the most important reforms was the integration of a system of facilities related to child protection – there are 52 day-time centers for families.
Farid Adilov, State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs of Azerbaijan, began its presentation by stating that, after its independence, Azerbaijan adhered to UN’s standards regarding child protection and signed the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. Afterwards, Mr. Adilov provided an overview of the programmes implemented by the state in the field of child protection such as: the de-institutionalization reform, which aimed at finding alternative care for children without parents, while at the same time working on preventing family dissolution; measures taken for poverty reduction among children, prevention of early marriage and child labour; facilitating adoption procedures; preventing child infractionality etc.

Regarding the psychological and emotional needs of children, a Center for Social Rehabilitation of Children and Youth was established. This center mainly offers psychological counselling and emotional support for children and parents. Also, a Child Hotline has been created to provide solutions to difficulties faced by children at psychological, emotional and social levels.

As far as health issues are concerned, the Ministry of Health established a commission to ensure the quality of health services provided to children and youth, especially children with disabilities. The latter were provided with the necessary equipment to deal with their disabilities (such as prosthesis).

In order to protect the cultural rights of children, measures were taken to ensure children to develop their creative potential, such as the establishment of music and art schools.

Petya Dimitrova, State Agency for Child Protection of Bulgaria, presented the 4 main objectives of the State Agency for Child Protection in Bulgaria, namely: reduction of child poverty, education, improvement in the health care system and involvement in the policy making. Their purpose is to engage EU resources in order to finance the main project of Bulgarian reform. Afterwards, Bulgaria’s most important results have been presented: 1600 less children in institutions and also the reintegration of children either in their biological families, or in foster care and adoptive families. Moreover, the 2011 State Policy in juvenile justice managed to change the perspective towards the children, meaning that they are no longer view as the offenders but more as the victims. According to Petya Dimitrova, the main challenge is child poverty that remains at a level higher than 17% and she considers the Regional Cooperation Mechanism as a joint effort for child protection.

Mamuka Machavariani, Deputy Head of Social Service Agency, Ministry of Labor, Health and Social affairs of Georgia, emphasized that the goal of the ministry is to insure the return of the children to their biological families or foster families rather than placing them in orphanages. In this sense, in 2004 a new law for child protection was adopted. The government has started an action plan in 2008, the goal being to increase the number and role of social service personnel. Some of the reforms were related to: providing birth certificates and health care insurance for all institutionalized children, making sure that these children receive education, offering incentives (financial and otherwise) to foster families, creating day-care centers for children coming from poor families. The children adoption process has also been improved, as now the paper work has become more flexible and faster. Also, in 2010, a new law was adopted in 2010 by the Ministries of Education, Labor and External Affairs, dedicated to child protection against violence inside, as well as outside families.

Discussion session

Among the issues brought up in the debate that followed the presentations of the guest speakers were:

- The similarities and differences between the reform process in the Baltic Sea Region and the wider Black Sea area. While both regions initiated a process of de-institutionalization, there are also differences: when compared to the Baltic Sea Region – the reforms are more general and meant to change the core of the system;
- The main challenge of these reforms is finding the methods to ensure their sustainability;
- The role of NGOs in providing social services is also important and should be taken into consideration;
- The modern issues children are facing, especially teenagers (such as suicide), should also be addressed;
- The proper training of social services personnel at the level of each state is extremely important.
For cities to become poles of economic and social development, for businesses to succeed and for citizens to have a quality life, cities must be vital and effective. What are the characteristics of such a city and who is responsible to ensure these characteristics? Answers to these questions will highlight the close link that exists between good local governance and development. Unfortunately, many local governments are plagued by inefficiencies and corruption. Fortunately, success stories exist around the world, demonstrating that dramatic improvements in public services and business climate can be made. FPDL has been at the forefront of improving local governments; working with 20 cities and towns in 11 countries, it has pioneered an anticorruption methodology implying diagnostic tools, participatory planning, and realistic implementation. Case studies from Romania and other countries from the Black Sea region will provide powerful lessons for future initiatives, by illustrating the main concepts, process and results. The workshop was held in an informal set in order to ensure a more dynamic and participatory meeting.

To begin with, participants were asked to provide answers to the following questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the conditions for a city to have economic and social development?</th>
<th>Who are the main entities responsible for creating these conditions?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• low level of corruption, high level of integrity in the decision-making departments;</td>
<td>• local authorities;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• investment in youth;</td>
<td>• the intellectualty;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• existence of resources (human, material, financial etc) and effective management of these resources;</td>
<td>• society as a whole, meaning all three sectors: public, private and third sector;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the existence of business and social entrepreneurs and a favorable context in which they can work;</td>
<td>• citizens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• good strategy for development;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• fair competition in the business sector;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• high quality education and health system.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Even though the responsibility for creating the preconditions for local development are shared, local governments play a big part in this sense, due to the fact that they are the main decision-makers and administrators of public money used to invest in infrastructure, education, health, culture systems; they issue licenses and permits for local businesses and entrepreneurs; and they make inspections to see that the legal provisions are obeyed. However, corruption is an obstacle and it has spread at local level along with the power and resources made available through the decentralization process.

Partners Foundation for Local Development – FPDL has developed a methodology to address corruption in a strategic and practical way, in order to foster improvements in local governments, inspired by a famous book entitled: “Corrupt Cities: A Practical Guide to Cure and Prevention”12 which presents, amongst others, a success story from La Paz, Bolivia.

The next step was to transfer and replicate this successful experience in CEE/SEE countries, by using the experiential learning theory, composed of four main phases: observation, reflection, conceptualization and application of the concepts to create a new experience:

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The anti-corruption methodology developed in this way by FPDL essentially relies on two main approaches:

A participatory approach which starts from within, from the leaders of the organization, and involves people who work in local governments and outside stakeholders (citizens/NGOs, businesses and other public institutions).

A strategic approach which focuses on changing the organizations’ corrupt systems, not only corrupt individuals; identified and treats the most severe forms of corruption; helps mayors act not as prosecutors or judges, but as effective managers and institutional reformers.

Success story on anti-corruption: The case of Craiova Local Government, Romania

The participants were then presented a success story coming from Craiova, Romania where the above-mentioned approaches were applied. The goal was to elaborate an anti-corruption strategic plan through a participatory process which involved FPDL facilitators and experts and local government employees.

The first step was identifying the most vulnerable activities to corruption, taking into consideration: the level of vulnerability and the level of impact on citizens’ lives and municipality’s future is such corrupt activities would occur.

315 out of the 563 employees, working in 12 departments, evaluated these activities resulting in the selection of 6 activities that would later on make the subject of the strategic plan:

1. Issuing Urban Certificates and Building Permits
2. Control of Discipline in Construction Works
3. Public Assets Management
4. Public Procurement, including monitoring of public investments construction
5. Properties Registration - Agricultural Register
6. Human Resource Management

For each activity identified, a problem-tree analysis was made to better understand what the situation is, who is responsible and why corruption arises. This analysis was at the basis of the strategic anti-corruption plan that was elaborated. The methodology novelty relied in the process itself, and its power to bring feasible solutions into existence. In addition, a dissemination strategy was elaborated, which had at its core a training programme for anti-corruption practitioners based on: knowledge building, skills building and support for in-country anti-corruption interventions at local level.

At their turn, the participants at the workshop were asked to identify the activities / services most vulnerable to corruption, a team exercise which provided the following answers:

- public procurement;
- issuing building permits/license (business, broadcasting and other sectors);
- health services;
- local budget (planning and approval);
- public services (gas, electricity);
• urban planning/renovating;
• education;
• tax collection;
• human resources management.

Success story on anti-corruption: Georgia

Georgi Meskhizde (Civitas Georgica) and Amiran Gigineishvili (Lanchkhuti Municipal Council) presented their experience in applying this anticorruption approach in Georgia. In order to make the workshop livelier, the facilitator used the format of a TV show, in which participants played the role of journalists asking questions to the speakers.

Why this anti-corruption initiative?

Civitas Georgica decided to participate in FPDL’s training programme and apply the anti-corruption methodology in Georgia because of: the government’s declared 0 tolerance policy towards corruption, the interest of the organization to learn more about other methods of fighting corruption besides punishment, the successful previous working experience with FPDL and the expertise of the NGO in this domain.

Why choose the city of Lanchkhuti?

The municipality of Lanchkhuti was a strategic choice as the project had the highest chances of succeeding here, the organization had the support of the municipality’s leadership, it had a multiplication potential in other two cities in the region and the mass-media is quite developed and active (6 printed newspapers).

Why did the local government agree?

Besides the 0 tolerance policy towards corruption, the local government’s interest stemmed from the fact that it had previous good experience in working with Civitas Georgica and elections were coming up that year, so it was a means to be more accountable to the voters.

What was the process?

The project had the same steps as the one implemented in Craiova. First of all, a Guiding coalition was established to advice on the elaboration of the anti-corruption strategy. This coalition was made of the heads of departments in the municipality of Lanchkhuti in order to ensure the principle of ownership and Civitas Georgica acted as a facilitator. Two main activities most prone to corruption were identified: human resource management and improvement of municipal territory (selection of infrastructure projects and public budgeting).

What is the situation now?

The main lessons learned through this project were that: it is good to analyze and intervene at the level of the system because local authorities tend to be more cooperative, rather than targeting corrupt individuals; and tackling the human resources issue ensured the support of the staff and not only of the leadership.

At present, the municipality of Lanchkhuti has two functioning commissions: a competition commission and a tender commission which ensure that the public procurement procedure is respected. These commissions are composed of local council members and NGOs and are open to mass-media. In addition, more public meetings are organized at local level.
WORKSHOP 3: Youth Cooperation: Danube Strategy (EUSDR) – Black Sea Synergy

(Facilitator: Dunăre.EDU, Romania)

**Moderator:** Daria Cătălui, Dunăre.EDU Romania

**Guest speakers:**
- Danilo Arsenijevic, European Environment and Health Youth Coalition
- Alex Petrov, National Youth Council of Moldova
- Corina Pîrvulescu, National Youth Council of Romania
- Adina Călăfăteanu, Partners Foundation for Local Development Romania

**Guest speakers:**

- Danilo Arsenijevic, European Environment and Health Youth Coalition

  Danilo Arsenijevic’s presentation began with a short history of the involvement of youth in the environment and health process. The European Environment and Health Youth Coalition was established at the 5th Ministerial conference organized by WHO in 2010 in Parma. In this way, the youth became a crucial actor in implementing and ensuring the follow-up of the outcomes of this conference, the most important being the ministerial declaration and the youth declaration.

  The Parma Youth Declaration is based on four regional priority goals:
  - Ensure safe water and sanitation;
  - Ensure protection from injuries and adequate physical activity;
  - Ensure clean outdoor and indoor air;
  - Ensure a chemical and biological risk free environment.

  A very important realization of the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition is the inclusion of a paragraph in the Parma Ministerial Declaration in which the ministries make a commitment to facilitating youth participation across all Member States at national and international levels by providing assistance, resources and training.

  Besides its advocacy role, the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition has the mission to support youth groups at national level and then making their actions visible at national and international level. A few examples of projects supported by the youth coalition in the Danube-Black Sea region are: *The Eco-club Friends of Water in Bulgaria; Side by Side for the Black Sea* in Romania; and the contribution to the creation and promotion of the *WHO Water and Health Protocol*.

  At the end of its presentation, Danilo Arsenijevic announced that the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition will elaborate a good practice book with youth projects that should be ready by November.

- Alex Petrov, National Youth Council of Moldova

  Alex Petrov presented the National Youth Council of Moldova which comprises 34 youth organizations and has the mission of representing the youth from Moldova nationally, as well as internationally. The council conducts its activities in four priority areas, according to their strategy for the period 2009-2013:
• **Developing youth policy** – consulting with youth organizations for the national youth strategy and the modification of the youth law in Moldova; support of youth mobility and monitoring of how public money is spent on youth at local level.

• **Promoting youth participation and social inclusion** – one of the main projects of the youth council is Intercultural Dialog, which has the aim to include young people with different cultural backgrounds in the social life.

• **Promoting youth education**, with a focus on non-formal education – advocating to obtain official recognition of non-formal education and creating a pool of trainers to ensure the quality of non-formal education.

• **Strengthening youth association and youth initiatives** – working closely with member organizations to increase their organizational capacity and help them apply good governance and transparency principles in their management.

**Corina Pîrvulescu, National Youth Council of Romania**

Corina Pîrvulescu made a presentation of the National Youth Council of Romania, whose members are organizations which focus their work on youth policies. The National Youth Council of Romania is currently focusing its activity on:

• **Influencing youth policies** (for example, the youth council is now discussing on the national youth strategy for 2014-2020);

• **Youth work development** (advocating for the recognition of the importance of youth workers);

• **Youth employment** (advocating for the recognition of the quality of internships and fighting against youth unemployment);

• **Recognition of non-formal education** (the skills and competences that young people gain through non-formal education and volunteering);

• **International and regional cooperation**;

• **Stimulating youth participation** in the democratic process (implementing a structured dialogue between decision-makers and young people).

• **Strengthening the capacity of youth NGOs** to act as strong lobbyists or advocacy actors at local level in order to influence the life of young people.

At the end of her presentation, Corina Pîrvulescu encouraged the participants to visit the National Youth Council of Romania’s website in order to find out more about the council, how one can get involved in the council’s work as a volunteer or how an organization can become a member of the council.

**Alex Petrov & Corina Pîrvulescu**

During 2012, at the initiative of the National Youth Council of Moldova, a regional project was developed called „Strengthening cooperation in youth field in the Black Sea Region”. The project involved 9 national youth councils (NYCs) in the region (coming from Moldova, Romania, Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Turkey) and aimed at fostering cooperation and exchange in the youth field among the partnered NYCs through study visits, a contact-making seminar and a research on youth issues in the Black Sea Region.

An important follow-up activity was the organization of the 1st Youth Conference of the Black Sea Region where NYCs gathered in order to share their vision on the cooperation in the field of youth policies. As a result, a series of recommendations were elaborated in 7 domains considered to be of crucial importance for youth cooperation:

• **Youth participation**

• **Education and employment**

• **Volunteering, non-formal education and youth mobility**

13 [http://www.ctr.ro/eng/articles/index](http://www.ctr.ro/eng/articles/index)
Adina Călăfăteanu, Partners Foundation for Local Development

Adina Călăfăteanu presented a project implemented by Partners Foundation for Local Development (in Romanian: Fundația Parteneri pentru Dezvoltare Locală – FPDL) in the south western part of Romania, “Tinerii pun punctul pe Interculturalitate – Youth pointing on Interculturality”. The project aims at promoting the concept of interculturality, as well as the culture of active participation in Mehedinți, through the involvement of 30 young people belonging to 9 ethnic groups living in 6 communities. The main partner of the project is a public authority, the Department of Interethnic Relations, with which FPDL has a fruitful collaboration.

The project began by recruiting 30 leaders from the 6 communities in the county and offer them a non-formal training in participatory methodology with the purpose of providing them with the necessary skills to engage in a constructive dialogue with local authorities. At present, the 30 youngsters thus trained are organizing World Cafés in the communities, where they invite other young people, authorities, seniors etc in order to discuss the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Euroregion. The World Cafés will be followed by a living library event, a Pro-Action Café and a structured dialogue meeting. At the end of the project, 3 follow-up sessions will be organized in order to disseminate the results of the project and, also, an Intercultural Development Guide will be elaborated.

At the end of her presentation, Adina Călăfăteanu expressed the desire of FPDL to collaborate with national youth councils in the region on interculturality.
THEMATIC PARALLEL WORKSHOPS – PART II

WORKSHOP 1: Building a regional cooperation mechanism for child protection – part II

If the first part of the ChildPact panel was dedicated to an in depth presentation of the situation of child protection at country level, the second session was dedicated to sharing experiences and best practices among the participants split into work groups: one composed of governmental representatives and the other one of civil society representatives. Discussions in the groups were facilitated by Jocelyn Hall, representing World Vision International and Mirela Oprea, General Secretary at ChildPact.

Governmental representatives working group

Jocelyn Hall, World Vision International

First of all, Ms. Hall began by stressing the added values of ChildPact as a regional coalition for child protection, one of them being the cooperation between NGOs and governments. The Child Pact mechanisms have been set up by NGOs because, usually, they have the ability to see problems at the level of the community and they can assume greater risks because they have greater liberty. However, Child Pact seeks for government involvement and support as civil society cannot implement projects by itself.

Cooperation in this region began due to the advantage that certain states hold (e.i. the level of resources) and from this derives the value of conversation: bigger states working with smaller ones. Having this in mind, Ms. Hall asked the representative of each country to share a successful goal that there country has achieved and they think it is worth sharing.

Vladimir Pesic, Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Policy of Serbia

Serbia’s government has achieved great cooperation with civil society and, therefore, they had benefited from the expertise of the NGOs. In drafting all important national law in the field of child protection, NGO experts were included. Moreover, through their advocacy activities, NGOs help the advancement of the reforms. They are also included in monitoring of whole implementation process. In addition, in some cases civil society acts as service providers, in this way helping the government fill in the gaps.

Petya Dimitrova

An important achievement of Bulgaria has been the involvement of children in making child policies, through the establishment of a Child Council.

David Hakobyan, Advisor to the Minister of Labor and Social Issues of Armenia

In Armenia the social servants are the ones who are taking care of children issues because they know the needs of children and their families, including psychological needs. In addition, each child that comes to a child center is considered to be an emergency case that is deeply analyzed.

Mamuka Machavariani, State Agency for Child Protection of Bulgaria

Georgia has created two universities for social workers and the government is very open for discussion with NGOs. Another important achievement was the inclusion of a legal provision that allows the child to have a say in decisions that affect him. Starting from the age of 12, the child is asked for his opinion whenever a social worker has to take a decision that concerns him.

Codrin Scutaru, State Secretary, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection of Romania

In Romania, the de-institutionalization process had very good results, with 300 institutions being closed (still 19 left) and 400 residential services created.

Mirela Oprea, General Secretary of ChildPact

Mirela Oprea emphasized the fact that there are two ways to start cooperation between governments on a given issue:
To be part of something already existing, meaning to dispose of a database of experts, where ideas are shared between neighbours.

To create an agreement that afterwards has to be implemented by accessing the right levels of political decision making and engaging key political stakeholders.

**Turid Heiberg, Council of Baltic Sea States**, provided the Baltic Sea example, a project that started in 1996/97 and materialized in 2002. The first steps have been taken by the bureaucrats of each government that had reunited and decided what is in the best interest of their countries and then had found the best person to be in charge. The ministries then indorsed what the bureaucrats had established.

At the end of the panel, it was decided to draft a letter that summarizes the panel and to send this letter to the ministries of the countries involved (Bucharest Statement14).

**Civil society working group**

During this session, participants identified the opportunities, as well as the challenges that a regional cooperation mechanism in the field of child protection would face:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharing experiences</td>
<td>Difficulty to administrate the mechanism and to have an active participation of all the countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better promoting of child issues at EU level</td>
<td>Child protection and children rights are not usually a priority for the governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating more resources to advocate at the regional level</td>
<td>Geo-political tension in the region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU delegations represent a resource</td>
<td>Ensuring that the mechanism is visible and reachable for all the countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing children protection reforms at country level</td>
<td>Arriving to a common understanding of children rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have an intergovernmental body to link to BSEC</td>
<td>The different political status of the countries involved: EU countries, neighbouring countries, pre-accession countries.</td>
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</table>

Based on the opportunities and challenges identified, the participants were asked to answer the following questions: 1) What should be the mechanism’s objective?; 2) How should the mechanism’s structure look like?; 3) What should be the immediate next step for building the mechanism?

**The mechanism’s objective**

- Reducing violence against children;
- Investing in early childhood development;
- Investing in vulnerable children and children with disabilities;
- Reducing the number of exploited children;
- Reducing child / infant mortality.

**The mechanism’s structure**

- Inspired from the Council of Baltic Sea States;
- Joint Secretariat with BSEC;

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It should also have an academic dimension (partnership with International Center for Black Sea Studies – ICBSS\(^{15}\));
There should be a Government and Children/Youth Council and a network of volunteers.

**Immediate next step for building the mechanism**

- Create a technical expert group;
- Define the profile of the mechanism;
- Promote the mechanism in each country;
- Create an action plan;
- Lobby and advocacy in each country for the recognition and implementation of 127/2012;
- Create a regional trust fund;
- Consultation with all groups of interest/all parties involved for building the mechanism;
- Involve BSEC.

**WORKSHOP 2: Public administration authorities and NGOs in the Black Sea Region**

(Facilitator: Association for Cross-Border Cooperation “Lower Danube Euroregion”)

**Moderator: Natalia Florentina Budescu, Association of Cross-Border Cooperation “Lower Danube Euroregion”**

**Guest speakers:**
- Radu Oprea, SMART Development Center, Romania
- Liliana Ivanova, Executive Committee of the District Council of Reni, Ukraine

This workshop aimed to identify the challenges and opportunities regarding the cooperation and partnerships between public authorities and the civic sector. Public-private sector cooperation takes several forms:

- **Public Private Partnerships (PPP)** as joint cooperation between the public and private sectors, can be found in the Romanian legislation: Law no. 178/2010 as amended by Government Ordinance no. 86/2011. PPP is the first step that allows the public sector to initiate cooperation actions with the private sector in areas such as public policy, investments, creation of development assistance structures and social development.
- **Establishment of regional and euroregional private entities: Euroregions for cross border cooperation and cross-border joint management structure.**
- **Creation of platforms, addressing both the community and local government, which aim the public policy field and can identify both the problems and the solutions within the community, by building/consolidating the relationship between public authorities and community.**

**Natalia Budescu, Association of Cross-Border Cooperation “Lower Danube Euroregion”** opened the workshop with a presentation of the Association of Cross-Border Cooperation “Lower Danube Euroregion” (ACT EDJ). ACT EDJ is a non-governmental entity, founded in April 2009, by public institutions, from **Romania** (Galati County Council, Braila County Council and Tulcea County Council), **Ukraine** (Odessa Regional Council, Odessa Regional State Administration and Reni District Council) and **Republic of Moldova** (Cahul District Council and Cantemir District Council). Its goal is to assist the sustainable development of the administrative-territorial units that constitute the association, through the enlargement of the cooperation between members and the development of the profitable relations in all areas of common interest.

Some of the successful projects in which ACT EDJ took part:

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\(^{15}\) [http://icbss.org/](http://icbss.org/)
1. “Inventory, assessment and remediation of the anthropogenic sources of pollution in the “Lower Danube” Region of Romania, Ukraine and Republic of Moldova” – General objective: to reduce the environmental impact of chemical dumps and wastewater discharges in the Lower Danube region as well as enhance environmental monitoring of soil and water pollution and make the information publicly available;

2. “Regional Business Incubators’ Network Black Sea BI-Net” – General objective: to accelerate the development of a productive and competitive economy and improve cooperation in the Black Sea region;

3. “Innovative instruments for environmental analysis in North Western Black Sea Basin (Black Sea E-eye)” – General objective: supporting the development of durable environmental policies by deploying innovative research initiatives focused on the analysis, monitoring and investigation of physical-chemical and biological parameters of surface aquatic systems in North Western Black Sea Basin;

4. “Citizen engagement in the prioritization, design and implementation of local development policies (SolveNet)” – General objective: capacity building for organizations of civil society in order to strengthen their role in the prioritization, design and implementation of local and regional development public policies;

5. “Sustainable Tourism Development in the Lower Danube Region of Ukraine, Moldova and Romania” – General objective: to improve the economic performance of the border area through the diversification and modernisation in a sustainable manner of cross-border tourism in the Lower Danube region of Ukraine, Romania and Moldova.

Radu Oprea, SMART Development Center, Romania provided a more in-depth presentation of the project “Citizen engagement in the prioritization, design and implementation of local development policies (SolveNet)” – June 2013 – December 2014, as an example of best practice. The project, funded by the Joint Operational Programme “BLACK SEA BASIN 2007-2013, is implemented by SMART Development Center in partnership with ACT EDJ Romania, Agency of Sustainable Development and European Integration “Lower Danube” Euroregion – Ukraine, Institute of Public Policy - Republic of Moldova and European Integration NGO – Armenia.

The project is designed to stimulate policy making in the Black Sea Region by directly engaging citizens to solve community problems by using SMART Method of Public Policy on an enhanced scale.

What is SMART Method of Public Policy?

SMART Method of Public Policy is a combination of online and offline citizen engagement in providing valuable, sustainable and feasible solutions to problems of public concern. The most important instrument is the website, www.Public-Policies.eu which offers two important services:

- It allows any person to raise a problem of European public concern that needs a valuable, sustainable and feasible solution, accessing the "Raise a problem to our team" link.
- It allows any person to recommend solutions to the existing problems that are published on the website, with only one mouse-click away.

Then, the proposed solutions are analyzed by the project team and those that are valuable, sustainable and feasible are selected. The next steps are creating a policy paper, building awareness on the solution provided and send it to appointed officials for implementation. The policy papers are archived on the website and every official response is also published here.
Liliana Ivanova, Executive Committee of the District Council of Reni, Ukraine presented a joint EU-UNDP programme which aims at enhancing local development through the interaction between local authorities and community organizations. Among the collaboration tools identified were: the participation of civil society organizations and local authorities in joint projects of local development; and co-financing of development projects from the local budget. The project focused initially on four villages. Among the activities carried out were: improving working conditions in rural medical clinics and repairing schools in local communities. For the period 2013-2015, the District Council plans to continue this programme and implement the projects funded under the Joint Operational Programme Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova 2007-2013”.

WORKSHOP 3: Citizen diplomacy and cultural diplomacy in focus.
Can the Black Sea region be more than pipes and oil?
(Facilitator: Civil Society Development Foundation)

When generally speaking about the Black Sea region, the most frequent words are pipes, oil, gas and conflicts. Geopolitics and security dominate the public discourse on the region. Is energy and conflicts all that the region can offer? Is there no alternative narrative that could bring the people in the region together, beyond the politically driven mind frameworks? If stability and prosperity are the main goals of political decision-makers, the self-interest of countries in the region should drive them to invest more in supporting cultural and citizen diplomacy within the region, based on a model successfully tested in the European Union since the end of World War II. However, exchange programs for youth, students, scholars, artists and civil society activists remain modest and are supported by foreign donors rather than by the Governments and regional institutions in the region. Do people-to-people contacts work? What tools to promote mutual understanding across the region does civil society have and what more is needed?

The workshop was organized in an informal manner, requiring active participation from the audience. Participants worked together to provide insights on citizen diplomacy, its added value and whether the government should be part of it or not, examples of such diplomacy and effective tools used in this respect.

First of all, participants defined citizen diplomacy as a type of diplomacy initiated by citizens themselves, with or without political aim, which has the added value of connecting people from the respective countries even in the absence of official diplomatic relations. Also, citizen diplomacy does not necessarily express the vision of the government.

In reality, each and every one of us is an ambassador because, more often than not, the first person/s a foreigner meets in a country/ community shapes his image of that country / community. Some examples of citizen diplomacy are: the connections made through Erasmus mundus, couch surfing etc.

As regards cultural diplomacy, it can take the form of cultural festivals and other activities focused on cultural exchange. Two examples were given by Mr. Kutay Derin Kugay from GOLA Culture, Arts and Ecology NGO, Turkey: The Green Yayla Culture, Arts and Environmental Festival which takes place in the mountain villages from the eastern Black Sea Region each year with a different theme; and The Black Sea Music and Arts Festival which takes place in Istanbul and brings together artists from Armenia, Greece, and Georgia. A platform was also created to encourage cultural exchange among participant artists at the festival.

When asked to think about the role of the government in citizen diplomacy, the participants reckoned the importance of the government as a decision-making body, but citizens should be allowed to freely express themselves and they should influence governmental decisions. At the same time, voicing a different opinion is difficult in the region as governments usually control the education system and the media. Nevertheless, high-level people (from academia, artists, and so on) and also NGOs from different countries can ensure communication between countries in spite of a less favorable environment. In addition, sometimes citizens are more credible then their governments when speaking about a community’s problems, for instance. This is why, it is important to invest improving citizens’ advocacy skills. An effective tool in this regard is social media which has succeeded in making people more politically aware on certain subjects.
The new CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) is an open platform that unites CSOs from around the world on issues relating to development effectiveness, in particular in the context of the GPEDC (Global Partnership on Effective Development Cooperation formed as a result of HLF4 in June 2012). The founding meeting of the CPDE was held in Nairobi in December 2012, reuniting previous BetterAid and Open Forum platforms. Since the meeting in Belgrade in 2012, the non-EU sub-region of the CPDE did not have the possibility to meet again. Therefore this meeting was convened to re-engage this sub-region, update them on the process and support their work on development effectiveness. At the end of the meeting, the non-EU sub-regional representative in the CPDE was elected.

Doina Crângașu, Vice-president, FOND

Doina Crângașu opened the plenary session by welcoming the audience to the non-EU sub-regional meeting of the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) and explaining the role of the meeting which was to involve civil society organizations (CSOs) in the region in the global debate on development effectiveness. Moreover, Ms. Crângașu reminded the audience of the importance of the Busan Forum (2011) where, for the first time, CSOs were recognized as independent actors with a vital role in promoting human rights, contributing to policy-making and concluding partnerships for development effectiveness.

Justin Kilcullen, European Representative of CPDE

Justin Kilcullen delivered a very insightful and empowering presentation on the important role and mission of civil society in promoting and acting in favor of development effectiveness. The official recognition of the role of CSOs in this area at the Busan Forum came in late, as civil society has long been involved in development activities, promoting human rights and holding the governments accountable of their actions, thus proving the legitimacy of their work and their expertise. However, the importance of the Busan Forum stands in acknowledging the need for creating the space in which CSOs can operate for development, at a time when this space was and continues to be threatened. CSOs must not lose momentum and put pressure on the donor
community to hold governments accountable and take into consideration civil society as an equal partner in
development.

At its turn, civil society made a commitment to being accountable themselves through the adhesion to the 8
Istanbul Principles:

1. Respect and promote human rights and social justice
2. Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women and girls’ rights
3. Focus on people’s empowerment, democratic ownership and participation
4. Promote environmental sustainability
5. Practice transparency and accountability
6. Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity
7. Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning
8. Commit to realizing positive sustainable change

Mr. Kilcullen’s presentation continued with a description of what CPDE does, what is its governance structure and
how it operates concretely.

CPDE areas of works are focused on:

- Monitoring and advocating on the Global Aid and Development Effectiveness Agenda, ensuring a Human
  Rights-Based approach;
- Promoting an Enabling Environment for CSOs;
- Building CSO Development and Effectiveness through the implementation of Istanbul Principles.

In terms governance structure, CPDE is formed by:

- The Global Council (56 members representing the regions where CPDE is present and the different sectors
  (NGDOs, trade unions, faith-based organizations, feminist organizations etc) plus 4 co-chairs elected
  independently;
- The Coordination Committee (20/22 members delegated from the Council);
- 8 working/reference groups;
- the Independent Accountability Committee (IAC) that ensures the observance of the Istanbul principles in
  CPDE’s work;
- The Secretariat.

The way of working of CPDE is through regional and sub-regional coordinating bodies, as well as national
coordination platforms. As Europe has two sub-regional representatives, one for the EU and one for the non-EU
part of Europe, the issue to work on is to produce a common European view on development effectiveness.

At the end of its presentation, Mr. Kilcullen stressed out the importance of exploring ways to continue the
engagement of CSOs in the non-EU sub-region in promoting development effectiveness.

Inka Pibilova, Evaluator and Freelancer

Inka Pibilova’s emphasized the usefulness of applying the Istanbul Principles in evaluating projects, by
presenting a concrete case of a project on prevention and early detection of breast and cervical cancer in
Georgia, financed by the Czech Development Agency and implemented by a Czech NGO together with two
Georgian NGOs. The purpose was to save lives by carrying out prevention activities (awareness campaigns),
screenings and referring women to oncological centers for treatment.

16 For more information on CPDE, please visit their website: http://www.csopartnership.org/
By applying the Istanbul principles at the time of the evaluation, it was discovered that out of the 8500 women that should have been screened for cancer, only 3244 benefited from this service. Moreover, out of the 31 women who were diagnosed with cancer, only 22 started treatment and out of the 48 women diagnosed with precancerous lesions, only 2 were treated. To make matters worse, the treatment was often inappropriate and unnecessarily expensive.

While some of the principles were well reflected by the project - respect and promotion of human rights by including all women in the region in the screening process regardless of their age or if they were internally displaced persons or not; and empowerment of the people involved in the project -, others were not respected: the men were not included as a target group in the awareness campaigns; the Czech NGO was not accountable in its work, as 50% of the funds received were spent on coordination and administrative costs and they did not share their entire budget with their Georgian partners; and, probably the infringement with the longest impact, sustainable change could not be achieved since the women were only screened for cancer, but not treated.

Therefore, a series of key recommendations were made to be taken into consideration until the end of the project:

- To find the appropriate clinics in which women who have been diagnosed with cancer or precancerous lesions can get adequate treatment and refer those women to these clinics;
- To monitor the situation of the women who have been referred for treatment;
- To buy cobalt-radiation machines in order to give the women in the screening program a chance to get treatment.

Daniel Nuijten, Capacity Building Officer, CONCORD

Daniel Nuijten introduced the working group session that followed. Participants were divided in 7 groups, each group comprising 10 people and were asked to think about opportunities of being involved in the global partnership for development effectiveness.

The answers were written on flipcharts and then presented in the plenary with the purpose of finding common ground between the 7 groups and extracting valuable conclusions regarding the involvement potential of CSOs in the region in development effectiveness.

REPORTING ON WORKING GROUPS

The results of the work done by participants in groups, emphasized a balanced list of ways in which CSOs in the region can contribute to the global platform and of ways in which CPDE can help civil society here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ways in which CSOs in the region can contribute to CPDE</th>
<th>Ways in which CPDE can help CSOs in the region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Promoting a better understanding of the Istanbul principles at local level</td>
<td>• Offering a space for networking and collaboration among NGOs in the region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Promoting CPDE’s advocacy messages in the region</td>
<td>• Providing CSOs in the region with contacts and experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Multiplying advocacy efforts and applying good practices on development effectiveness in partner countries</td>
<td>• Strengthening the advocacy capacity of CSOs in the region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Building a regional knowledge hub (analysis of the civil society in the region, funding resources)</td>
<td>• Monitoring the implementation of the Istanbul principles in projects at all levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Providing know-how on connecting NGOs with governments and promoting civil society participation in the decision-making process at local level</td>
<td>• Offering expertise and best practices on development effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cross-border cooperation on issues such as environment, education, community mobilization, local development, youth</td>
<td>• Elaborating a thematic catalogue of NGOs active in the region with the description of their work and contacts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Establishing a network of private donors and inform on funding opportunities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Advocate for donor support in regions where</td>
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development, child protection, minorities.
• Offering trainings, internships, information on financial resources, know-how, and consultancy and networking opportunities in the region.

funding opportunities are limited
• Building working national NGO platforms on development effectiveness
• Offering opportunities for developing sustainable partnerships at global level
• Promoting more media coverage
• More awareness on their respective areas of activity at global level
• Increasing the positive image and role of CSOs as important actors at global level

ELECTION OF NON-EU CPDE REPRESENTATIVE

The day ended with the election of the Non-EU representative in CPDE’s Global Council.

Firstly, the participants were reminded about the mandate of the Non-EU representative. In broad terms, the person elected will represent the sub-region in CPDE’s Global Council; actively promote Istanbul principles, CSO development effectiveness and CPDE’s work among the sub-regional civil society; and oversee the implementation of the strategy and action plans of CPDE.

There were four candidates to the position: Vazha Salamadze (Georgia), Fatima Gudieva (Russia), Hasmik Gregoryan (Armenia) and Mariana Ianachevici (Republic of Moldova). The election was won by Vazha Salamadze, who will represent for another mandate the Non-EU sub-region in CPDE’s Global Council.
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