

THE 13TH EDITION

ADVANCING
CIVIL SOCIETY COOPERATION
IN THE BLACK SEA REGION
IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY
23 – 27 NOVEMBER 2020, ONLINE



The 13th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum
**Advancing Civil Society Cooperation in the Black Sea
Region in Times of Uncertainty**

23 – 27 November 2020, Online

- **FINAL REPORT** -

Funded by:



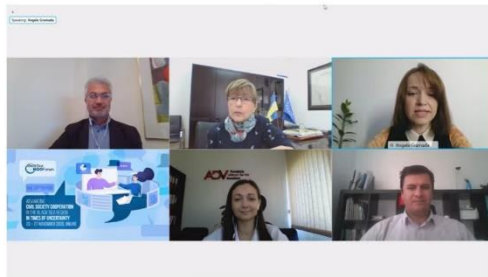
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The Black Sea NGO Forum continues to be a driver of change

The Black Sea NGO Forum is an annual regional event first organised in 2008 by the [Romanian NGDO Platform \(FOND\)](#) in the context of the **Black Sea Synergy European Policy**, with the support of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Representation of the European Commission in Romania and the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation. Since 2013, the Forum has been financially supported by the European Commission. Its main objectives 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**.

Since its very first edition, the Black Sea NGO Forum enabled an **open space for debate, sharing mutual knowledge and understanding, communication and cooperation** among civil society representatives, governments, international organisations and donors active in the Black Sea region. The Forum focuses on **sharing good practices** in various domains and **success stories of regional cooperation**.

More than 13 years after, the Black Sea NGO Forum has become a driver of change in the region, reuniting **more than 1,300 participants from 11 countries**: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine. 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; sustainable development, 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.

In 2019, the Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND started the implementation of the project **“Building CSO Capacity for Regional Cooperation within the Black Sea Region”** with the financial support of the European Union for the period 2019 – 2021. The project aims at increasing stability and prosperity in the Black Sea Region by strengthening regional cooperation among CSOs in the region, in the context of sustainable development and societal resilience.



You can find more information about the Black Sea NGO Forum at: <https://blackseango.org>.

The 13th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum: Advancing Civil Society Cooperation in the Black Sea Region in Times of Uncertainty

The 13th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum: Advancing Civil Society Cooperation in the Black Sea Region in Times of Uncertainty has been organized between the 23rd – 27th of November 2020, in an online format.

The event was organized by the Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND, with the financial support of the European Commission and in partnership with the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In the context of the **Sars-CoV-2 pandemic**, the 2020 edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum, through its unique format, aimed to contribute to identifying **the common challenges that the civil society organizations are facing, as well as opportunities for addressing them together**, with specific focus on:

- *Raising awareness on success stories of CSOs in the Region during the COVID-19 pandemic;*
- *Showcasing donors' response for supporting CSO development and resilience in this new challenging context;*
- *Presenting the progress made and next steps for the implementation of European Union's policies in the Black Sea Region;*
- *Creating a space for debate on Enabling Environment for civil society organizations in the Black Sea Region in the first half of 2020;*
- *Strengthening the importance of engaging in regional multi-stakeholder cooperation, with an emphasis on best practices and lessons learned on developing and consolidation civil society – public - private sectors partnerships.*
- *Highlighting the main achievements and future strategic actions of the Black Sea NGO Forum in fostering regional cooperation, through the project "Building CSO Capacity for Regional Cooperation within the Black Sea Region", funded by the European Union.*

The final agenda of the event, together with other resource documents, can be found online here: <https://blackseango.org/the-13th-edition-of-the-black-sea-ngo-forum-advancing-civil-society-cooperation-in-the-black-sea-region-in-times-of-uncertainty-23rd-27th-of-november-2020-online/>.



Welcoming remarks

“It is a great pleasure to welcome you to the 13th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum! The event is taking place for a number of years now and we are extremely glad to be able to hold this year’s edition despite the pandemic situation. The Black Sea NGO Forum brings together civil society organizations at the Black Sea Region, with two important aims: for civil society organisations to come together and establish networks and connect much better their countries; and to facilitate an enlarged space for CSO in the Region, as an important component of thriving societies.”

Mr. Ștefan Cibian, PhD, President, the Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND

“It is a great pleasure and honor for me to join you at the opening of this 13th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum. I am delighted to see that this initiative, emerged from the constructive partnership between the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the civil society in Romania back in 2008, has grown into one of the most important platforms for regional cooperation in the Black Sea region, inspired by the spirit and letter of the Black Sea Synergy [...]. I thank you all for your involvement and determination to develop the Black Sea region at its full potential, while building your communities’ future.”

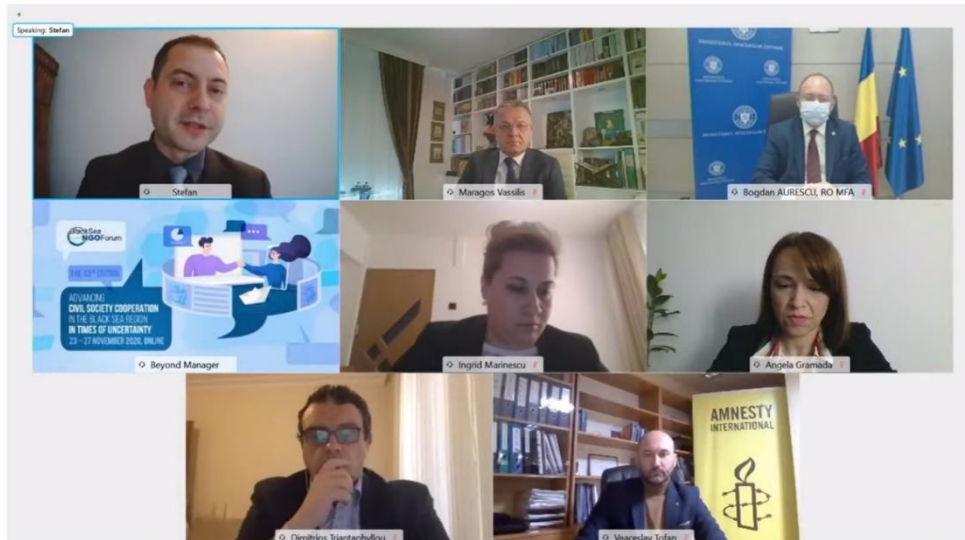
Mr. Bogdan Aurescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, Government of Romania

“I would like to express the support of the European Commission to the important work carried out by the Black Sea NGO Forum and in particular, to greet and thank Romania for the great support it is offering. [...]. The EU engages in various formats with the countries around the Black Sea, in the framework of the Eastern Partnership [...] and in the overarching framework of the Black Sea Synergy [...]. The Black Sea NGO Forum, as one of the most successful elements of the Black Sea Synergy framework, embodies this principle of cooperation, with level of ambition that we hope to achieve.”

Mr. Vassilis Maragos, Head of Unit, DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations,
European Commission

Plenary Session I

CSO Resilience in Times of Uncertainty. New realities, new challenges, new policies.



Objectives:

- ✓ Raising awareness on the work of civil society organizations in the Black Sea Region during the COVID-19 pandemic. The struggle between options and opportunities – looking for efficiency in times of crisis;
- ✓ Enabling Environment for CSO activities in the Black Sea Region in 2020. New realities, new challenges, new policies. What is next?
- ✓ EU response and participation in times of COVID-19.

Moderator: *Ms. Ingrid Marinescu, Executive Director, the Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND*

Speakers:

Ms. Angela Grămadă, Project Manager, the Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND

Mr. Professor Dimitrios Tryantaphyllou, Director, Center for International and European Studies (CIES), Kadir Has University, Istanbul, Member of the Black Sea NGO Forum Advisory Group

Mr. Veaceslav Tofan, Executive Director, Amnesty International Moldova

Key points:

- **Civil society organizations in the Black Sea Region represent a reliant partner in elaborating and implementing public policies for addressing the COVID-19 pandemic at national and regional levels;**
- **The new context has impacted not only civil society representatives in their work, but also beneficiaries, and there is a strong need of identifying ways for reconstructing trust and interaction;**

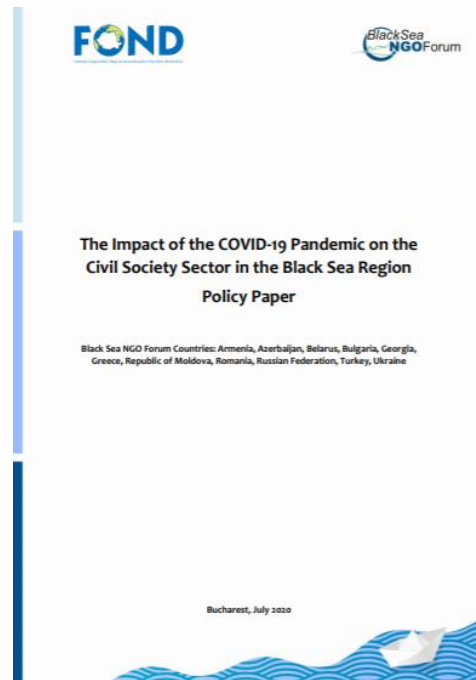
- *The new context has exposed internal vulnerabilities, but created opportunities for fostering solidarity, support and dialogue among CSO representatives and relevant stakeholders.*

In the new context created by the Sars-CoV-2 pandemic, states and societies around the globe have been highly affected, **being forced to find new ways of functioning and strategies for adapting to the new reality.**

According to the findings of the [Policy Paper on “The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Civil Society Sector in the Black Sea Region” \(July 2020\)](#), developed by the Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND, during the COVID-19 pandemic, non-governmental organisations from the Black Sea Region (both EU and non-EU countries) have been facing **similar challenges on internal and external levels**, proving at the same time to be **relevant and reliant partners** for national institutional actors, becoming more involved **in regional dialogue and cooperation**, despite incoherent or restrictive legislative and financial environments.

As most of other sectors of the societies, a great part of civil society work has been restricted to online formats, blurring the divide from work to one’s personal life and putting great pressures on a faster adaptation process. **The longevity of the pandemic and the ongoing restrictions have affected not only civil society representatives in their work, but also beneficiaries**, marginalizing even more the already marginalized communities. These new frameworks imposed limitations of civil rights and liberties, along with increasing economic insecurity, creating gaps in interaction and limiting the impact of CSO activities at grass-roots levels. CSO representatives must identify new innovative approaches for making their work more relevant and more interactive than ever.

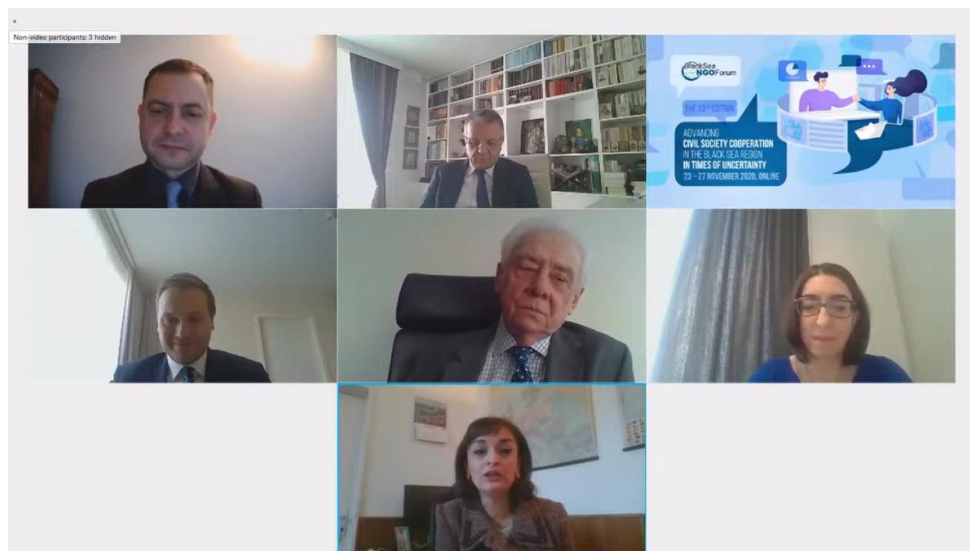
Civil society organizations have been confronted with situations and challenges never encountered before, **exposing internal vulnerabilities** and at the same time, **capabilities to unite** against the new climate caused by the pandemic. These difficult times underwent by civil society organizations also provided an **opportunity to evaluate and rethink strategic long-term priorities**, clarifying their positioning in relation to national governments, partners and donor organizations. In this new context, non-governmental representatives stressed the importance of the respect of fundamental rights and freedoms for the citizens, launching a **call for solidarity** among CSOs and **call for support** from national authorities, to facilitate them in reaching out to beneficiaries from less developed regions.



DAY II: 24th of November

Plenary Session II

Advancing EU policies in the Black Sea Region during the COVID-19 pandemic



Objectives:

- ✓ Reaffirming political support for regional cooperation in the Black Sea Region for the EU long term budget for the period 2021 - 2027;
- ✓ Presentation of the latest developments at the EU level of policies targeting the Region: Black Sea Synergy, Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea, The European Black Sea Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA), European Green Deal;
- ✓ Identifying new opportunities for engagement and partnerships for regional cooperation.

Moderator: Mr. Ștefan Cibian, PhD, President, the Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND

Speakers:

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

Ms. Olivia Todorean, Director, Policy and Analysis Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania

Mr. Vassilis Maragos, Head of Unit, DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission

Mr. Radosław Darski, Deputy Head of Division, Eastern Partnership, Regional Cooperation and OSCE, European External Action Service

Ms. Patrizia Busolini, Policy Officer, Sea-basin Strategies, Maritime Regional Cooperation and Maritime Security, DG MARE, European Commission

Key points:

- *Increasing dialogue and building partnerships with CSOs are key for coordinating efficient approaches and solutions to the COVID-19 pandemic in the Black Sea Region;*
- *It is vital to deepen existing partnerships and prepare for the future, by investing in developing adaptive resilience, to be able to carry on and withstand future potential shocks together;*
- *The European Union is reiterating its concrete support for civil society organizations, providing support of 1 billion EUR to the Eastern Neighbourhood and for advancing civil society organizations's work;*
- *It is time to work together to build positive momentum on the EU green recovery-oriented commitments in the Black Sea Region, with a focus on blue growth and environmental protection cooperation;*
- *The new context provides an opportunity to rethink in a more synergic dynamic, especially in the context of the Common Maritime Agenda, for the implementation of regional sectoral actions regarding the concept of blue economy.*

The Coronavirus pandemic has posed to all societies serious challenges that require fast and efficient adaptation, in order to support economic cooperation, stability and prosperity. All the initiatives implemented by regional actors in what regards addressing the COVID-19 crisis in the Black Sea Region are important achievements that contribute to advancing cooperation. Despite this, there is still much to be done to effectively respond to the pandemic. All Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) Member States are committed to **enhancing cooperation and coordination for more efficiency-driven results**. Thus, **increasing constructive dialogue** with other actors, including **civil society organizations**, is vital in these uncertain times. The work of the **CSO sector, a positive force for change**, can substantially complement BSEC activities.

National actors also express their openness and support for the increasing collaboration with civil society organizations, with a view to advance the implementation of the EU regional policies, with a focus on the **Black Sea Synergy, the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea and the Black Sea Strategic Agenda for Research and Innovation (SRIA)**. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the newly crisis caused, an important milestone to be reached will be the EU Multiannual Financial Framework, which provides CSO from partner countries an opportunity to be involved in future negotiations. Now it is the time to deepen **partnerships**, to reflect on how to advance together and how to invest in **adaptive resilience**.

The European Union is also reiterating its concrete support for civil society organizations in these difficult times, attributing importance to their direct engagement in processes of combating the negative consequences of pandemic, mobilizing resources and preparing for the recovery processes. The newly launched EU Global Response to the COVID-19 pandemic paves the way forward for initiatives and collaboration. In a broader picture, in 2020, the EU, together with the European Investment Bank, has provided **20 billion EUR for the response in addressing the pandemic**, out of which almost **1 billion EUR** has been

secured for the Eastern Neighbourhood. The EU has given very important contributions for **increasing the resilience of partner countries** through budget support, which has contributed to the financial survival in a year where most of governmental revenues are decreasing.

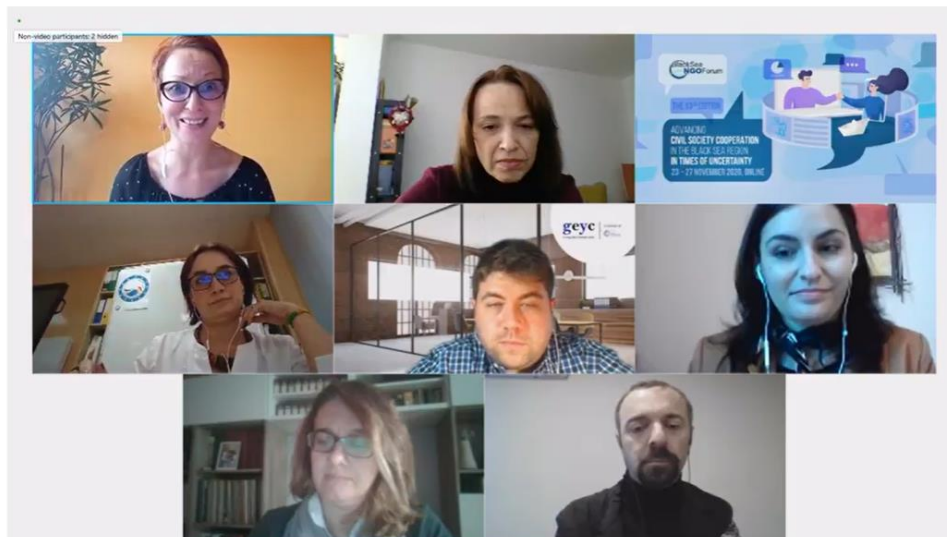
Nevertheless, the EU is recognizing the **CSO activity on ground as key in contributing to the mitigation of the effects of pandemic and combating disinformation campaigns.** The multifaceted impact of the Coronavirus pandemic highlights the need to multilateral and multi-stakeholder approaches in the Black Sea Region, remaining committed to fostering stability, prosperity and sustainability. 2020 is also the time to work together to build positive momentum on the **EU green recovery-oriented commitments.** In the context of the region, this links to *blue growth and environmental protection cooperation*, in order to ensure a bottom-up holistic engagement.

The EU policy on blue economy makes no exception to the process of transformation underwent at the European level. The new context provides an opportunity to rethink in a more synergic dynamic, especially in the context of the Common Maritime Agenda. In the first half of 2021, the European Commission will publish a new communication on new approach of **sustainable blue economy**, as an integral part of the European Green Deal. Blue economy is thus a key dimension for fostering regional cooperation, and a central element in foresighting policy making and implementation, as a response to the pandemic.

DAY III: 25th of November

Plenary Session III

Achievements of the Black Sea NGO Forum in 2020



Objectives:

- ✓ Presenting the main results of the project activities: the Mobility Fund for CSO experts within the Black Sea Region; the “Leadership and Organizational Resilience in Times of Uncertainty” Training Program; the “Capacity Building Path towards the Start-Up Of Regional CSOs Networks” Training Program; the Sub-granting Scheme for activities that Support the development of CSO regional networks;
- ✓ Highlighting opportunities for learning and sharing: The time is now - why CSOs leaders should learn, reflect and adapt to the major disruptions (like the global pandemic) and continuous changes of the civic space in the Black Sea Region.

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

Speakers:

Mr. Gabriel Brezoiu, General Manager, Group of the European Youth for Change - GEYC

Ms. Mariana Trifonova, Program Director & Senior Analyst, Economic Policy Institute

Ms. Marina Sarli, Fundraiser, trainer and Consultant for CSOs

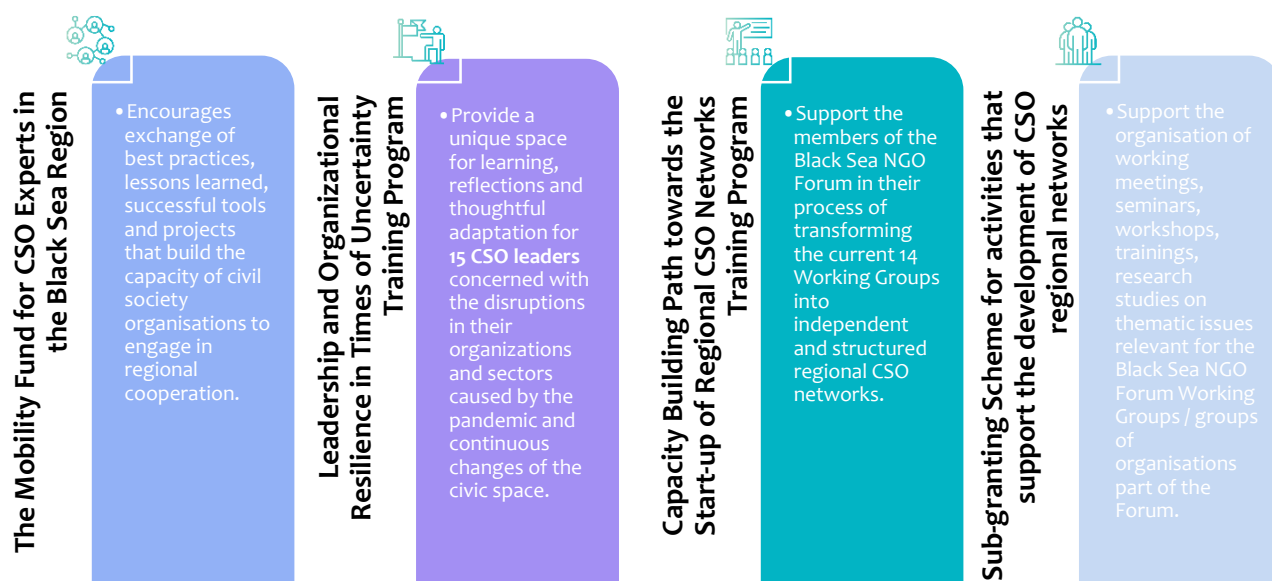
Ms. Natalia Budescu, Director, Association of Cross-Border Cooperation “Lower Danube Euroregion”

Mr. Zviad Eliziani, Chairman, International Business Development and Investment Promotion Center

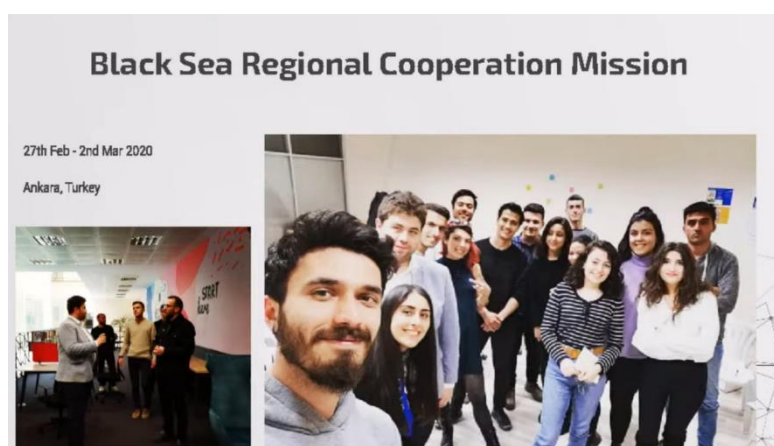
Key points:

- *The COVID-19 pandemic context has created unique opportunities for CSOs to change and transform, embracing and putting into practice the concept of “resilience”;*
- *CSO cooperation, through sharing of knowledge and expertise, and consolidated partnerships, is instrumental in the development of inclusive, resilient and adaptive societies in the Black Sea Region.*

In 2020, civil society organisations have been pushed out of their comfort zones, for adapting to the new realities. Despite this, the new framework for functioning has created unique opportunities to change and transform, embracing the word and the concept of “resilience”. The activities planned in the context of the project “**Building CSO Capacity for Regional Cooperation in the Black Sea Region**”, implemented by the Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND, with the financial support of the European Union and of the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation, a program of the German Marshall Fund, have focused exactly on these pressing NGO needs.



The COVID-19 crisis, for many of the CSO representatives, has been a learning invitation to reconsider ways of doing things, especially at the internal level. **The Mobility Fund for CSO representatives within the Black Sea Region** has provided opportunities for learning and best practices sharing, and even in a way for preparing for the shift that was about to come. Such mobilities, consisting of travel and learning opportunities, are vital in identifying and understanding your own organizational needs, to learn about new perspectives and to reflect on what can be further adapted in your organization, starting from redesigning internal policies and procedures and finishing with developing new activities, projects and partnerships.



As a response to these needs, **the Leadership and Organizational Resilience in Times of Uncertainty Training Program** has been implemented in the period May – September 2020 by the team of trainers Ms. Cristina Rigman, Ms. Olivia Baciú and Ms. Mirela Oprea. The Program aimed to provide a unique space for learning, reflections and thoughtful adaptation for **15 CSO leaders** concerned with the disruptions in their organizations and sectors caused by the pandemic and continuous changes of the civic space. Along with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Program represented a capacity building opportunity very much welcomed by CSO representatives from the Black Sea Region, consisting of a long-term journey on discovering ways of not just surviving, but also **thriving and adjusting ways of working in challenging times**.



Apart from this, in the period June – November 2020, the **Capacity Building Path towards the Start-up of Regional CSO Networks Training Program** took place, facilitated by Ms. Marina Sarli. The aim of the Programme was to support the members of the Black Sea NGO Forum in their process of transforming the current **14 Working Groups into thematic independent and structured regional CSO networks**, by providing both strategic and operational guidance and tools to achieve common goals for developing a comprehensive three years' Working Plan. The Program provided the opportunity to design common projects and initiatives, to rethink strategic partnerships and to ensure organizational and financial sustainability.



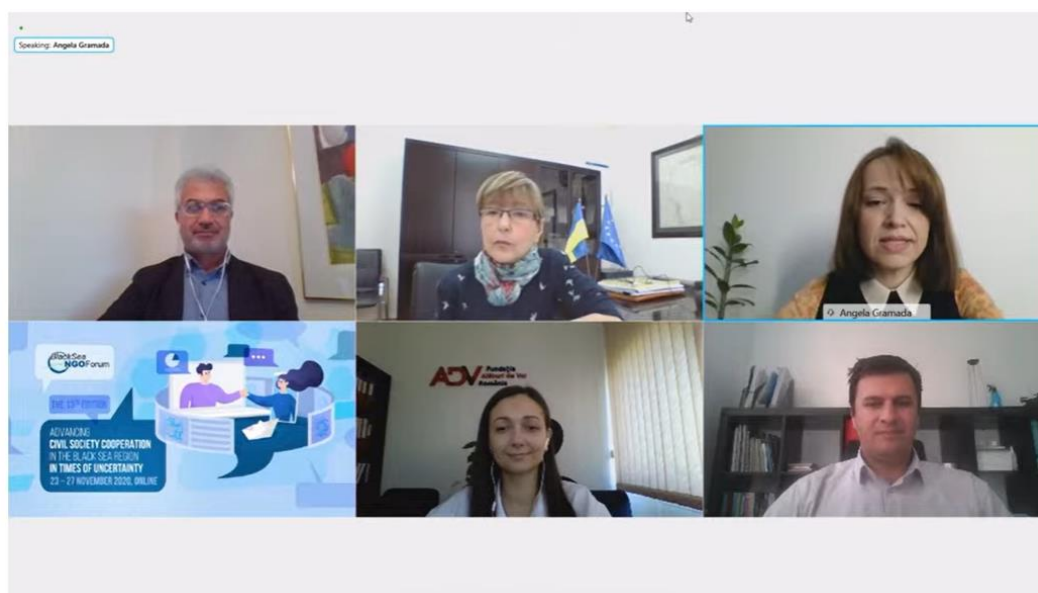
In addition to all of these, in the context of the Black Sea NGO Forum project, at the beginning of 2020, a new **Sub-Granting Scheme for activities that support the development of CSO regional networks** has been launched. Its overall objective is to support civil society organisations part of the Black Sea NGO Forum initiate or consolidate regional thematic networks in the cooperation areas identified in the 2019 Strategic Framework, thus supporting the organisation of working meetings, seminars, workshops, trainings, research studies on thematic issues relevant for the Black Sea NGO Forum Working Groups / groups of organisations part of the Forum, as well as concrete small projects with the objective of initiating or consolidating a regional thematic network.

One of the projects implemented in the context of the Sub-Granting Scheme is **“Development of WG Culture & Education via Creating Digital Tools/skills capacity and Strategic Plan”**, organized by International Business Development and Investment Promotion Center (Georgia), in the framework of the Black Sea NGO Forum Culture & Education Working Group. Its aim is to enhance WG structure, facilitating strategic development and internal communication through collaborative projects and initiatives. Thus, fostering the creation of regional CSO networks, in the context of the Black Sea NGO Forum, provides more long-term perspectives towards sustainable cooperation.

DAY IV: 26th of November

Plenary Session IV

Building Partnerships in the Black Sea Region in Times of Crisis



Objectives:

- ✓ Strengthening the importance of the cross-thematic cooperation, for tackling regional challenges and moving forward together;
- ✓ Exploring the potential collaboration opportunities between civil society actors and public institutions, academia, and private sector.

Themes for reflection:

- CSOs and public institutions – cooperation, not competition;
- Academia, experts, young researchers and civil society organizations – partnerships with benefits;
- How to advance partnerships between CSOs and entrepreneurs?

Moderator: *Ms. Angela Grămadă*, Project Manager, the Romanian NGDO Platform - FOND

Speakers:

Mr. Professor Nicolaos P. Theodossiou, PhD, Chair Sustainable Development Solutions Network Black Sea

Ms. Emma Gileva, Board Member, Black Sea NGO Network

Ms. Ms. Iryna Soltys, expert on international projects Association of Ukrainian Regions "EU Strategy for the Danube Region"

Ms. Elena Vasiliu, Communications and Marketing Expert, Close to You Foundation

Key points:

- The civil society organizations and academia representatives can together promote the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Cross-border cooperation on transversal thematic areas creates a more coherent results-driven framework;
- Border regions have common challenges that require common solutions and partners are adopting innovative methods of working together;
- Cross-border cooperation in the field of social economy is essential for improving policy making, and making societies more inclusive.

Rank	Country	Score
1	Sweden	84.72
33	Serbia	75.24
38	Romania	74.78
39	Bulgaria	74.77
42	Moldova	74.44
43	Greece	74.33
47	Ukraine	74.25
54	Azerbaijan	72.61
57	Russia	71.92
58	Georgia	71.88
68	Albania	70.82
70	Turkey	70.33
75	Armenia	69.86
166	Central African Republic	38.54

The process of implementing the [2030 United Nations' Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) at national levels requires both a top-down and a bottom-up approach. In the latter approach, citizens can get directly involved and contribute to the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). **The civil society organizations and academia can together promote and implement solutions for the**

implementation of the SDGs, including in the Black Sea countries, through strong regional networks, through new innovative approaches, and tools, and more importantly, through involvement of youth in this common cause.

Cross-border cooperation is also important in tackling common challenges in the Black Sea Region, especially in what regards marine and coastal environment, marine litter and pollution. Thus, **the collaboration between civil society organizations, research institutes and academia** on transversal thematic areas creates a more efficient and coherent working framework, providing analytical data and **linking better expertise knowledge to the society, the beneficiaries and their needs**. This multi-stakeholder collaboration also ensures the delivery of more accurate results at the regional level, through digitalized processes, providing a **space for coordination, sharing best practices and lessons learned**.

Cross-border cooperation gains even more importance in a micro-regional context. The Danube Delta region are part of the Black Sea Region program area, therefore, collaborations in such a framework represent opportunities to strengthen regional integration, for both EU and Non-EU Black Sea countries. Such cooperation contributes to the **social and economic convergence of the development of border regions** that often times have common challenges that require common solutions. The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced the level and quality of cross-border cooperation, and now national authorities, together with non-governmental organizations and volunteers are adopting innovative methods of working together.

Society development comes along with multifaceted cooperation. Through cooperation, trust is being built and solutions are found in times of crisis. In the process of replicating

on large scale models of good practice and develop a functional and sustainable ecosystem in the region, **cross-border cooperation in the field of social economy is essential for improving policy making, fostering social innovations, addressing regional issues and contributing to more inclusive societies.**

Side Event

Listen to the Voice of the Region: Occupy Library – a story about cohesion between libraries and NGOs

Speaker:

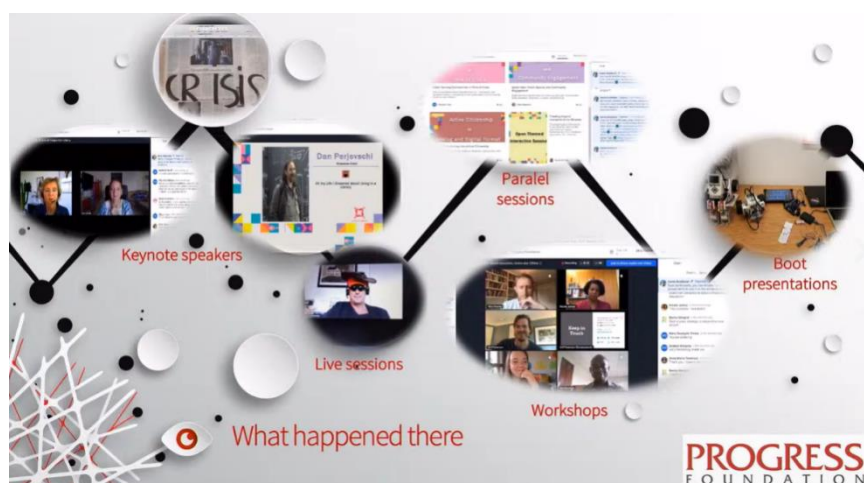
Mr. Ovidiu Ana, Program Director, Progress Foundation

Libraries represent an important cooperation element in today's societies, becoming more present and more involved in the civic life. This trend of involvement is becoming more visible, especially when ensuring equal access to information and education for participatory democracy.

Civil society organizations together with libraries can contribute to the development of local communities through the delivery of innovative services, to show best practices and foster the development and long-term sustainability of networks in the region.

One of the most important event bringing together CSOs and libraries is the **Occupy Library Conference**. In 2020, the Occupy Library Conference has gathered more than 800 participants streaming live from over 30 countries, in the context of live sessions, parallel sessions, workshops and boot presentations.

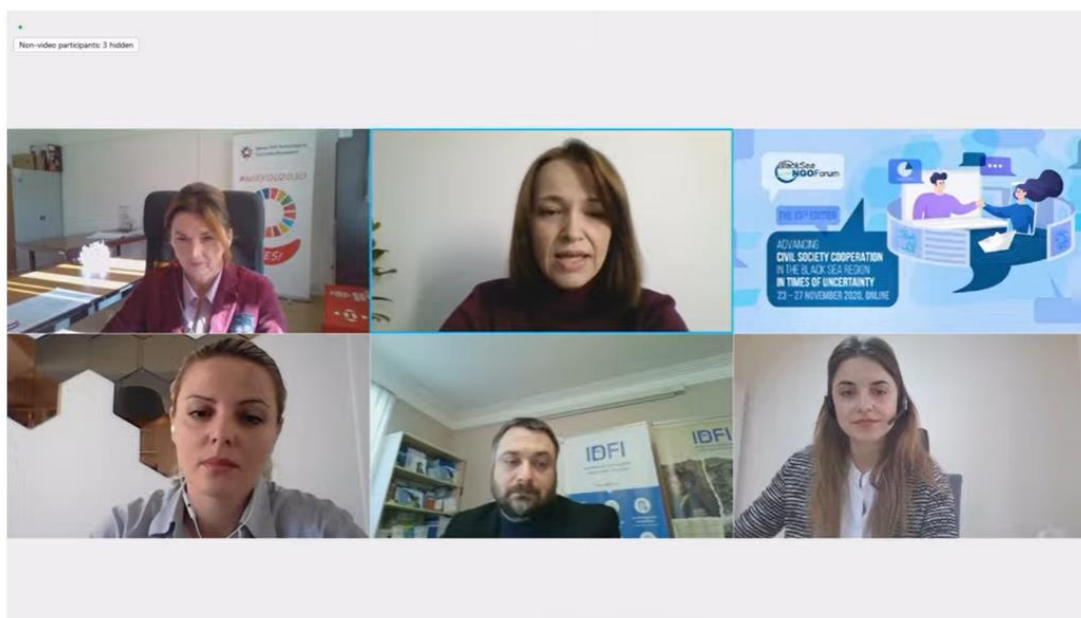
The Occupy Library Innovators Hub project is implemented by Progress Foundation Romania in the framework of the “Black Sea NGO Forum Sub-Granting Scheme For Activities That Support The Development Of CSO Regional Networks”, within the project „Building CSO Capacity for Regional Cooperation within the Black Sea Region”, implemented by the Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND with the financial support of the European Union.



DAY V: 27th of November

Plenary Session V

Advancing Sustainable Development in the Black Sea Region in 2020



Objectives:

- ✓ Underlining the progress of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in the Black Sea Region in 2020;
- ✓ Promoting the role of the civil society cooperation for achieving sustainable development.

Moderator: Ms. Angela Grămadă, Project Manager, the Romanian NGDO Platform (FOND)

Speakers:

Ms. Luminița Bălălaşu, Head of Office, Department of Sustainable Development – the Government of Romania

Ms. Franziska Tadé, Project Manager, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Mr. Giorgi Kldiashvili, Executive Director, Institute for Development of Freedom of Information Georgia

Ms. Biljana Spasovska, Executive Director, Balkan Civil Society Development Network, Secretariat of the European Region, CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness - CPDE

Key points:

- **Civil society organizations are relevant partners for national authorities in the monitoring and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at national levels;**

- Donor organisations are open to building partnerships and dialogue with civil society organizations for national coordination and cooperation for sustainable development;
- The involvement of government agencies, of civil society organizations and of international organizations is key in promoting sustainable development at national level;
- By becoming involved in regional/ European/ international CSO networks, non-governmental organizations can coordinate more efficiently their activities at higher levels, in order to strengthen existing development partnerships, as means for implementing the 2030 Agenda.

With a view to ensure the efficient promotion and implementation of sustainable development, a strong institutional framework is the key for good coordination for national policies in this sense. **The Department for Sustainable Development** has been established in 2017 under the Romanian Prime Minister office, with the main role to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Romania. In order to draw on the potential capacities of all the actors involved in the process of implementing the national Sustainable Development Strategy 2030, **the Department for Sustainable Development has been building multilateral partnerships, including with civil society**, bringing thus into spotlight the role of NGOs in the monitoring of the Agenda at both national and European level.

This process is influenced by the particular context of each country, where the openness of the national authorities plays an important role in advancing the 2030 Agenda together with other relevant national stakeholders. **The Republic of Moldova**, as other Black Sea Region countries, is committed to the implementation of sustainable development, with successful nationalization of SDG indicators, and presenting in a very participatory manner its first Voluntary National Review at the 2020 edition of the United Nations' High Level Political Forum. In times of COVID-19 pandemic, the involvement of international organizations has fostered **national coordination and cooperation with NGOs** for sustainable development.

Thus, the involvement of government agencies, of civil society organizations and of international organizations is the key in promoting sustainable development. **Georgia** is another country where international organizations and the donor community were very active in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, together with the national NGO sector. CSOs contributed to **the strengthening of data collection and coordination processes, built the capacity of local authorities and raised the level of national public awareness** on these topics. Despite this, more consolidated cooperation is needed, in order to ensure transparency and accountability, increase representation in legislative bodies and foster public participation in policy development.

In this context, regional, European and international CSO networks become vital for dialogue, learning, and experience sharing in what regards the promotion of sustainable development. By becoming involved in these networks (such as the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness), **CSOs at national level can coordinate more efficiently their**

involvement and activities at higher levels, in high-level fora, in order to strengthen existing development partnerships, as means for implementing the 2030 Agenda.

CSO – Donor Dialogues (world-café method)

Objectives:

- ✓ *Fostering the dialogue between CSOs and donors active in the Black Sea Region, with a two-fold purpose: for CSOs to learn about funding opportunities available for civil society in the Region and for donors to meet their potential grantees and learn about the needs on the ground;*
- ✓ *Creating a space for questions, answers, and feedback.*

Facilitator: The Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND

Speakers:

Mr. Etienne Cuche, International Aid / Cooperation Assistant, DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission

Ms. Patrizia Busolini, Policy Officer, Sea-basin Strategies, Maritime Regional Cooperation and Maritime Security, DG MARE, European Commission

Ms. Maria Florea, Program Officer, The Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation, A Project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States

Ms. Angela Sima, Counsellor, Romanian Agency for International Development Cooperation (RoAid)

Ms. Ana Gheorghe, Counsellor, Directorate MA for European Territorial Cooperation Programs, Management Authority Service for Black Sea Basin, Romanian Ministry of Public Works, Development and Administration

Starting from the very positive feedback received from the participants at the Black Sea NGO Forum on the world café sessions organised over the past few years, this session aimed at supporting an **active dialogue between donors and CSOs in the Black Sea Region** in what concerns **funding opportunities**.

Participants were given the opportunity to join one of the **4 breakout online groups**, and were encouraged to discuss together with the representative of the donor organisations about the engagement and support they provide to CSOs.

In each group, the donor “hosted” the discussions, presenting the main activities, priorities and CSO funding programs of the organisations they are representing. Following discussions, they allocated time for interaction, questions and comments.

Parallel Sessions

Consolidating the Black Sea NGO Forum Working Groups

Objectives:

- ✓ Highlighting the results of the Black Sea NGO Forum Working Groups in 2020;
- ✓ Creating a space for discussions for the development and consolidation of the Black Sea NGO Forum Working Groups: Membership and Leadership, ways of improving decision-making processes;
- ✓ Working together on the WG Term of References and setting the new ways for future collaboration;
- ✓ Developing opportunities for increasing communication among the Black Sea NGO Forum participants.

All throughout the five days of the online Black Sea NGO Forum, special parallel sessions were organized, dedicated to facilitating discussions between the members of the **14 Black Sea NGO Forum Working Groups**.

The parallel sessions were coordinated by the WG Leaders and Co-Leaders, gathering together both new and former WG members to discuss about further ways of consolidating the WG; presenting the Working Plans for the next three years; establishing future communications channels; setting the new leadership (if the case).

Knowledge Networks
for Development WG

Leader: TBD
Co-Leader: TBD

Anti-Corruption WG

Leader: Diana Ranga-Enachi
Co-Leader: Natia Pirashvili

Civic Engagement WG

Leader: TBD
Co-Leader: TBD

Youth WG

Leader: Tamar Jangulashvili
Co-Leader: TBD

Culture & Education WG

Co-Leaders: Zviad Eliziani, Zaruhi Tonoyan, Anca Rapeanu,
Claudia Serbanuta

Sustainable Development WG

Co-Leader: David Tsiskaridze
Co-Leader: Iulian Mareş

Youthbanks WG

Leader: Artur Ghazaryan
Co-Leader: TBD

Human Rights WG	<p>Leader: Vitalii Misiats</p> <p>Co-Leader: TBD</p>
Networking WG	<p>Leader: TBD</p> <p>Co-Leader: TBD</p>
Media & Communication WG	<p>Leader: TBD</p> <p>Co-Leader: TBD</p>
CSO Sustainability & Resilience WG	<p>Co-Leader: Natalia Budescu</p> <p>Co-Leader: Mariana Trifonova</p>
Environment & Climate Change WG	<p>Leader: Erdem Vardar</p> <p>Co-Leader: Svitlana Kuts</p>
Sustainable Development & Corporate Social Responsibility WG	<p>Leader: Anahit Ghazanchyan</p> <p>Co-Leader: TBD</p>
Volunteering Development WG	<p>Leader: TBD</p> <p>Co-Leader: TBD</p>

Conclusions and acknowledgements

The 13th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum: *Advancing Civil Society Cooperation in the Black Sea Region in Times of Uncertainty* has been organized in a unique format, and aimed to contribute to identifying **the common challenges that the civil society organizations and facing**, as well as opportunities for addressing them together.

Throughout its five online days, the Black Sea NGO Forum gathered on the online platform Cisco Webex **117 participants**, both from the Black Sea Region (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine), as well as from the EU (Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Ireland, Italy and Romania), and the Balkans (North Macedonia and Albania).

The Black Sea NGO Forum team wishes to give special thanks to our funders and partners:



The European Union



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of our participants for their active involvement during this special year's edition as well!

We invite you to stay updated with news about the Black Sea NGO Forum and opportunities for the NGO sector from the Black Sea Region by following:

Our website: <http://blackseango.org/>

Our Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/BlackSeaNGOForum/>

Our Twitter: <https://twitter.com/blackseango>

For any inquiries, please contact us at: forum@blackseango.org
