



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

- REPORT -



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



Empowerment, Peace,
Partnerships

CSO Partnership
for Development Effectiveness



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DAY I, the 4th of December 2017

Plenary Session 1: “The Power of NGOs: Success stories of partnerships and sustainability”

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

Welcome remarks: Ms. Tatiana Molcean, State Secretary for Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova

Ms. Gayane Mkrtchyan, Program Director, Eurasia Partnership Foundation Armenia

Ms. Angela Achiței, President, “Close to You” Romania Foundation

Ms. Natia Pirashvili, Project Manager/ Anti-Corruption Practitioner, AGG, Georgia

Mr. Ion Manole, President, Promo-LEX Association, Republic of Moldova

Ms. Lisbeth Pilegaard, Vice-Chair of the Executive Committee, European Endowment for Democracy

On behalf of the Moldovan Government, **Ms. Tatiana Molcean** welcomed the participants to Chișinău and express the honour to be host country for the 10th anniversary edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum. The State Secretary emphasized that CSOs are key actors giving the example of their partnership on the implementation of the Association Agreement with the Republic of Moldova. As an added value, CSOs can cover the institutional memory and provide relevant expertise for civil servants. Having reached this anniversary edition, the forum can be shared as a good practice with other similar structures.

The aim of this first session was **to share success stories and examples of established NGO leaders from the region** as a source of **inspiration and motivation** for the participants present at this year’s Forum. This new approach was part of the recommendations of the last evaluation of the Forum (2012-2016) regarding the format of this annual event.

The first speaker, **Ms. Angela Achiței** shared the importance of education, motivation to do the right thing and to make a difference as a basis for her drive in working in the NGO sector on improving social services. Ms. Achiței highlighted her engagement in the development of the “Close to You” Romania Foundation and later on, in setting the foundation of the first Romanian Federation of Non-Governmental Organizations for Social Services. The success of a NGO network lies in the involvement of its members with time, expertise, resources without expecting something in return and being united by shared ideas and common challenges. This is particularly



important in the current difficult environment for NGOs in accessing funding, legislative changes, narrow focus of activity.

Mr. Ion Manole started his presentation with recognizing the importance of the Black Sea NGO Forum's high standards from the very beginning and, in particular, opening this edition with the opportunity to introduce the experiences of successful NGOs and their story. Mr. Manole shared how he established the Promo-LEX Association, the first projects and building his team, as well as, the development of his organization throughout the years and focus on Transnistria (pioneering many activities in this region). All the perseverance and hard work paid off with the remarkable results of his NGO, such as, 130 cases represented in European Court of Human Rights. Also, the organization ensures the monitoring of electoral process covering all the country and providing important recommendations in improving the electoral code.

Ms. Gayane Mkrtchyan emphasized the opportunities provided by the Black Sea NGO Forum, especially on establishing partnerships, which are crucial for having a better understanding of the world and sharing good practices and useful tools. In this context, CSOs must become more open, change stereotypes, have a more business-minded approach and focus more the relation with the citizens. Following this idea, people must be seen more as partners in accomplishing the organization's mission and in making governments accountable and businesses more responsible to social issues.

Ms. Lisbeth Pilegaard presented a different view on the CSOs and what makes them successful from the point of view of a donor. Ms. Pilegaard first emphasized the current challenges faced by CSOs, such as: shrinking space, growing distance between them and the grassroots level (the people they work for) and donors. In some countries, this has created the stereotype that CSOs are more grant-eaters or elites in the society. It is very important to avoid that by communicating more strategically with the constituency of your NGO avoiding the standard wording and targeting young people's engagement. Ms. Pilegaard concluded with three important recommendations for successful NGOs: go GLOBAL (reach out in your thematic area), go FLAT (reach out communities in more informal settings, youth and people outside of your CSO world) and go TECH (use technology to reach out to other people).

As last speaker of this session, **Ms. Natia Pirashvili** introduced her experience in the NGO sector and its importance in changing policies, attitudes and mentalities. Ms. Pirashvili focused on her engagement in a pilot project strengthening local governments to identify their vulnerabilities to corruption and to elaborate strategies to address them. This project later developed in an initiative to have a regional network with the anti-corruption practitioners involved in this region, which has also been supported by the Black Sea NGO Forum.

Formal Opening of the Forum: “The importance of sustainable development as key for increasing resilience in the Black Sea region”

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

Key note address: Mr. Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (video message)

H.E. Amb. Peter Michalko, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Moldova

H.E. Amb. Traian Chebeleu, Deputy Secretary – General, Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)

Ms. Olivia Todorean, Director, Directorate for Analysis and Policy Planning, Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Justin Kilcullen, European Representative, CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE)



Mr. Ștefan Cibian opened the session by mentioning the need to focus more on the achievements, to debate on the current regional and international context and emphasizing the added value of the **Black Sea NGO Forum** as a space for networking and sharing know-how, facilitating dialogue and encouraging new initiatives in the region.

In the video address prepared for this event, the EU Commissioner **Mr. Johannes Hahn** underlined the role played by civil society organisations and the BSF, which enhances the will to cooperate by identifying opportunities for further regional cooperation and synergies for fulfill the potential of the Black Sea area. The EU’s approach to the region is based on the **Black Sea Synergy** initiative launched in 2007, which is flexible and inclusive, focusing on building confidence and fostering regional dialogue and providing a framework for more cross-sectoral activities, supporting what the countries in the region want to do together. In this current context, **CSOs should enhance their contribution to the reform processes, to strengthen the society resilience.**

During his speech, **H.E. Amb. Peter Michalko** emphasized the unicity of the Form as it includes both EAP countries and Southern EU countries. Over the years, **the Forum has been a catalyst in the region.** It is not an easy task to design an inclusive agenda taking into consideration the regional challenges and the role of CSOs remains crucial. The Black Sea

Forum is important for the European Union and it will continue to support CSOs to become stronger actors in their home countries. Civil society organisations are the active elements of the society that **care about standards, democracy and rule of law**. They are also important in keeping the balance and Governments accountable.

Regarding the Black Sea Synergy, H.E. Amb. Michalko also mentioned that the Black Sea NGO Forum is one of the most relevant initiatives in this context and, in the future, **practical cooperation will remain the main focus**. BSF is the success story of this strategy as **it builds trust and provides effective results**. In the same time, the evaluation made by FOND for the last years of the forum reveals the main challenges in the region and the difficulties faced by CSOs and the societal resilience will be more important in the next years.

The EU will continue to support CSOs in the region through its financial instruments, like the [European Neighbourhood Instrument \(ENI\)](#), the [European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights](#) or the [Thematic Programme Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities \(CSO-LA\)](#). **Specific areas** include radicalization, social resilience, culture, youth, education, environment, cyber disruption. For the period 2014 – 2020 EU provides approx. 49 mil. Euro.

H.E. Amb. Traian Chebeleu emphasised the importance of the BSF as an **open platform to share best practices** and mentioned the relevance of **the Sustainable Development Goals** and their implementation process. Through their meetings at ministerial level and the Working Groups, they agreed to support the new development cooperation agenda – SDGs and to strengthen partnerships for sustainable development.

Their **areas of cooperation** include agriculture, healthcare, education, energy, trade and economic development, transport, small and medium size enterprises, emergency assistance, culture, environmental protection.

Ms. Olivia Todorean underlined that **interaction** is very important and we need to listen to the **needs of NGOs and people from the region**. The BSF is relevant as it makes the region more democratic and secured, it **explores opportunities and builds trust in the region, facilitates partnerships**. There are still some challenges in the region that need to be approached – *the limited economic development, instability, frozen and open conflicts*. There are also some positive aspects – *the facility for blue growth, the presence of CSOs and of course opportunities – the EU Council Presidency of Romania (2019) and Bulgaria (2018)*. The Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs will continue to support the Forum and the initiatives in the region. Ms. Todorean emphasized that the **BSF should be supported on a multiannual basis** from Government, CSOs, and other partners as well, as it has a greater role still to play - to influence public policies, build solidarity, facilitate new projects that can strengthen resilience of societies, deterioration of democracy.

Mr. Justin Kilcullen addressed the very important role that CSOs have in setting up the **2030 Agenda and resilience**. One of the most important principle was **Leave no one behind**. CPDE has been involved in the discussions related to the SDGs and **development effectiveness**. They participated in all the fora and WGs regarding the SDGs. Mr. Kilcullen also mentioned the Busan momentum when **Civil society was recognised as an independent development stakeholder**. Although the Government level has an important role in designing the public policies, we need to take into consideration what is happening at **local level**. SDGs should be reflected in these policies at national level but this is not happening. The **monitoring process** should be mandatory and we need to work together

around this. In this context, Ireland initiated **Coalition 2030 - Working together to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals**, an alliance of civil society organisations committed to and working towards upholding Ireland's commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at home in Ireland and in over 50 countries by 2030.

Taking into consideration the importance of CSOs at national and local level, we need to empower them to lobby and campaign. We need to find allies and to persevere in our work.

Parallel Thematic Workshops - Part I

The role of regional networks in monitoring the implementation of Child Rights Convention and the Committee's final remarks

Coordinated by the Alliance of NGOs active in the field of Child and Family Social Protection (APSCF) and moderated by Ms. Cristina Rigman, Secretary-General at ChildPact - The Regional Coalition for Child Protection, the workshop's objectives were to **share the experience of national child protection networks in implementing the Child Rights Convention (CRC)**; to analyse importance of networks' involvement in the monitoring process; and to identify opportunities of network collaboration for strengthening the impact of civil society in ensuring the implementation of Child Rights Convention.

Ms. Mariana Ianachevici, *The Alliance of NGOs active in the field of Child and Family Social Protection – APSCF* mentioned that in the Republic of Moldova the monitoring process of the CRC implementation began in 2002 as an expert-driven, UNICEF led process. Over the years, the lead was transferred to APSCF and children participation was included. In 2016, the monitoring process was CSO and children-driven with experts' involvement. At the same time, Ms. Ianachevici highlighted that **CRC monitoring is a task for all interested parties** – authorities, CSOs, children and parents etc. Moreover, Ms. Ianachevici dedicated a part of her presentation to the **importance of regional cooperation** in the field of child protection.

Mr. George Bogdanov, *National Network for Children* presented Bulgaria's experience in monitoring the children's rights at UN level. For this, it is important to know all instruments available and decide strategically. Besides the CRC and the two optional protocols (on the Sale of Children and Children in Armed Conflict), there are also other instruments such as: [Human Rights Council](#), the [Universal Periodic Review](#), the [Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#) and [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#).

As regards the Bulgarian coalition's experience with the CRC monitoring, it comprised of the following: providing complementary and constructive input on the authorities' monitoring process; organising a separate children's meeting; promoting their findings and

main recommendations in the Bulgarian media; commenting upon the list of issues sent to the government and concluding observations of the CRC Committee.

Mr. Zini Kore, *United for Child Care and Protection - BKTF* outlined in his presentation Albania's experience in the reform of the child protection system. Albania benefited from the exchange of experience and lessons learnt with other countries, the child protection reform being inspired by the Romanian law, which was adapted to the Albanian context. According to Mr. Kore, it is crucial for the child protection policies to take into consideration children's participation. However, there is a tendency to include in the participation process the children who are well spoken, have good grades etc. There is still work to be done to make sure the voices of the most marginalised children are heard and taken into account. As far as regional cooperation is concerned, Mr. Kore highlighted its necessity for the success in policy & advocacy efforts, **the creation of child protection index** being the most important tool in this sense developed by the regional coalition.

Fact-checking skills and counter-fake precautions for media workers and NGO practitioners: any difference?

The workshop facilitated by **Mr. Roman Egorov**, Association "Institute for Social Prospects" aimed at sharing tips and tricks on how non-governmental practitioners, journalists and anyone interested can verify the validity of their daily news.

Nowadays it is not that easy to identify fake news, whether one speaks of fabrications, fictions that comprise just bits of truth, misleading reports or even viral wrong-quotes stories. All of these are designed to look respectable, imitating legitimate news outlets. Often times, their authors are using unrelated pictures and names, only to catch the attention of the public.

In order to address these issues, Mr. Egorov presented to the participants a list of tips and tricks for recognizing a fake news article:

1. **Explore the source** – usually fake news sources are mimicking URLs, their outlet does not have any physical location or address and other sections of the website are underdeveloped;
2. **Read past the deadline** – many busy readers may not look past the headline or the opening paragraph before they decide to share an article;
3. **Verify the author** – for more credibility, search for their biography, other publications, or photos;
4. **Verify the quality of the supportive links** – one should always verify the sources of the photos and keep an eye for pop-advertisements;

Useful resources:

- [Snopes.com](https://snopes.com)
- [Washington Post Fact Checker](https://www.washingtonpost.com/fact-checker/)
- [Melissa Zimdars' List Of Fake News Sites](https://www.melissazimdars.com/fake-news-sites/)
- [On The Media Fake News Handbook](https://www.onthemediainstitute.org/fake-news-handbook/)
- [FactCheck.org](https://factcheck.org)

5. **Verify the dates mentioned in the article** – often times authors manipulate the dates when the reported events happen.

Towards the end of the workshop, participants were asked to share their personal experiences in detecting fake news and best practices implemented by civil society organisations in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Romania, Republic of Moldova, and Turkey.

Rise and Fall of Organizations: What can CSOs Learn from It

This workshop was initiated and facilitated by **Ms. Svitlana Kuts, Institute of Professional Fundraising, Ukraine** and had the following objectives: to encourage critical thinking of participants around issues of organizational development and discussing long-term capacity of civil society in the region; to develop large scale vision of change necessary for coherent and sustainable strategy of civil society organizations individually and by sector and to provide space for comparative analysis between countries' CSOs and finding common solutions for further development of region's civil society.

The workshop was focused on the participants' expectations and interests regarding this important issue for CSOs, which included: building capacity of CSOs and the topic of sustainability, sharing achievements, how to make CSOs rise again and learn from failure, how to grow stronger organizations and the donors' influence, advocating on the role of CSOs, keeping the activities sustainable and sharing good and bad practices in this context.

To address these issues, Ms. Kuts introduced a several **resources and theories** on the topic of rise and fall of organizations:

- [Mr. Ichak Adizes's "Corporate Life Cycle"](#), which looks at the stages of an organizations depending on the size/ growth and age, such as: courtship, infant, go-go, adolescence, prime & late prime, aristocracy, recrimination, bureaucracy, death of an organization;
- Jim Collins' flywheel theory in "GOOD to GREAT and the Social Sector", which refers to the importance of transition from a build-up stage of an organization to the breakthrough stage, from disciplined people (focus first on who then what) to disciplined thought (confronting the brutal facts and sensing the danger) and then to disciplined action (culture of discipline and technology accelerators). In addition, Ms. Kuts introduced from the same author a [diagnostic tool for organizations](#).
- [Lawrence M. Miller and his book "Barbarians to Bureaucrats: Corporate Life Cycle Strategies Lessons from the Rise and Fall of Civilizations"](#), which sets up different stages in the development of organizations similar to Adizes' cycle along the two dimensions of growing and aging, but introducing also the decision making style as a variable (command or collaborative). The main stages included in this theory are: prophet, barbarian, builder and explorer, synergist, administration, bureaucrat, aristocrat.

Parallel Thematic Workshops - Part II

Black Sea Knowledge Network

The main objective of the workshop was to start an initial conversation **on building a network of organizations focused on research, analysis and advanced education from the Black Sea Region**, with the purpose of generating a space for debate and engagement among Black Sea NGOs and support these organisations increase their capacity through knowledge sharing.

The workshop was facilitated by **Mr. Ștefan Cibian**, The Romanian NGDO Platform - FOND/The Romanian Association for International Cooperation and Development - ARCADIA. The workshop had an interactive format, the participants being split into 3 groups discussing the following themes:

- 1) *How we can improve the learning process of the Black Sea NGO Forum?*
- 2) *How can we facilitate networking and partnerships?*
- 3) *What type of knowledge we need within the Forum?*

Group 1 – Improving the learning process	Group 2 – Facilitating networking and partnerships	Group 3 – Type of knowledge needed within the Forum
Focused on how can innovation be produced and highlighted the need to exchange information and best practices of innovative initiatives in the Black Sea Region.	Proposed a set of recommendations on how communication and networking between participants can be improved (create a page dedicated to the involved organisations, develop e-mail/ Facebook groups, facilitate partner matching, create a study programme for NGOs in the region, create a travel grant, develop a fellowship scheme).	Identified several themes which need more knowledge/studies/data: <i>sustainable development, rural development, climate change, economic development, security, peacebuilding, human rights, media literacy, non-formal education.</i>

Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness

The workshop coordinated and moderated by **Ms. Antonita Fonari, Executive Director, Platform for Active Citizenship and Human Rights Partnership**, aimed at having a discussion on the examples of implementing self-regulatory mechanisms for CSOs in the Black Sea region and European region, based on the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness.

Mr. Sergiu Neicovcen, Executive Director, Centrul CONTACT, presented the situation in Republic of Moldova and why is important to discuss and integrate the Istanbul Principles in our daily work. There is a negative tendency in the Republic of Moldova when speaking about institutions (because of the corruption phenomenon) and the trust in NGOs. Studies reveal that mistrust is related to the level of awareness and is stimulated by the historic background. There is the need some proactive positions for the trust to be earned. In 2008, the National NGO Forum adopted for the first time a resolution, and a code of conduct developed by experts related to ethic and NGOs activities. However, only some NGOs adopted it as the document cannot be applied considering the current national context. Main issues described by NGOs were related to financial sustainability, which is not ensured by the local community, the level of trust and the lack of interest.

The following speaker, **Ina Coşeru – President, National Environmental Center** (also engaged in the coordination of the the third Working Group on Environment of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum) gave the example of the principles followed by the national platforms involved in EAP Civil Society Forum. These include: participation based on willingness and equity in rights among all the members, non-involvement in promoting political parties, transparency, responsibility, flexibility, autonomy of the members, active civic participation, partnerships with state authorities, private sector, media, mutual respect and working with officially registered NGOs.

Andrei Isac, President, EcoContact, presented the situation in Republic of Moldova regarding the issue of environment, with focus on organizing green events. In 2015, EcoContact initiated a forum on environment in the Republic of Moldova and launched a national competition for NGOs, but applications lacked. This revealed the fact that it is not an easy task to be green and to respect all the standards, especially when organizing large events. Usually it is more expensive to organise such green events. Mr. Isac also provided useful resources introducing the green standards for events such as: *Green Meeting Guide 2009* (UNEP) and *Green Office Guide*.

The last speaker of the workshop, **Ms. Iulia Sirghi-Zolotco – Director of Administrative, Financial and Communication Services, Expert-Grup**, presented internal practices and norms of her NGO to ensure transparency and ethics. Expert-Grup has four main internal policies – *financial manual, travelling, focus on acquisitions, qualified personal and o tolerance to corruption*. Their internal procedures reflect some of the Istanbul Principles. However,

one the main challenges, is to make sure all employees are on the same page with the implementation of these ethical principles.

Youth Civic Engagement

The main objectives of the workshop coordinated by **Ms. Maka Tsertsvadze, LDA Georgia, Youth program Coordinator**, were to:

1. Explore youth civic engagement best models and practices from a mix of European Union and non-EU countries;
2. Generate new, creative ideas on how CSOs can encourage young people to actively participate in society and decision making processes
3. Reflect on the current European Youth Strategy priorities and their implementation at the national and local level.

A special attention was drawn to the opportunities provided by the **Erasmus+ programme**, which started to also approach the countries included in the Eastern Partnership (EaP), through its 2nd **Key Action (KA2): Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices**. As a result, there has been a significant increase of non-governmental organisations working with youth in the region.

The participants, who attended the workshop from different countries from the Black Sea Region and the Balkans, were thus encouraged to share their diverse experiences with different types of donors in the region which fund youth activities and programmes. Later on, the discussion focused on the common challenges identified at local/ national level and finding ways on how these can be jointly overcome, It was concluded that **cooperation between EU and non-EU countries is a vital key** in initiating projects and partnerships across the region.

The last part of the workshop centred around **developing a common strategic vision of the BSF Youth Working Group** that would go beyond the EU Youth Strategy. For this, the participants focused on the common understanding of regional problems and ways of pushing the EU youth agenda closer to the region. As a conclusion, Ms. Tsertsvadze initiated on behalf of LDA Georgia the proposal to **develop a regional youth project**, an idea to which many of the participants expressed their openness. At the end of the workshop, interested participants exchanged contact details for follow-up communication on the project drafting.

DAY II, the 5th of December 2017

Plenary Session 3: “The importance of networks – How to work together as part of the Black Sea NGO Forum?”

Moderator: Anemari-Helen Necşulescu, Program Director, “Ateliere Fără Frontiere” Association

Special intervention: Conclusions of the Report “The Black Sea NGO Forum – A Decade On: Evaluation, Impact and Perspectives”

Ms. Kerry Longhurst PHD, Jean Monnet Professor, Collegium Civitas, Warsaw, Poland and Visiting Professor, College of Europe, Natolin, Poland

Introduction of the facilitation process for the interactive open space session

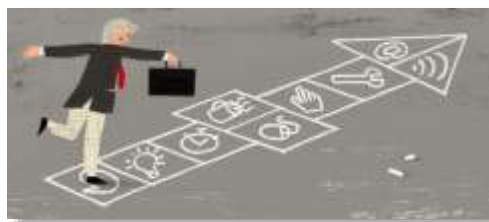
Facilitators:

Ms. Olivia Baci, Senior Advisor and Technical Lead, Partners Global

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

The session started with a special intervention from **Ms. Kerry Longhurst**, who presented the conclusions of the Report “[The Black Sea NGO Forum – A Decade On: Evaluation, Impact and Perspectives](#)”, officially launched on the [Black Sea NGO Forum website](#).

BSF met its original mandate and its objectives. When we look at the region as a whole, The Black Sea Forum is a winner as it has grown as the forum contributed to creating a regional identity, confidence building and dialogue during tricky times, promoted common ownership – as it started to be organised in different countries, helped nurture collaboration and regional coalitions amongst NGOs in important areas and policies.

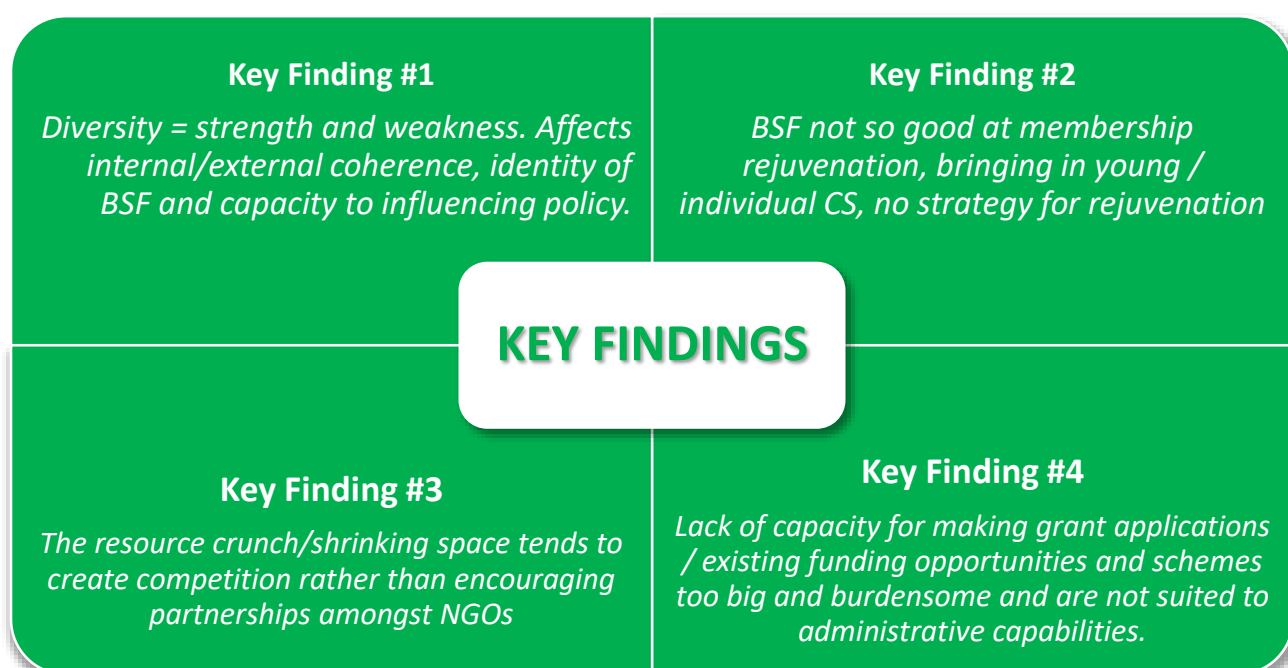


The purpose of the evaluation:

- Taking account of **new** regional contexts and realities;
- Identify and take in to full account views and desires of **stakeholders**;
- **Retrospective** - Stock Taking of Past Four Years of Activities - Effectiveness, Impact and Added Value;
- **Forward Looking** - Creating Concrete Recommendations - Sustainability, Attractiveness and Relevance;
- Help to make the BSF ‘**fit for purpose**’ for the future.

Who participated?

- **319 NGOs** participated in the survey; **Diversity of membership** – nationalities, sizes and subjects, mostly small/diverse budgets.
- **20% of participants have collaborative projects as a result of BSF** + 15% in the pipeline. Evidence suggests more – but are not reported to BSF
- Gap between expectations and reality; BSF tools not in place to create and support sustainable projects; lack of momentum/ communication/monitoring/funds (re-granting)
- Not enough regional ‘champions’ or leaders with the requisite skills, know-how, time and experience to drive regional cooperative projects.



Main conclusions:

- ✓ **BSF is more relevant and needed than ever before;**
- ✓ **Overall vision, logic and methodology still valid;**
- ✓ **Changing context and needs of (current and future) stakeholders necessitates BSF's renewal/ rejuvenation;**
- ✓ **BSF should have a more ambitious and confident agenda;**
- ✓ **Financing structure holds back long term development for sustainability;**
- ✓ **BSF not strong at selling and communicating its own story;**
- ✓ **Emerging opportunities for BSF to improve influence ie. renewal of BSS, EU Global Actor, EaP.**

Ms. Cristina Rigman presented the ChildPact coalition from the perspective of a success story in the region and also the importance of networks.

[ChildPact](#) is present in 10 countries, covering more than 600 NGOs, having as main goal to support vulnerable children in the region.

Why are networks WANTED?

For more:

- *Power;*
- *Impact;*
- *Legitimacy;*
- *Capacity;*
- *More representative;*
- *Expertise;*
- *Reach out.*

Why are networks USED?

- *To communicate better;*
- *To motivate organizations, people, and decision makers;*
- *To identify choices, test models, develop and share good practices;*
- *To represent interests;*
- *To legitimate decisions or processes;*
- *To change perspectives.*

The **ingredients of a success story** include:



Ms. Olivia Baci presented the Network of Practitioners in Anticorruption, implementing a methodology developed by FPD Romania - Islands of integrity. The main aim is to facilitate changing processes in the local governments in order for them to develop better links to the communities and report more transparently. The methodology was also recognised in 2011, when it received the [Public Service Award from the United Nations](#).

In the Black Sea Region, the methodology was implemented in the Republic of Moldova (Strășeni), Georgia (Kutaisi) and Ukraine. In these countries, anti-corruption practitioners

were trained to work with local authorities in identifying points vulnerable to corruption and, based on this, develop anti-corruption plans focused on prevention rather than sanctions.

The same methodology is being implemented in Central America in 4 countries (Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador) and right now practitioners are brainstorming on ways to connect and coordinate the two sides of the ocean.

Open Space for the Thematic Working Groups part of the Strategic Framework of the forum & new initiatives

Part I: Ideas from the open space

Focus on the current status, new ideas & future steps

Ms. Olivia Baciú introduced the facilitation process for the interactive open space session which was coordinated together with Ms. Cristina Rigman.

Participants were split in different working groups, based on their needs and expectations and discussed about their activities, future steps in the context of the BSF.



Civic engagement WG

- Assessing the current situation of the working group and its members;
- Listing the main opportunities of cooperation, identifying several priority areas, as well as the importance of having such a working group;
- Follow-up communication (e-mails).

Confidence building WG (NEW)

- Aiming to write policy papers and position papers on the topic of confidence building;
- Establishing 2 main directions:
 1. Domestic issues: tolerance, accountability of political actors and discourses, ethnic minorities situation, political violence, hate speech, gender equality, civil education, trust-building, social cohesion;
 2. Foreign issues: conflicts border management, best practices, negotiation formats and concessions;

- *Developing a methodology through the creation of an index and forecasting tools, looking at political speeches, documents and resolutions, and sharing of best practices for new partnerships.*

Culture and Education WG

- *Stimulating non-formal education in the art/ culture and creative sector (ex: photography trainings);*
- *Advocating for new ideas in what concerns the Purchase Power Parity (PPP) in the culture & education sector;*
- *Creating an annual award for the projects in art and culture in the Black Sea region, under the patronage of the Black Sea NGO Forum, to bring more motivation;*
- *Future steps: plan a meeting in 2018; continue to use social media to maintain communication one with another; create a sub-page dedicated to the WG on the BSF website for a complete database with useful information and contact details.*

Human Rights & Freedoms WG

- *Follow-up on the last meeting of the Human Rights & Freedoms WG on the freedom of association, expresion and assembly (July 2017, Kiev, Ukraine);*
- *Brainstorming on more specific topics to cover;*
- *Reporting about the situation of human rights in every country of the Black Sea Region.*

Knowledge networks for development WG

- *Approaching the Black Sea as a region and identifying the initiatives that are created, as well as the needs and challenges;*
- *Proposing a shared and valid database with variables with communities in the region;*
- *Future steps: supporting other thematic networks that are existent with information and expertise;*
- *Setting goals: (1) gather comparative data, (2) identify the main funding opportunities and (3) identify means of staying in touch with one another.*

Local and rural development (NEW)

- *Aiming to elaborate media articles on the role of NGOs in supporting local authorities and to organise study trips;*
- *Keeping membership updated through the use of social media;*
- *Raising awareness on issues related to local and rural development;*
- *Attracting new members → making topics cool.*

Media & communication WG

- *Boosting communication through a new alternative media journalism;*

- Comparing media-related legislation in the Black Sea countries (tracking regressive trends and EU standards implementation), the self-regulatory bodies and practices, the level of protection of the rights of journalists across the region;
- Sharing best practices in what regards conflict-sensitive reporting;
- Developing programmes for cross-border internships for journalists from conflict-stricken areas, as well as for media camps for video content producers;
- Attracting new members and maintaining communication through social media.

Networking WG

- Supporting thematic network with information, support, finance;
- Pilot new mechanism to increase civic activism of the citizens.

Sustainable Development WG

- Identifying ways of funding diversification and donor coordination;
- Learning from best practices of EU.

Youth WG

- Sharing their experiences and local context;
- Continuing the discussions with other groups.

Youth Banks WG

- Developing to have a regional memorandum;
- Discussed the activities for the next year;
- Joint activities within the network;
- Concerns about how people can join the network.

Part II: Ideas from the open space

How can YOU contribute to rejuvenate the Black Sea NGO Forum?

Mapping your EXPERTISE, BEST PRACTICES, INNOVATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED

ARMENIA

The Armenian participants considered that the BSF should: concentrate on 2/ 3 topics linked to the WGs; develop a **membership approach**; membership country/ candidate country; continue to work on **thematic groups at national level**; have a status quo of each country before each Forum; have a very strict process of selection.

Lessons learned: the diversification of donors funds, collaboration with decision makers.

AZERBAIJAN

The participants from Azerbaijan would like to get involved in the **future development of the Black Sea NGO Forum strategic document**; in the promotion of the Forum among other

Azeri NGOs; in the development of a **country-level Working Group**, with multiple focal points across the country that would be active in between the Forums; in the building of bridges between the Forum and other regional/ global initiatives in which they are active.

Expertise: *budget analysis, confidence-building, child protection.* **Best Practices:** *online media, investigative journalism.* **Innovations:** *alternative reporting, civilian protection in border regions, statistics and mapping of property rights violation.*

Lessons learned: *the diversification of funding sources, collaboration with decision makers.*

BELARUS

In what regards their contribution for the Black Sea NGO Forum, the participants from Belarus highlighted the **awareness-raising campaigns** among the youth, through social media, bringing some recommendations in what regards the BSF goals, its online branding (friendly language), and its other inter-Forum activities (organising trainings & camps). They would like to see the Forum **more eco-friendly** and going **more digital**.

Expertise: *rural development, human rights, public participation, sustainable development, educational work.* **Best Practices:** *working with volunteers, green networks, local sustainable development strategies (more than 30).*

BULGARIA

The representatives from Bulgaria emphasized their openness to engage in the BSF activities through the **Bulgarian youth organisations** active in BPID, in order to engage with new organisations and implement new initiatives.

Experience: *civic development, social services, work with roma minorities, social inclusion.*

Best Practices & Innovations: *affiliation with with Western Balkans and Black Sea NGOs, networks and platforms, ensuring healthcare for marginalized groups, interaction with faith-based structures.*

Lessons learned: *recognize the cultural specifics, define better duties & responsibilities for the stakeholders, crucial institutional engagement for successful projects.*

GEORGIA

The participants from Georgia pinpointed the **main skills** that they can bring to the table for the future evolution of the Black Sea NGO Forum: *project writing, coordination, film making, trainings, networking, financial reporting, project management, budgeting, innovation & analytical expertise, consultation, event hosting and facilitation.*

Expertise: *youth engagement & youth strategies, human rights, anticorruption, accountability, good governance, inclusive decision making, public-private partnerships, cultural economy, organisational development.* They also have **good connections with different NGOs**, culture and community, entrepreneurship, films and international festivals.

ROMANIA

For next edition of the Forum, the Romanian participants would like to contribute to **increasing interactivity, emphasizing good practices** in institutional-nongovernmental partnerships, organising **workshops with donors** (designing trust funds to address certain issues in the area), updating the formats of events (using mobile applications for the agenda & sessions), **bringing the business sector closer**, having inspirational speeches (TEDx), elaborating **articles & interviews** which could be published in the ARCADIA review.

Expertise: *the Romanian Experts Database, trainings on networks-building, the ARCADIA review, toolkits on global education, civic education, active citizenship, and anti-corruption.*

Lessons learned: *crucial engagement of both institutions and donors.*

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

For the rejuvenation of the Forum, the participants from the Republic of Moldova would like to improve the **communications inside the BSF Working Groups**, to monitor and **report on the evolution of the Forum**, and to **prioritize better the objectives** in order to have more engagement.

Expertise: *volunteering policies, human rights, health, dialogue between public authorities and NGOs, youth involvement, ecology, legal framework for CSOs.*

Best Practices: *implementing legal framework for volunteering, promoting rights of people with disabilities, children's rights, youth friendly healthcare centres, joint conferences between NGO and governmental sectors, the National Youth Council activities.* **Innovations:** *„Meritul civic” award, youth hubs, Youth index.* **Lessons learned:** *how to get public funds for volunteering, prioritisation.*

RUSSIA

In order to rejuvenate the Forum, the Russian participants proposed to disseminate and inform more about the thematic WGs and learn from other initiatives and platforms from the region (EaP Forum and EU-Russia CSF).

Expertise: *working with young leaders, advocacy, media-related issues, dealing with gender issues (girls clubs expertise).* **Best Practices:** *analysis of thematic activities described in Russian only.* **Innovations:** *women's issues approach to networks, appreciative inquiry framework to strategic issues.* **Lessons learned:** *digitalizing paperload.*

UKRAINE

The participants from Ukraine highlighted the main expertise that can be shared in the context of the BSF.

Expertise: *civil society capacity building, anti-corruption think-tanks, peacebuilding, IT smart applications, social business impact, engagement of vulnerable groups, blogging for advocacy, media trainings and research.*

DAY III: 6th of December 2017

Interactive World Café: Donors in the Black Sea Region



Following the feedback received from participants both in the evaluation forms and the interviews for the evaluation report, one of most important recommendations was to add more interactivity to the tradition „donors session” included in the annual forums.

Taking this into consideration, the 2017 edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum piloted an **interactive donors session**

using the *world café* method, in order to encourage the dialogue between CSOs and donors. The aim was to have an exercise useful for both parties, enabling CSOs to find out specific information on the thematic priorities and funding opportunities available, as well as giving donors the possibility to gather information on the CSOs’ activity, their funding needs and their perspectives on donor priorities.

The process, detailed below, was explained at the beginning of the session by Ms. Romina Matei, FOND Board Member and Project Coordinator at the Intercultural Institute Timișoara in Romania.

Participants were split in 7 groups of approximately 15 people, each group discussing the engagement and support provided to CSOs by one of the donors in the Black Sea Region present at the Forum:

[The European Commission;](#)

[Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation;](#)

[European Endowment for Democracy;](#)

[RoAid – Romania’s International Development Cooperation Agency;](#)

[Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme 2014-2020;](#)

[USAID – United States Agency for International Development;](#)

[International Visegrad Fund.](#)

At each table/ group, the representative on behalf of the donor was “the host” of the table. After a first round of 20 minutes, the participants were asked to move to a different table to join the discussion of that respective group, while the hosts remained in the initial place throughout the Donors’ café. During one round, donor representatives gave a brief

presentation on their funding programs and opportunities available for CSOs in the region, followed by a free discussion in which both CSOs representatives and donors asked questions and provided clarifications on issues of interest.

Plenary Session 4 on Development Effectiveness

in partnership with CPDE



On the third day of the Forum (6th of December), FOND together with its partner CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) organised a **plenary session dedicated to CPDE's work, updates on the development effectiveness agenda at global level, European and regional levels.**

The session was opened by **Mr. Justin Kilcullen, CPDE European Representative**, with an introduction on CPDE's mission and advocacy objectives, according to the new CPDE Strategic Plan.

CPDE is a global civil society coalition created in 2012, following the [4th High-Level Forum on Development Effectiveness](#) in Busan (2011). CPDE is the civil society representative in the [Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation](#), having as main mission to ensure governments uphold the commitments made in the [Busan Partnership Agreement](#) to respect the development effectiveness principles (democratic ownership, focus on results, partnerships for sustainable development and transparency & shared responsibility). In their own turn, CPDE is committed to respect the [Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness](#). With the adoption of the SDGs, CPDE's priority is to advocate for and monitor that the implementation of the SDGs is done in accordance with the Busan commitments.

The participants were informed on the adoption of a new **Strategic Plan at the level of CPDE**, with its **core advocacy areas** focused on: CSO Enabling Environment, CSO Development Effectiveness, South-South Cooperation, Private Sector as a Development Actor, Countries in Situation of Conflict and Fragility. In this sense, the CPDE Working Groups were reorganized to correspond to the above-mentioned core advocacy areas. Participants were encouraged to become more engaged in one or more of these working groups, according to their field of expertise and interests.

Following this intervention, **Ms. Zuzana Sladkova, Policy & Advocacy Coordinator at CONCORD**, highlighted in her speech the upcoming 3rd Monitoring Round of Indicator no. 2, part of [GPEDC Monitoring Framework](#). CSOs from all of 3 sub-regions (EU, Black Sea & Balkans), have the opportunity to be actively engaged in this process together with CPDE's CSO Enabling Environment and Development Effectiveness Working Groups, in order to

make the challenges in this region known at global level. There are also a few other initiatives which give CSOs the opportunity to voice their concerns: [the CIVICUS Monitor](#) or [Civil Society Europe](#). Moreover, Ms. Sladkova introduced the 2017-2018 CPDE European Regional Work Plan. In addition, CONCORD will also organise next year two regional workshops to support CSOs outside the EU engage and work effectively with EU delegations, one of which will be organised in a country from the Eastern Neighbourhood.

Going to the regional level, **Ms. Antonia Fonari, Outgoing Non-EU Sub-regional Representative**, shared with the participants her experience in carrying out her mandate, the activities she has done at national level, in the Republic of Moldova (promoting the Istanbul Principles, connecting with the government and parliament to create a platform of dialogue about development effectiveness, monitoring the implementation of the development effectiveness principles and the SDGs at national level) and at regional and international levels (through the participation at the annual Black Sea NGO Forum and CPDE's assemblies/events).

Moreover, participants were informed about the decision of the CPDE Global Council in October 2017 to approve the division of the Non-EU Sub-region in two separate sub-regions: one for the Black Sea CSOs and one from the Balkans CSOs. As Ms. Fonari's mandate as Non-EU Sub-regional Representative is ending in December 2017, the [call for candidacies](#) launched on the 22nd of November for the election of the new Black Sea Sub-regional Representative within CPDE, was further promoted. Participants were encouraged to apply by the 15th of December, following which an online voting process will be organised.

Ms. Biljana Spasovska, Policy and Advocacy Officer at Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN), had an intervention about BCSDN's work on monitoring the enabling environment for civil society in the Western Balkans, through the [Monitoring Matrix](#) – a tool developed by BCSDN and applied since 2013. Moreover, Ms. Spasovska also presented another initiative in which BCSDN is a partner, the [Global Standard for CSO Accountability](#), which proposes a concrete and practical methodology for CSOs to apply the Istanbul Principles. Apart from an internal analysis, the tool proposes an approach which focuses also on the interaction and feedback from stakeholders and beneficiaries in assessing one's compliance with the Istanbul Principles. The newly established Balkan sub-region (part of the European region) will be represented by the Balkan Civil Society Development Network.

