



The 11th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum

Building a more resilient civil society in the Black Sea region

12th – 14th of November 2018
Brussels, Belgium

– FINAL REPORT –



EUROPEAN UNION



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



Federatia Organizatiilor Neguvernamentale pentru Dezvoltare din Romania



This report was elaborated by the Romanian NGDO Platform FOND, as a follow-up activity of the 11th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum.

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The Black Sea NGO Forum – A driver of change

The Black Sea NGO Forum represents an annual initiative that was organised for the first time back in 2008 by [the Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND Romania](#). The Forum is currently organized with the support of the European Commission and of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the framework of **the Black Sea Synergy**.

Its main objectives is/are **to increase the level of dialogue and cooperation among NGOs in the wider Black Sea Region, to strengthen the capacities of NGOs to influence regional and national policies and to increase the number and quality of regional partnerships and projects.**

More than 10 years after its first edition, **the Black Sea NGO Forum has become a driver of change in the region**, reuniting **more than 1000 participants** from 11 countries from the wider Black Sea region – respectively, from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, the Republic of Moldova, Turkey, Ukraine, Romania and Russia.

The Forum has enabled participants to share expertise and best practices on a diversity of themes of regional interest (democracy & human rights, local development, youth, children rights, environment, citizen participation etc.), encouraged multi-stakeholder dialogue and facilitated partnerships, thus, contributing to building trust and joint projects, identifying common challenges and opportunities and addressing them together.

More information about the Black Sea NGO Forum is available at: <http://blackseango.org>.

The 11th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum: Building a more resilient civil society in the Black Sea region (12th – 14th of November 2018, Brussels, Belgium)

By taking place in **Brussels, between the 12th and 14th of November 2018**, the **11th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum** aimed at **drawing attention on the importance of the Black Sea Synergy and on the contribution brought by civil society** to its transversal priorities and themes, as well as to **increasing society resilience within the Black Sea Region**. The 2018 edition of the Forum was organised by FOND Romania, in partnership with the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with the financial support of the European Commission.

- ➔ The final agenda of the event, as well as other resource documents, can be found online at: <http://www.blackseango.org/update-the-11th-edition-of-the-black-sea-ngo-forum-building-a-more-resilient-civil-society-in-the-black-sea-region-12th-14th-of-november-2018-brussels-belgium/>.

Day I

The 12th of November 2018

Plenary Session: “Putting CSOs in the Spotlight – Stories of Society Resilience”

Moderator: Ms. Natalia Budescu, Director, The Association for Cross-border Cooperation “Lower Danube Euroregion”

Speakers:

Ms. Haykuhi Harutyunyan, President, Protection of Rights without Borders, Armenia

Mr. Mihail Sirkeli, Director, Pilgrim-Demo, Republic of Moldova

Ms. Cristina Rigman, Secretary - General, ChildPact - The Regional Coalition for Child Protection

Ms. Ilyana Nikolova, Executive Director, Workshop for Civic Initiatives Foundation, Bulgaria

Mr. Volodymyr Sheyhus, Executive Director, ISAR Ednannia, Ukraine

Drawing on the success of the [2017 anniversary edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum \(4th – 6th of December, Chişinău/ Kishinev, Republic of Moldova\)](#), this year’s edition started off with a special plenary session dedicated to **the added value of civil society in terms of building resilience in the Black Sea region**. Discussions aimed at collecting and sharing



success stories and examples of NGO leaders and activists from the region, as a source of **inspiration, motivation and mobilization**.

As the moderator of the discussion, **Ms. Natalia Budescu** welcomed the speakers in the panel and greeted warmly the participants, continuing the welcoming speech by stressing on the importance of regional projects and initiatives in growing the capacity of the non-governmental sector across the region. *“We are always talking about long-term partnerships, but we have to also talk about our vulnerabilities and how we can become more focused in our future initiatives.”* added Ms. Budescu.

The first speaker, **Ms. Haykuhi Harutyunyan** shared her views on her own achievements from the last 15 years of working on human rights protection in Armenia within *Protection of Rights without Borders* NGO and how much pride she does take to be part of the process

of transformation in the country. Over the years, she observed how the civil society sector developed at the national and regional level and how **encouraging cooperation and building partnerships is vital in demonstrating unity and resilience of CSOs in region**, especially in the given context of shrinking CSO space. Asked if she would take the same path, if she would be given the chance, she underlined that: *“I would do it again so I can be part of the change. Have the courage to be part of the changing process, towards the democratization of your country.”*

Mr. Mihail Sirkeli was the second speaker on the agenda and [talked about Piligrim-Demo](#), one of the few NGOs active in the Gagauzia region from the Republic of Moldova. After working for more than 15 years in the non-profit sector, he reached the conclusion that **resilience is fostered by working at grassroots level, in rural areas, being closer to the people**. He emphasized how **CSO cooperation** is the main key in overcoming challenges, through sharing of expertise, and how civil society representatives can become stronger and more resilient when united. *“We need to fight for ensuring our own enabling environment. We ourselves are the agents of change – this is actually in our job description.”*



'Change' was also a keypoint in the speech of **Ms. Cristina Rigman**, from ChildPact - The Regional Coalition for Child Protection, [who talked about her own stories of lessons learned](#) by **working in, with and for networks** for more than 15 years. Presenting and pinpointing a few 'golden rules' to follow while working in the non-profit sector, Ms. Rigman underlined how small steps of developing yourself not only as an individual or as an organisation, but also as a network contribute to a more resilient CSO environment. *“Believe in yourself and make others believe in you. Change is inside us so make sure to invest time in yourself and your capacities to be the professional you need.”* she concluded.

Ms. Ilyana Nikolova started her speech by declaring that her own personal motivation is **being able to change the lives of people and supporting their local community to thrive**. She firstly went on [to present the activities of the NGO she was representing](#), Workshop for Civic Initiatives Foundation and stressed the importance of engaging youth and youthbanks, as they represent the next generations which are willing to improve the societies they live in. In her view, **the key to fostering CSO resilience is to work together and develop joint campaigns** – for this, *“we have to also change our own mindset, as CSO representatives, to be more open, transparent and accountable.”*

Last, but not least, **Mr. Volodymyr Sheyhus** began to emphasize the positive development trends that the Ukrainian civil society sector has been seeing in the past ten years, since he

has been active in this field. In his speech, he talked about the organisation which he was representing, *ISAR EDNANNIA*, whose success - consists in CSO development and willingness to **support active agents of positive change** at national level. He underlined the power of moving people in the NGO sector, sharing that in the last 7 years of activity, he and his colleagues have managed to support 20 community foundations, which raised up to \$8 million USD locally, to solve different community problems. *“The real challenge is how to solve local problems and how to bring together actors in one space to resolve the real needs of the community”*.

Plenary Session: Formal Opening of the Forum: “The Black Sea Synergy – The Power of Regional Cooperation”

Moderator: Mr. Ștefan Cibian, PhD, President, *The Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND/ Board Member, ARCADIA: Romanian Association for International Cooperation and Development*

Video Message: Mr. Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations

Key Note Speech: Mr. Călin Stoica, PSC Permanent Representative, Permanent Representation of Romania to the European Union

Speakers:

H.E. Amb. Michael B. Christides, Secretary – General, *Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)*

Ms. Audrone Perkauskiene, Head of Division Eastern Partnership, *Regional Cooperation and OSCE, European External Action Service (EEAS)*

Mr. Dimitrios Triantaphyllou, PhD, Director, *Center for International and European Studies (CIES), Kadir Has University Istanbul*



Mr. Ștefan Cibian, as the President of [the Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND](#), introduced the formal opening session from the first day of the event and in his speech, he emphasized the importance of the framework in which the Black Sea NGO Forum project has developed throughout the years – mainly, [the Black Sea Synergy](#), as a policy framework for building cooperation between the countries surrounding the Black Sea region.

After this brief introduction, a special video message was transmitted on the part of **Mr. Johannes Hahn**, European Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, who **congratulated the initiative of the Black Sea NGO Forum for its 11 years of activity and accomplishments** in bringing civil society organisations from the wider Black Sea region together, under one single voice.

The Black Sea NGO Forum was also praised by **Mr. Călin Stoica**, PSC Permanent Representative. Over the past 11 years, in his view, **the Forum has become a central platform for dialogue and cooperation** for activists who make a difference. With the **Romanian Presidency of the EU Council**, we all must identify **mutually beneficial areas of cooperation**, and **noting the whole process of revisiting the Black Sea Synergy**, we have to put the Black Sea region on the map and enhance its role in recent EU developments in the region, such as the introduction of the concepts of **blue growth** and **blue economy**.

Next to talk was **H.E. Amb. Michael Christides**, BSEC Secretary – General. Taking note of the previous discussion related to the need of funding and the shrinking CSO space in the region, H.E. underlined that governments should act more towards supporting the work of NGOs, and also the most vulnerable groups of the society. The Black Sea NGO Forum has played an important role in the development of regional cooperation in the region. Yet, **its full potential can be reached only through supportive interaction** with other initiatives.

Ms. Audrone Perkauskiene, EEAS Head of Division, underlined the importance of the Black Sea Synergy, as **the prime example of successful and harmonious cooperation of the EU with its Member States and other partner countries** and of promotion of stability, sustainability and prosperity all across the region. Recently, there have been many positive developments in the region that must be as well taken into consideration: the blue growth concept, the elaboration of the new Common Maritime Agenda, as well as the concept of blue economy which has been promoted for a while and across the region.

The final presentation on the topic was delivered by **Mr. Dimitrios Triantaphyllou**, who put an accent on the role of CSOs and of the Black Sea Synergy in boosting the Europeanisation process among the Black Sea countries. In the current context of shrinking civic space, we, as **civil society representatives have to work together at EU level, in the light of enhancing regional cooperation and CSO empowerment**, as well as boosting our common dialogue.

"It is admirable that since 2008, CSOs from your countries, which as we all know, have different ambitions and faced different challenges, have consistently come together to increase dialogue and cooperation and strengthen capacity around specific Black Sea-related issues. So, in your discussions here in Brussels, we hope you will stand as proof that civil society, through its role as an incubator for regional synergies and exchange, is and will remain an invaluable stakeholder in the resilience of the wider Black Sea region. "

Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner, DG NEAR

Interactive Session: “Civil Society – A key component of the Black Sea Synergy”

Facilitator: *Ms. Svitlana Kuts*, Independent NGO Consultant

Speaker:

Ms. Diana Tase, Black Sea Synergy and Eastern Partnership Policy Officer, Division for Eastern Partnership, regional cooperation and OSCE, European External Action Service (EEAS)

The first interactive session from the first day of the Forum stirred up discussions centred around the **Black Sea Synergy (BSS)**, which represents the EU commitment to promote cooperation and regional development among the countries surrounding the Black Sea and to facilitate open dialogue between EU and the region.

Following a brief introductory intervention from **Ms. Diana Tase**, EEAS Black Sea Synergy and Eastern Partnership Policy Officer, who talked about the history, main specificities and the **upcoming process of revision of the BSS** in 2019, **Ms. Svitlana Kuts** guided the participants throughout the whole interactive session, designed in three different rounds. Participants were asked to split into groups and find common answers to **3 main questions**:



1. What are the thematic issues, even cross-cutting, that can bring an added value to regional cooperation among CSOs within the framework of the Black Sea Synergy (based on your organisation's regional experience)?
2. How can the Black Sea Synergy support mechanisms for fostering civil society regional cooperation and strengthening resilience (regional projects, networks)?
3. How to ensure coordination of the Synergy with other regional initiatives in the Black Sea and how to exchange best practices with other maritime regions?

Based on the input received and on the findings of our 2017 Evaluation Report “[The Black Sea NGO Forum a decade on. Evaluation, impact and perspectives \(2012 – 2016\)](#)”, The Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND has elaborated a **Position Paper** which aims to highlight the importance of civil society cooperation in the Black Sea Region and put forward a series of recommendations for the Black Sea Synergy policy in terms of thematic priorities and regional mechanisms to enable civil society to cooperate more effectively and sustainably.

The BSNGOF Position Paper „**Towards a Stronger & More Sustainable Civil Society Cooperation at the Black Sea**” is available online for consultation [here](#).

Parallel Thematic Workshops

Keeping the Momentum – from protest rallies to civic engagement

Facilitated by **Mr. Cosmin Bârzan**, Executive President, The Civic Resource Center and by **Ms. Mariia Symonova**, Expert, Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, the workshop aimed at understanding and discovering ways of **transforming protest movements into sustainable civic engagement**.

The workshop started off with brief presentations of each participant and their personal reasons **for taking to the streets and protesting**. Most of the answers were representing *a reaction* to certain actions or decisions of the government in power and participants admitted to protest because of corruption, of the lack of legitimacy, , the lack of freedom, the lack of rule of law, of social injustice, of unemployment or even because of electoral frauds.

The session was designed in such a way to encourage interactivity between participants, and the room was thus split into two opposing parts: **“Strongly Agree”** and **“Strongly Disagree”**. The facilitators had prepared a set of (controversial) statements related to protests and civic engagement and participants were asked to share their opinions and thoughts and take a stand in the room, between the two extremes, **according to the degree to which they were agreeing with the statement or not**.



After each statement and lining up, participants were invited to explain their choice of positioning in the room and to give examples from their personal experiences.

Examples of statements:

- *Women should avoid taking leadership of protest movements as it is very dangerous;*
- *Only formalised communities can draft and propose high quality legislative amendments after the revolution;*
- *Online movements cannot impact decision making and politics. It must only be a team of people working as a legal entity;*
- *Successful CSO movements have to transform into interpolitical projects or political parties in order to sustain the positive transformation in their societies.*

Video Resources

[Radio Free Europe: 'This Is A Dictatorship' - Protests Mark Moldova's Independence Day](#)

[Netflix: Winter On Fire - Ukraine's Fight for Freedom](#)

- CSO activists have to engage youth in processes of voting at elections even though young people mistrust politics in general

Role of networks in advocating for better social inclusiveness through respect of Human Rights, particularly on right to education

Moderated by **Ms. Cristina Rigman**, Secretary General, Child-Pact – The regional Coalition for child protection, the workshop had the objective **to share experiences of national child protection networks in creating inclusive education at national level** and to create a space of **mutual learning**.

Ms. Vasluian Stela, Board Member, Alliance of Active NGOs in the field of Child and Family Social Protection (APSCF), Republic of Moldova, [began with a presentation](#) of APSCF and the projects implemented. It is a network of 65 non-governmental organizations throughout the Republic of Moldova, including the Transnistrian region, set up as an informal network in 2002 and formally registered only in 2014. APSCF is working to create a coherent and functional development framework of the decision makers and of the implementation mechanisms and practices, while securing the respect and real protection of children and families.



Ms. Muraydan Aida, President, Child Protection Network, Armenia began with a [presentation](#) of her organisation. Child Protection Network of Armenia (CPN) started its operations informally in 2005 and formally in 2012. Nowadays, with 49 members., CPN activities include: *advocacy and lobbying for law improvement, awareness campaigns, consolidation of local and international organizations' potential*. The network has a strong focus on combating violence against children, advocating for the adoption of the domestic violence law with an emphasis on children's rights.

Ms. Kalandadze Ketevani, Executive Secretary [talked about](#) the Coalition for Children and Youth, Georgia. Even though the Coalition exists since 2012, it was formally registered in 2016. Nowadays, it comprises 41 organizations. Ms. Ketevani continued her presentation with some of the big challenges Georgia faces regarding the subjects of *education and children with disabilities*, underlining the lack of human resources, the absence of a mechanism for identifying children with disabilities, insufficient teachers for children with special needs, and the lack of NGOs working on public awareness.

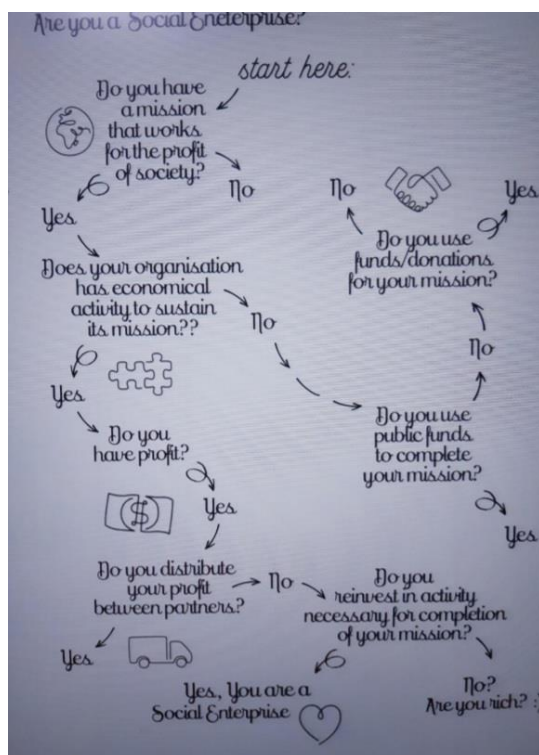
Ms. Ashumova Kamala, Head of Secretariat presented the NGO Alliance for Children's Rights from Azerbaijan. The NGO Alliance for Children's Rights was founded in 2002 and

today it brings together 70 organizations. Next year, the Alliance will publish a report on the situation of children in Azerbaijan, especially in what regards children with disabilities. Due to the Early Detection of Disabilities Program, the Alliance has the support and involvement of the Ministry of Education which can lead to better services.

The conclusion of the workshop was that even if there are a lot of problems in every country, the important thing **is to collaborate and join forces in order to make a real change in the society.**

Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship for creating Economic and Social Values

The workshop on social innovation was facilitated jointly by **Ms. Maya Doneva**, Karin dom Foundation (Bulgaria), **Ms. Tamar Jangulashvili**, Social Innovation & Entrepreneurship Center – SiNC (Georgia) and **Ms. Sophia Shakirova**, Center for Network Initiatives Support (Russia).



The aim of the workshop was to introduce the concept of **social entrepreneurship** for beginners in the field and to underline the links and importance between social impact actions and using business tools for solving social challenges.

The presentation (which can be found online [here](#)) started off with a general definition of social enterprises, which represent **businesses that exist in attempt to solve social problems**, improve communities, to benefit public and community, rather than shareholders and owners.

Some of the **main challenges** that the social entrepreneurship sector faces nowadays are: the *misunderstanding of the sense of the concept*, the *lack of specialists and support infrastructure*, the *lack of special legislation*, as well as the *difficulty to*

enter the market and to get funding.

The presentations focused also on defining and explaining the construction and operationalization of *business models and business model canvas*, *customer exploration maps*, *minimum value products*, *empathy maps* and *social business model frameworks*. In the last part of the workshop, **success stories of social enterprises from Bulgaria, Georgia and Russia** were presented.

The Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea – How can civil society be engaged?

The workshop on the Common Maritime Agenda was facilitated by **Ms. Petya Genova, Maritime Policy Officer at DG MARE** and aimed to *raise awareness among civil society representatives on the concept of blue economy, introduce the process of creating a Common Maritime Agenda in the Black Sea and explore ways of cooperation with civil society on this matter.*

To this end, Ms. Genova first made a [comprehensive presentation](#) on the **concept of blue economy** from EU perspective, its application to the Black Sea basin, as well as the initiative of creating a Common Maritime Agenda for this region.

With a turnover of EUR 556 billion in 2016, the EU blue economy sector (covering sea basins within and bordering the EU) has an **enormous potential for development**, economic growth and job opportunities.

To reach this potential, blue economy has **a series of enablers**: common skills, shared infrastructure, sustainable use of the sea, environmental protection, maritime spatial planning, maritime security and marine data. Moreover, the growth of the blue economy is dependent on **sustainable funding, research & innovation and effective regulation**.

Blue economy comprises all economic activities related to oceans, seas and costs and covers a wide range of interlinked established sectors (such as fishing, shipbuilding, shipping, tourism etc) and emerging sectors (renewable energy, bio-technology, circular economy etc).

Given that sea basins bring together many countries, **blue economy** presents a series of **opportunities for regional cooperation** in order to:

- ❖ Better use the resources of the sea to relief pressure on land, ensure food security and enable circular economy;
- ❖ Fight climate change by advocating for environmental protection and reduction of emissions;
- ❖ Support coastal communities by creating high-value and sustainable jobs and use local resources.

With regard to **cooperation at the Black Sea basin**, there is not yet a strategy in place as it is the case for the Atlantic Ocean, Mediterranean, Adriatic, Ionic or Baltic seas. However, a two-year technical assistance project was started in October 2017 in order to facilitate **blue growth** in the Black Sea basin ([The Facility for Blue Growth in the Black Sea Project](#)). The project aims to:

- ✓ Support to establish and/or maintain national cross sectoral structures on maritime affairs;

- ✓ Raise awareness in the region of the added value of a coordinated approach to maritime affairs;
- ✓ Develop knowledge about potential growth in the Blue Economy;
- ✓ Offer guidance to project conception.

This is being done by performing **country assessments** in order to identify individual country needs; consulting relevant stakeholders; organizing **events**; promoting **research**; and supporting **specific projects**.

As far as **results** are concerned, **the Facility** has promoted inter-ministerial and stakeholder dialogue, provided analysis on the state of blue economy at national and regional level, created a virtual blue economy knowledge platform (which offers latest information on related subjects, data, funding opportunities alerts and partner match-making), created a hotline support for stakeholders, and organised targeted workshops on specific subjects.

In terms of promoting a coordinated approach, an important step was taken with the adoption of the [Burgas Declaration Towards a Common Maritime Agenda in the Black Sea](#) – a document by which ministers responsible for maritime affairs from Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey, Ukraine, as well as the Republic of Moldova agreed to an enhanced cooperation in the Black Sea basin. **Next steps include finalising the adoption of the Common Maritime Agenda in 2019.** In addition, experts from the Black Sea region elaborated a [vision paper](#) for blue growth from the perspective on research and innovation.

Ms. Genova's presentation was followed by a discussion among participants trying to identify how civil society can be engaged and contribute to the discussions and projects on blue growth and the Common Maritime Agenda.

With regard to the political process, civil society from Black Sea basin countries can become involved and give their input by participating at national/ regional workshops organised by DG MARE (the next regional workshop will be organised in March 2019 in Istanbul) or contacting their national focal point (usually a ministry) directly.

During the discussions, it was highlighted that it's important to remember that civil society has a voice and expertise in a variety of topics, not just human rights and good governance.

Therefore, civil society's main roles were seen as being related to raising awareness on climate change; educate and engage communities in coastal areas and beyond regarding their responsibility to reduce pollution and plastic waste, as well as involve them in decision-making process at local level related to maritime issues; raising awareness and advocating for the correlation between the skills and employment offers.

Day II

The 13th of November 2018

Interactive Session: “How to make CSOs more resilient?”

Facilitator: Ms. Cristina Rigman, Secretary-General, ChildPact – The Regional Coalition for Child Protection



In the first part of the second day of the Forum, two interactive sessions on the topic of **increasing CSO resilience in the Black Sea region** were organised. The discussions were facilitated by **Ms. Cristina Rigman**, ChildPact Secretary-General.

Society resilience is one of the key concepts envisaged by the *European Union Global Strategy* that promotes partnerships with and among civil society organisations, by working closely together.

At the Forum, participants, split into groups, were asked to firstly discuss, under the form of a *negotiation exercise* and then decide on answers to the following 3 questions:

1. What is/ can be the role of CSOs in fostering society resilience at national and local community level?
2. How to keep CSOs resilient in a shrinking civic space context?
3. What should be the role of the Black Sea NGO Forum (through regional cooperation) and other stakeholders in facilitating the CSO resilience in the region?

After working together on the questions, participants were asked to present the main ideas discussed in their own groups. Most of them underlined first and foremost the **core of shared democratic values that keep CSOs representatives motivated in their work**, despite shrinking civic space, as well as the **strong need for good CSO governance/ leadership**, for a **long-term strategic vision**, for **transparency and accountability**, and for **financial sustainability**. In their presentations, participants also stressed that CSO resilience can be achieved through **partnership and regional cooperation** and for this, a cooperative and enabling environment and permissive legislation are vital.



Interactive Plenary: “Improving Civil Society Environment: Sharing Expertise & Building Solidarity”

Facilitator: *Ms. Biljana Spasovska*, Policy & Advocacy Officer, Balkan Civil Society Development Network

Speakers:

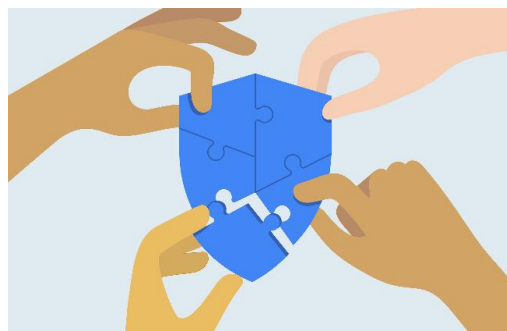
Ms. Zuzana Sladkova, Policy & Advocacy Coordinator, CONCORD

Ms. Giada Negri, Campaign Officer, European Civic Forum

Ms. Carlotta Besozzi, Coordinator, Civil Society Europe

Ms. Sînziana Poiană, Acting Team Leader, DG NEAR Civil Society Support, European Commission

The second half of the day was designed to **continue the discussions from the interactive process** from the previous two sessions. As it turned out in the end, the participants came to (at least one) common conclusion on **ways of increasing CSO resilience across the Black Sea region** and one condition to do so is to ensure first of all an operating **enabling environment**. Thus, the



main objectives of the third session was to **present advocacy initiatives and mechanisms that are promoting enabling environment at both national and regional level**, participants being encouraged to contribute with their own thoughts and ideas along the way.

The session started off with the presentation of **Ms. Biljana Spasovska**, BCSDN Policy & Advocacy Officer, on the main projects her organisation has implemented on increasing enabling environment across the Balkans region, with the aim of sharing expertise and best practices. One of their best-known tools is the [Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development](#), which aims to **monitor the legal, regulatory, and financial environment** in which the civil society from the Western Balkans and Turkey operate, starting from **3 thematic areas** (*respect of basic legal guarantees of freedoms; monitoring the framework for CSOs' financial viability and sustainability; as well as the government – CSO relationship*). Apart from this, BCSDN, as part of the [CIVICUS' Affinity Group of National Association \(AGNA\)](#) and the [Global Standard for CSO Accountability](#), also promotes **CSO global accountability and transparency** for both governments and citizens, in order to draw attention on the urgent matter of shrinking civic space.

Also in the context of enabling environment, **Ms. Zuzana Sladkova**, CONCORD Policy & Advocacy Coordinator [presented](#) one of the most recently published CONCORD reports on **the topic of development and digitalization - Development going digital?**, elaborated within the [CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness – CPDE 2017 European Region Work Plan](#). Its main aim was to introduce the **digitalization** concept, to highlight its impact and consequences for the development sector and to explore **the role of CSOs and ways of empowering them**. We, as civil

society representatives, have to think about how to reinvent ourselves in order for us to be ready for the digitalization age and while doing so, we should always remember to link our work and activities to the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development. Digitalization can play a very big role in advancing the implementation of the 17 SDGs and can also boost the impact of advocacy initiatives, especially in the context of shrinking CSO space.



The next speaker, **Ms. Giada Negri**, European Civic Forum Campaign Manager, [presented](#) on the part of her organisation [the Civic Space Watch](#) – a collaborative online tool for providing easy access to already existing resources, for improving information sharing among civil society actors and between civil society and institutions and for encouraging the demonstration of solidarity with grassroots activists and CSOs in need. As underlined in her speech, **civic space in**

Europe is changing rapidly, but in a very subtle way and for this we have to continue to

monitor, to report, to do fact-based advocacy and to have a coordinated solidary response as civil society representatives, in order to pass our stories further on.

Next to present was **Ms. Carlotta Besozzi**, Civil Society Europe Coordinator, who too emphasized that the environment for civic space is changing quickly. Noticing this, she and her colleagues from *Civil Society Europe* prepared, in partnership with CIVICUS, **two reports (2016/2017)** in which they are **trying to measure the perception on civic space and the state of democracy across Europe and beyond**. The reports shed light on the main funding challenges of smaller CSOs, as well as on the increasing trend of general polarization of society and the pressure coming from several economic and extremist groups. To counteract this, we must promote the role of the EU in addressing shrinking civic space, as well as the importance of the non-governmental sector in advancing democratic values and principles.

About the role of the EU in promoting enabling environment talked **Ms. Sînziana Poiană**, DG NEAR Acting Team Leader, who, as part of the Centre of Thematic Expertise on Civil Society Support, shared her views on **the importance of partnerships between EU institutions and CSOs from the region**. Throughout time, in its dialogue with partner countries, the EU has encountered different challenges and starting from the lessons learned, Ms. Poiană touched upon the needs for the full understanding of the regional and national contexts, a more comprehensive coherence between national legislation on CSO foreign funding and EU procedures and dialogue, as well as the need for a better coordination between donors in the region.



1. Acknowledge the complexity of the issue of shrinking CSO space in the region and collect evidence

- Going beyond looking at the respect of basic freedom and reacting at the political level.
- Try to understand what is really happening on the ground and involve all relevant stakeholders in process of monitoring (especially through EU country roadmaps for engagement with CSOs).



2. Become part of the global debate on the standards for foreign funding for CSOs

- Need to look at anti-money laundering and anti-terrorist legislation, and at risk assessments, with the help of partners such as the Venice Commission, the Council of Europe, the Fundamental Rights Agency and other civil society organisations around the globe.



3. Acknowledge the importance of donor coordination in the region

- Having a common donor upfront is extremely important in tackling shrinking civic space and we need to exchange information on a regular basis.

Side Event: “Counteracting Emotional Burnout: Self and Structural Support of Civil Activists”

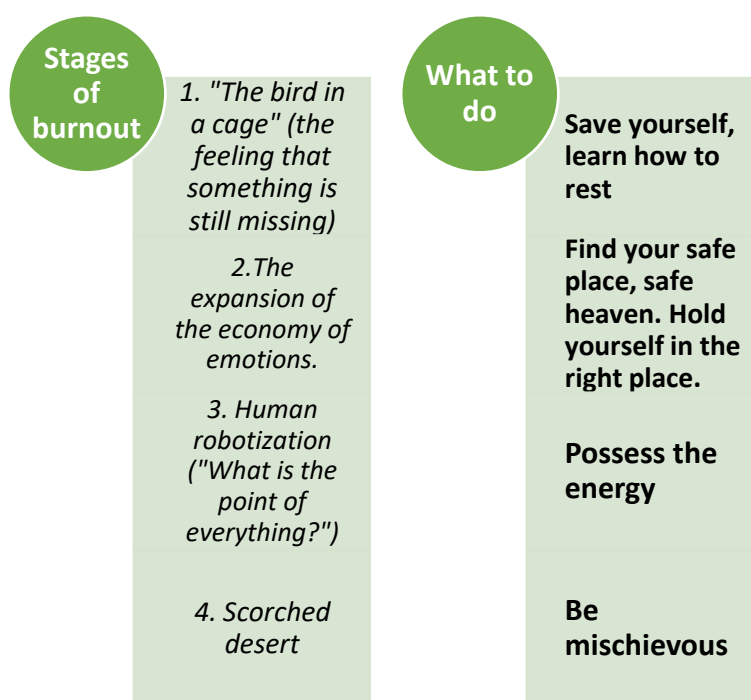
Speakers:

Ms. Volha Karach, Director, International Center for Civil Initiatives “Our House”

Facilitated by **Ms. Volha Karach**, Director, International Center for Civil Initiatives “Our House” and organised as an **informal discussion**, the side-event aimed at:

- *supporting the networking and systemic innovation relating to the emotional burnout of civil activists;*
- *mediating peaceful conflict resolution and the interaction among local stakeholders so as to meet the objectives of prevention of emotional burnouts, that may be blended with specific participatory methodologies, according to local needs;*
- *adapting different methods and facilitation techniques, communication strategies to involve, inform and disseminate results of prevention of the emotional burnout of civil activists;*
- *preventing the drain of civil activists/ actors from the civil society.*

After presenting the main visible stages of burnout, the participants were encouraged to talk about their personal experiences and what solutions worked for them in regaining energy and motivation.



Day III

The 14th of November 2018

Interactive Session: “Regional Cafe: Meet your donors”

Facilitator: *Ms. Romina Matei*, Board Member, The Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND / Project Manager, The Intercultural Institute of Timișoara

Speakers:

Ms. Sînziana Poiană, Acting Team Leader, DG NEAR Civil Society Support, European Commission

Ms. Marja Susic, Program Officer, European Endowment for Democracy

Ms. Maria Florea, Program Coordinator, Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation

Ms. Dana Onofrei, Counsellor, Managing Authority – Black Sea Basin Programme, Directorate – MA European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration

Mr. Marc Ellingstad, Liaison to the EU, USAID

Mr. Rotislav Valvoda, Executive Director, Prague Civil Society Center



Following the **very positive feedback** received on part of the participants on the regional cafe session organised at the 2017 edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum, the third day of the event was dedicated to strengthening the dialogue between donors and CSOs in the Black Sea region, regarding the available funding opportunities and thematic priorities.

The interactive process was facilitated by **Ms. Romina Matei**, FOND Board Member/ Project Coordinator, Intercultural Institute Timișoara in Romania.

All participants were split in **6 groups** of approximately 15 people, and for each group there was assigned a representative of a donor organisation active in the Black Sea region. Participants were encouraged to discuss about the engagement and support provided to CSOs by the donors, especially in what regards *sources of funding*. The donor organisations present at this year's edition of the Forum were the following:

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- [European Commission;](#)
 - [European Endowment for Democracy;](#)
 - [Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation;](#)
 - [Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme 2014-2020;](#)
 - [USAID – United States Agency for International Development;](#)
 - [Prague Civil Society Center.](#)

In each group, donors „hosted” the discussions, presenting their **main activities, priorities and CSO funding programs** and in the end allocating a few minutes for interaction, questions and comments. After a first round of 20 minutes, participants were asked to join the discussions of a different group in order to ensure direct interaction and networking with all present donors.

Plenary Session: “Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in the Black Sea Region”

Moderator: *Ms. Monica Prisacariu, Board Member, The Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND/ International Program Coordinator, New Horizons Foundation*

Speakers:

Ms. Heghine Manasyan, CEO, Caucasus Research Resource Center - Armenia

Mr. Eden Mamut, Secretary-General, Black Sea Universities Network

Mr. Giorgi Kldiashvili, Executive Director, Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)

The last plenary session of the Forum focused on **active involvement of CSOs in the promotion and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs)** and of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals in the Black Sea region.

In this regards, **Ms. Monica Prisacariu** introduced briefly to the public New Horizons Foundation (NHF), the non-profit organization she is representing, which promotes experiential education models that advance life skills for youth. In the last few years, NHF representatives understood that working at national level is not enough and have **started**

to connect their story to the stories of the world. This is how they began to connect all of their work and programs to the 17 SDGs, especially those related to education and youth.

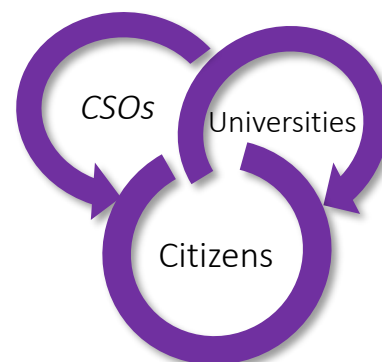
*Starting from this, Ms. Prisacariu organised a small exercise in order to see what are the goals that the BSNGO participants work on and invited them to present briefly the activities and projects of their organisations that matched each SDG. In the context of the discussion, a special emphasis was put on **Goal 17 – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.***



Ms. Heghine Manasyan, CEO, was [the first to speak about her organisation](#), Caucasus Research Resource Center – Armenia and the projects that they are implementing on the subject of SDGs. CRRC-Armenia, as a regionally focused and nationally based independent research centre, aims to address national and regional socio-economic and political challenges via high-quality data collection, analysis and enhancement of the scientific capacity of the research community. In the framework of the [CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness – CPDE](#), CRRC has implemented throughout 2017 a special study on the **CSO engagement in the implementation of SDGs in Armenia**, with a focus on ‘No Poverty’ and ‘Gender Equality’. Ms. Manasyan stressed the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships in facilitating the implementation of the SDGs in the region and presented several useful tools and links in this regard, putting an emphasis on the monitoring activity of [the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation \(GPEDC\)](#).

Next to present was **Mr. Eden Mamut**, *Secretary-General, Black Sea Universities Network*, who [talked about the implementation of SDGs in the Black Sea region from an academic perspective](#). His presentation focused on the **opportunities of collaboration of the non-profit and academic sectors** in the Black Sea region in what regards the promotion of the 2030 Agenda. Therefore, the successful implementation of SDGs in each region depends

fundamentally on the understanding, learning and implementing an effective set of measures tailored to the specific factors of the region, leveraging the existing resources and putting a major emphasis on education and innovation. **The universities from the Black Sea region could be partners with high potential to contribute to the implementation of SDGs in each country** and to facilitate generation of synergies at regional level.



Following this, **Mr. Giorgi Kldiashvili**, Executive Director, Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) [talked about the experience of his organisation in promoting the 2030 Agenda in Georgia](#). IDFI is a Georgian non-governmental organization founded in 2009, working as a hybrid watchdog/ think-tank, combining monitoring and analytical skills with evidence-based advocacy, strategic litigation, awareness raising and consulting activities, as well as growing international impact. By presenting the UNDP – SIDA supported project “**Facilitate the Landing of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the National Level in Georgia**”, he drew the main challenges and lessons learned and forwarded a set of recommendations for **the CSOs, the national governments and the international organisations** as well for a better coordination in implementing the SDGs.



Final Remarks & Closing Session

Facilitator: Ms. Anca Ciucă, FOND Vice-President/ President, Foundation for Democratic Changes

In the last part of the Forum, **Ms. Anca Ciucă**, FOND Vice-President/ President, Foundation for Democratic Changes facilitated the Final Remarks Session and encouraged **participants to share their thoughts and opinions** on what meant this edition of the Forum for them at a professional and personal level. By using the online platform [Metimeter.com](https://www.metimeter.com), responses were collected anonymously and displayed live.

The Black Sea NGO Forum organising team took the opportunity to kindly thank all the speakers on the agenda, as well as the present participants for all of their active engagement throughout the event.

What do you take with you from the Forum this year?

Mentimeter

Energy	New connections and ideas	New ideas, new contacts
Contacts. Inspiration	New contacts and ideas	Energy, updated info, partnerships, some secret ingredients for resilience.
Contacts and ideas	Friends, new contacts, inspiration	Motivation for further activity
network	New contacts and understanding of a new dimension - Black Sea Region	motivation to improve a collaboration within a network and new ideas about getting financial support from the donors. Thank you for organising and giving us a space to find collaborators.
New ideas and information from the future projects New contacts Information about donors and projects	More ideas about resilience of civil society, more knowledge about donors, more contacts with colleagues from other NGOs.	I'm going to discuss with my colleagues on how we can promote the importance of the Black Sea NGO Forum activities, network and partnership. We will discuss how our work could support and impact the regional work around the Black Sea
Ideas to strengthen capacity building of our organization, how to promote to a larger public our goals and to engage them to sustain us. It was significant to meet donors and to identify new modalities to ensure financial durability of our work.	Only new contacts	A lot of interesting ideas, information and some contacts
Good partnership network. Are the contacts shared between all participants?	SDGs, ideas for how to be more resilient, ideas for projects (digitalisation)	First, thank the organizers and their partners for managing to conduct the 2018 Forum. I took useful info about resilience and sustainability of the NGOs, donors and their proposals, good examples, networking of participants, never give back mood.