

***The Black Sea NGO Forum – 10th Anniversary Edition
Advancing Regional Cooperation in the Black Sea Region***

4th-6th of December 2017, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova
Hotel Radisson Blu Leograd, 77, Mitropolit Varlaam St.

Considering the volatile and challenging regional and international context, the focus must be more than ever put on how to foster cooperation around joint sustainable development-related initiatives. At global level, Agenda 2030, promoting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasizes that their implementation will not be possible without everyone's engagement and support.

As clearly stated by Goal 17 "Partnerships for the Goals", the achievement and monitoring of the SDGs must be complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, in all countries and in particular in developing countries (targets 17.16 and 17.17)¹.

At the level² of the Black Sea region, sustainable development is key in increasing resilience of states and societies, starting from the grassroots level. Civil society organizations (CSOs) can act as enablers and connectors by engaging the local communities they are part of in furthering the SDGs. This added value should be highlighted and supported within the framework of joint regional cooperation initiatives and multi-stakeholder dialogues and this is the core vision of the Black Sea NGO Forum through its "Strategic Framework for Civil Society Cooperation in the Black Sea region"³.

CELEBRATING 10 EDITIONS OF THE BLACK SEA NGO FORUM (ideally no caps, bold/italics better option)

From its very first edition back in 2008, the Black Sea NGO Forum aimed at creating an open space for debate, sharing mutual knowledge and understanding, communication and cooperation among civil society representatives, governments, international organizations and donors active in the Black Sea region. The Forum has as a central focus the sharing of good practices in various domains and success stories of regional cooperation.

¹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/11803Official-List-of-Proposed-SDG-Indicators.pdf>

² https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/join_2017_21_f1_communication_from_commission_to_inst_en_v7_p1_916039.pdf

³ <http://www.blackseango.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Strategic-Framework-for-Civil-Society-in-the-Black-Sea-Region.pdf>

Almost 10 years after, the Black Sea NGO Forum is a driver of change in the region, reuniting more than 900 participants from 11 countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, the Republic of Moldova, Turkey, Ukraine, Romania and Russia. The Forum has enabled the participants to share expertise and best practices on a diversity of themes of regional interest (democracy & human rights; local development; youth; children rights; environment; citizen participation etc.), encouraged multi-stakeholder dialogue and facilitated partnerships, thus, contributing to building trust and joint projects, identifying common challenges and opportunities and addressing them together.

OBJECTIVES OF THE 2017 EDITION:

While celebrating the achievement of this important milestone – 10 editions – the Black Sea NGO Forum must reassess its strategic positioning in the region and how it can adapt and further opportunities enable sustainable regional cooperation.

Therefore, this year's anniversary edition will focus on several objectives:

- Reflect on the achievements accomplished so far and the lessons learnt that will shape the evolution and further development of the forum based on the evaluation of the last editions (2012 – 2016);
- Debate the current regional and international context and how CSOs can address the main challenges by identifying opportunities for further regional cooperation and synergies;
- Continue the support given to the active Thematic Working Groups of the forum within the „Strategic Framework of the Civil Society Cooperation in the Black Sea Region”, by providing a space for networking and further development;
- Encourage new initiatives by facilitating dialogue and engaging newcomers.

Background:

The first edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum was organised in 2008 as a unique regional event by the Romanian NGDO Platform (FOND), with the support of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Representation of the European Commission and the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation. The event was initiated within the framework of the Black Sea Synergy, a European policy launched at the initiative of Romania, Bulgaria and Greece with the purpose of consolidating regional cooperation at the Black Sea.