



Funded by the
European Commission



BLACK SEA NGO FORUM

• 14TH EDITION •

Strengthening the capacity of the CSOs in the Black Sea to foster regional cooperation and stability

13-15 OCTOBER 2021 • ONLINE



The 14th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum

Strengthening the capacity of the CSOs in the Black
Sea to foster regional cooperation and stability

13 – 15 October 2021, Online

- FINAL REPORT -

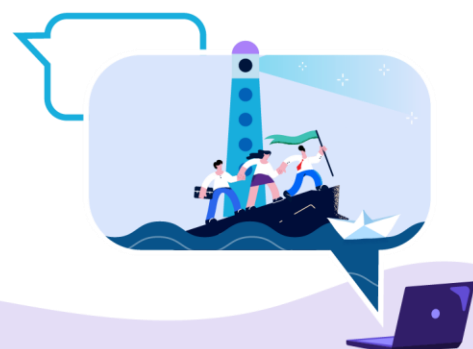


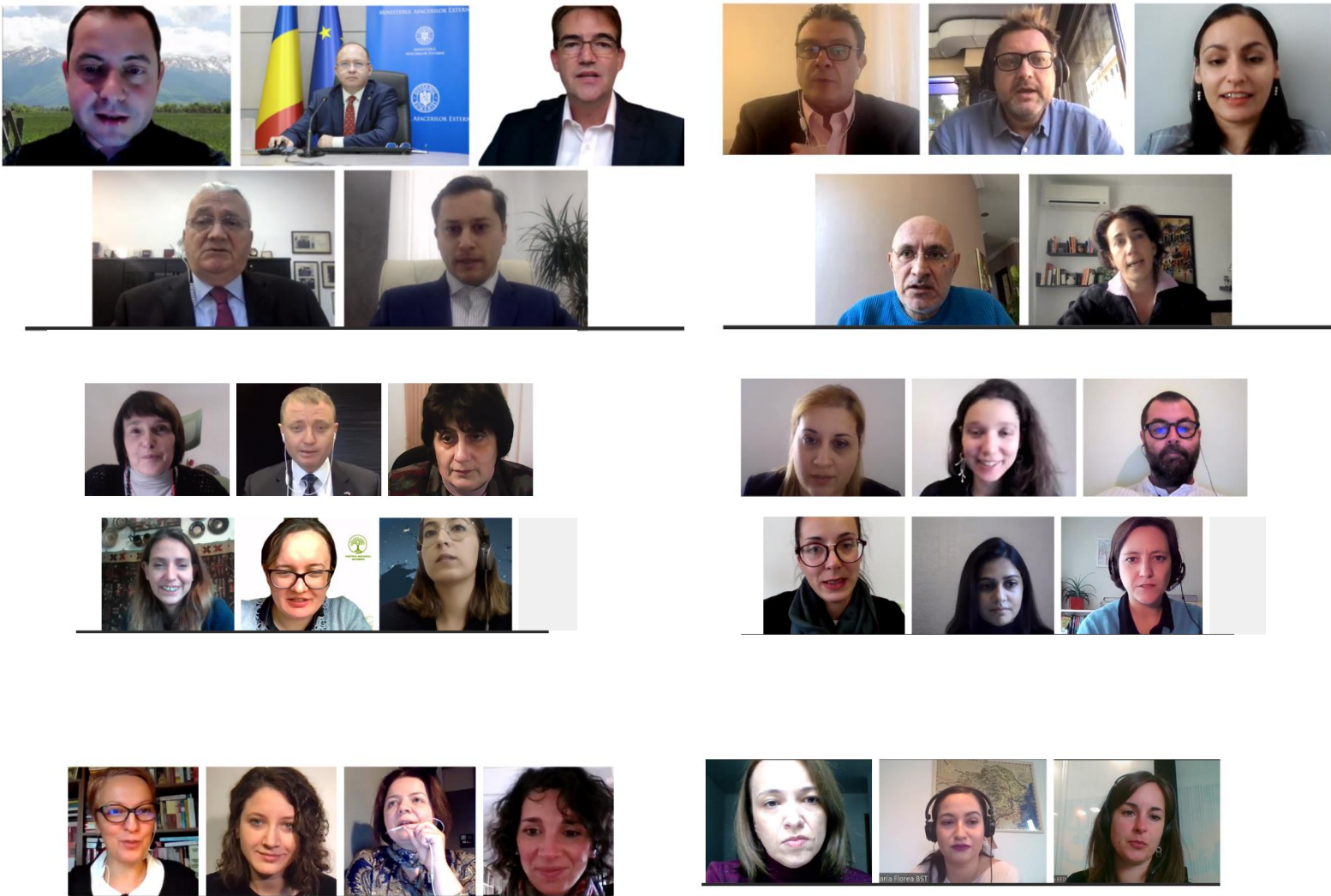
Funded by the
European Union

Organised by:



Federația Organizațiilor Neguvernamentale pentru Dezvoltare din România





The Romanian NGDO Platform FOND elaborated this report as a follow-up activity of the 14th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum. All publication rights belong to the Romanian NGDO Platform FOND. Any reproduction, entirely or partially, regardless of the technical methods used, is forbidden without the written consent of FOND.



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, strengthen NGOs' capacities to influence regional and national policies, and increase the number and quality of regional partnerships and projects.

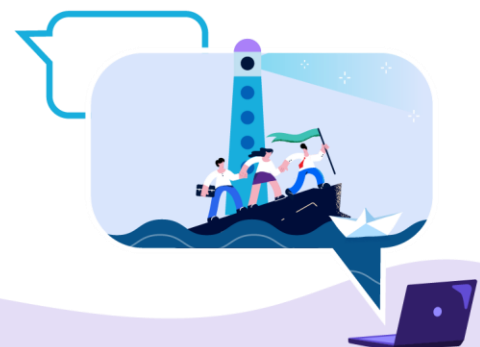
Since its first edition, the Black Sea NGO Forum enabled an open space for debate, sharing mutual knowledge and understanding, communication and cooperation among civil society representatives, governments, international organisations and donors active in the Black Sea region. The Forum focuses on sharing 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 1,400 participants from 11 countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine. The Forum has enabled participants to share expertise and best practices on the adversity 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 implementing 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 14th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum Strengthening the capacity of the CSOs in the Black Sea to foster regional cooperation and stability

The 14th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum: Strengthening the capacity of the CSOs in the Black Sea to foster regional cooperation and stability has been organised between the 13 – 15 of October 2021, in an online format.

The event was organised by the Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND, with the financial support of the European Commission.

The 2021 edition of the Forum will contribute to the identification of the common challenges that civil society organisations are facing right now by presenting the main findings of two studies developed by FOND this year, "Shrinking Civic Space post-COVID-19 pandemic in the Black Sea region" and "CSO Development Effectiveness Principles in the Black Sea region" to understand the nature of the evolution of the impact of the pandemic on NGOs from the Black Sea region, based on the premise that a healthy democracy works based on dialogue between the government and the population.

In this context, the themes addressed through this edition had a specific focus on:

- The contribution of a multi-stakeholder approach towards sustainable democratisation processes and sustainable economic development in the Black Sea region;
- Civil society as a key driver of resilience and development;
- Calling for cohesion and joint actions in the Black Sea Region - the power of organised civil society;
- The Black Sea NGO Forum in 2021: SDGs and Development Effectiveness Principles in the spotlight;
- Personal Stories: From personal experience to regional/global impact - the unwritten civil society convention.
- CSOs Dialogue with Donors: Cooperation in the Spotlight, World Café Session.

The final agenda of the event, together with other resource documents, can be found online [here](#).



Day I: 13th of October

Welcoming remarks

The Black Sea NGO Forum is an annual regional event first organised in 2008 by FOND in the context of Black Sea Synergy 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 and in the last three years, with the aims to increase the level of dialogue and cooperation among NGOs in the wider Black Sea Region, strengthening the NGOs capacity to influence regional and national policies and to improve the number and quality of regional partnerships and projects.



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

Keynote Speech

It is a great pleasure for me to open the 14th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum. I am sure that this Forum will provide, as always, many opportunities for practical discussions and innovative ideas on the way forward. Since its launching in 2008, this initiative, resulting from a partnership between the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the civil society in Romania, has grown into the most relevant platform for debate, communication and cooperation among civil society leaders, organisations and individuals in the Black Sea region. We can undoubtedly say that collaboration among civil society organisations in this region has proved to be a success story.



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

Welcoming Remarks

Regarding the cooperation within the Black Sea Region, the European Commission will continue to work with FOND and other partners to implement the Common Maritime Agenda and SRIA, as the two main goals to address the common challenges. (...)

Finally, the European Commission will further support joint partnerships and the sharing of experience among civil society organisations in the region (..), through several measures, including visibility actions and thematic events. Furthermore, the European Commission will continue to support civil society in and around the Black Sea.

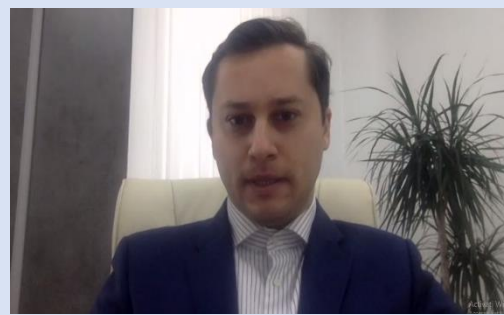


Mr Michael Rupp, Principal Administrator DG NEAR - Eastern Partnership, C.1. Team leader, European Commission



Plenary Session I

Together for action: The contribution of a multi-stakeholder approach towards sustainable democratisation processes and sustainable economic development in the Black Sea region



Highlights:

- How can a multi-stakeholder approach contribute to the cohesion of common interests in the Black Sea region? How important is the role of civil society in achieving results?
- Sustainable democratisation and sustainable economic development as sources for prosperity and stability.
- A civil society view on sustainable development in the Black Sea region.

Moderator: Mr Ștefan Cibian, PhD, President FOND

Speakers:

H.E. Amb. Lazăr Comănescu, Secretary General, Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)

Mr. Cătălin Constantin Harnagea, General Director, Romanian Agency for International Development Cooperation (RoAid)

Mr Jocelyn Guitton, Political Officer, European Commission (EEAS) - Eastern Partnership, Regional Cooperation and OSCE Division

Mr Adrian Lupușor, Executive Director, Expert-Grup, National Facilitator for Moldova, Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

Key points:

- Nongovernmental organisations are essential, especially given the positive role of civil society as a force of change.
- There is a significant need for greater focus, vision to make a difference and shape events. For this reason, we have to look at partners in the region.



- **Every country society is essential in developing the Black Sea Region as a whole, and it is a universal picture regardless of the country level or ambitions.**
- **Civil society organisations promote long term social and economic transformation, which complements the role of politicians.**

Civil society has a significant role in all the areas, going from economic development to environment and digitalisation. However, it is important to stress that the space for civil society is closing throughout the region. Without long term independent endowment that would secure resources for civil society in the area, it is very unlikely that civil society will stay at the level it is today and be able to have a significant role.

The Black Sea Region is a complex area with excellent potential for development and where different actors are involved. In this sense, the **Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC)** uses this potential. The organisation has adapted its work to be aligned with the Agenda for Sustainable Development to make the most for the development of the economy in the region. Especially in times of uncertainty, like the past two years and with the current number of COVID cases increasing worldwide, sustained effort is needed to turntables.

In such context, the funding provided by **Romanian Agency for International Development** for projects aims at combating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in developing countries in line with the "Team European" initiative, for areas of intervention like responding to the immediate health crisis, strengthening health systems, and mitigation of rapid social and economic needs including support for the private sector. Romania has made significant progress in consolidating its role as a donor country, joining the international community to achieve the **Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals**.

At the European level, **the European Union** continues to push for a strong commitment to developing regional cooperation in the Black Sea area through the Black Sea Synergy and its two agendas, the **Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea and the Black Sea Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda**. In the framework of the two agendas, civil society has an essential role in raising awareness and contributing to their successful implementation. Moreover, the EU is reaffirming its strong commitment to developing regional cooperation in the Black Sea. We should keep in mind that joint endeavours are the key to dealing with the numerous changes that affect the region.

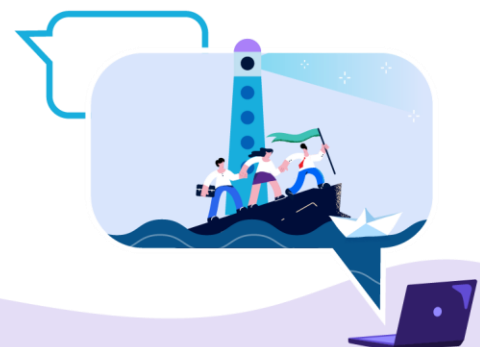
Nevertheless, sustainable development and qualitative transformations cannot be delivered by politicians alone, as such vision goes beyond. Three aspects are important if we treat CSOs as agents of change in all the Black Sea countries:

1. Policy agenda;
2. The platforms or instruments of engagement of CSOs with the government;



3. CSOs should focus on the trio composed of monitoring governmental activities, enforcing the accountability mechanisms and capacity building of grassroots CSOs at the local level.

Through the involvement of the NGOs, the work of different stakeholders is substantially complemented in a more efficient and relevant way for the real needs of the citizens. Nevertheless, there is a quite significant openness from all directions with regard the multisector collaboration. This is significant prove that all sector is quite resourceful in what they do.



Plenary Session II

Civil society as key driver of resilience and development



Highlights:

- Heightened awareness of the shrinking civic space in the Black Sea Region in the post-pandemic period. The struggle to overcome new risks and challenges – the presentation of the study report "Shrinking Civic Space post-COVID-19 pandemic in the Black Sea region".
- Enabling Environment for CSO activities in the Black Sea Region in 2021. Advocacy for quality policies and opportunities.
- Mapping the civil society capacity to achieve the EU policies objectives in the Black Sea Region.

Moderator: Prof. Dimitrios Tryantaphyllou, Director, Centre for International and European Studies (CIES), Kadir Has University, Istanbul, Member of the Black Sea NGO Forum Advisory Group

Speakers:

Mr Marc Mazureanu, Executive Director, ASIST Moldova

Ms Mariana Trifonova, Program Director, Economic Policy Institute, co-leader of the CSO Sustainability & Resilience WG of the BSNCOF

Mr Vazha Salamadze, Director, Civil Society Institute Georgia

Ms Olivia Baciu, Senior Adviser & Technical Lead, Partners Global, member of the Advisory Group, BSNCOF



Key points:

- Civic space as a changing space for interaction of CSOs.
- Civil society organisations must continue their efforts as remaining relevant partners for different stakeholders.
- The changing dynamics needs a different approach in terms of operating, skills and behaviour.

Covid-19 has changed worldwide the way of functioning of the civic space. In such challenging times, studies are needed to have an overall view of the changes of civic space and understand how CSOs can be sustained in their activity.

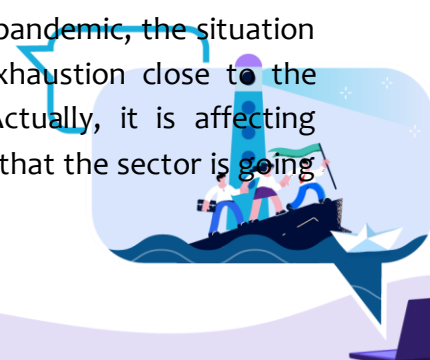
According to the regional report **"Shrinking Civic Space post-COVID-19 pandemic in the Black Sea region"**, prepared by Danu Marin, Mark Mazureanu, Sanda Sandu, Ilie Prodan and commissioned by the Romanian NGDO Platform for Development FOND, the space of interaction is not shrinking, but simply changing its internal mechanisms and civic space actors adapt to the new conditions in case they encounter oppressive environments. This change is conditioned by both the power attitude and the internal mechanism of interaction among the actors.

Moreover, civic activism cannot disappear even if the state is creating all the possible measures to marginalise and exclude civic actors. In these cases, activism continues to be produced in other venues and through different actions. Any new environment pushes the civic space actors to evolve and change their mechanism of functioning and interaction. Simply put, the actors adapt to burdening procedures and biased controls.

To understand the evolution of the civic space or the transformation of civic space, the authors focused on the following several pillars: regulatory environment, financial sustainability, cooperation with government and advocacy capacity, organisational capacity and digital transformation, taking into account that the terms of conditions that might influence the civic space, are numerous and can vary from one society to another.

What is essential in understanding the specific context in each country from the Black Sea Region is that not all CSOs are equal. Some are more equals than others in terms of govern relations, internal capacity, knowledge or sustainability. Especially in these times, to remain relevant, civil society organisations must continue their efforts to stay relevant and vocal and be more prepared professionally to engage with government stakeholders to make their voices heard and contribute constructively to the dialogue. Beyond that, a prominent role remains with major international donors, which should not only act having in mind specific regional targets but being able to get deeper into the context of each country and civil society organisations working with.

Furthermore, after almost two years since the beginning of the pandemic, the situation of CSOs is also different, meaning that there is a level of exhaustion close to the overwhelming burnout, and it is across the organisations. Actually, it is affecting organisational life per se. However, the challenge is to recognise that the sector is going



through a transformational moment that requires new ways, adaptive ways of doing the old businesses as usual. In this sense, new skills and behaviours must be embedded within the organisations to enable the shift between practicability and crisis.

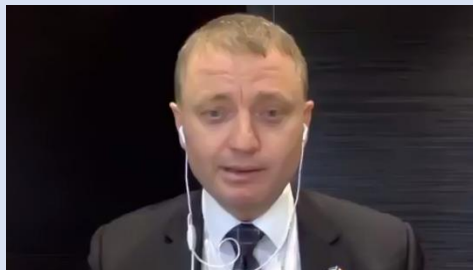
So everything is different, and the two red dots are about reflections and action.



Day II: 14th of October

Plenary Session III

Calling for cohesion and common actions in the Black Sea Region - the power of an organised civil society



Highlights:

- Highlighting the importance of digitalisation in the CSOs activities/Mapping the influence of digitalisation and new opportunities for CSOs
- Assessing EU policies in the Black Sea region and beyond: Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea, the European Black Sea Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA), European Green Deal initiatives, Digitalization;
- Evaluating the climatic state of the Black Sea Region.

Moderator: Ms Svitlana Kuts, Director, International Fundraising Consultancy Ukraine, member of the Advisory Group of the BSNCOF

Speakers:

Mr Victor Guzun, International Negotiations Lecturer, former public servant and Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova to Estonia (2010-2015)

Ms Emma Gileva, Board Member, Black Sea NGO Network, member of the National Focal Points

Network, BSNCOF

Ms Ana Murray, Country Director, Ashoka Romania



Ms Elena Culighin, Chair, Waste Program Manager, National Environmental Center

Ms Pinar Uygurer, Project Manager, Black Sea CONNECT and BRIDGE-BS

Key points:

- **Digitalisation can be seen as a key driver for supporting the cooperation between countries and NGOs.**
- **CSOs need to work together, collaborate and to be emphatic with each other's work and actively listen to each other to understand different organisations.**
- **The importance of connections with different countries and networks to achieve results.**
- **Overfishing and overpopulation are some of the challenges that harm the Black Sea ecosystem.**

Building resilient and innovative societies represent one of every state's goals, and digitalisation is one key element that should be embraced in this endeavour. Nowadays, digitalisation has become essential, especially in times of pandemic, is fundamental for operating the economy and the systems.

In this context, NGOs have an essential role in promoting and achieving digital skills and tools, as there is a primary focus on developing digital skills for education. Moreover, digitalisation can also be seen as a key driver for supporting the cooperation between countries and NGOs. In this sense, CSOs need to adapt quickly if they hope to impact the digitisation of the Black Sea region.

Digitalisation is also essential in environmental activities. The Black Sea environmental challenges were at the centre of the central policies adopted at the European and national levels in the last years. While digitalisation represents the future and will help tackle environmental challenges, there should be more emphasis on people and convincing them to cut down on pollution. There is a necessity to focus on adopting sustainable ways to protect the environment and how to face challenges in communicating messages about the environment and the future.

CSOs need to work together. The power of togetherness and the need for cohesion and collaboration between NGOs represent one of the future steps for the civic sector. For Ashoka, there is an operational need to explore how civil society organisations can be supported. Thus, CSOs need to be very kind to themselves, and there is a requirement for human connection. But, most importantly, to create resilient societies, NGOs need to collaborate, be emphatic with each other's work, and actively listen to each other. Through communication and collaboration, the civil society sector can show the world the power of networks. Last but not least, collaborative solutions can change the world, and the most important lesson is that doing good is the most accelerated way to transform our societies for the future.

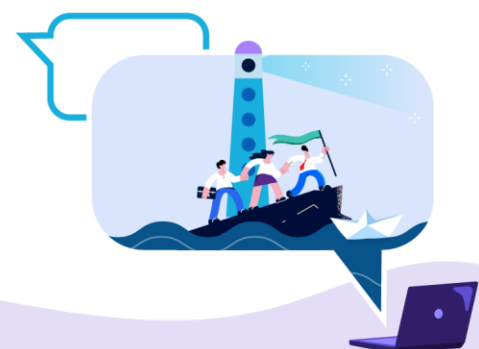
Even if creating innovative societies represents the future goal of the international community, climate change challenges are affecting the main sectors of societies



Climate change is the most actual problem that is affecting resources and agricultural activities. Due to the climate change in the Republic of Moldova, the annual temperatures have increased. According to a study conducted by UNDRR, the Republic of Moldova is in the top ten countries with the population affected by climate disasters.

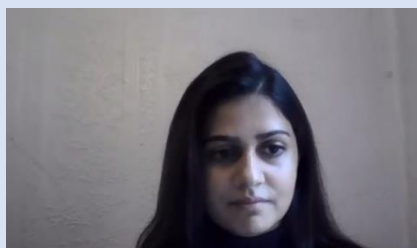
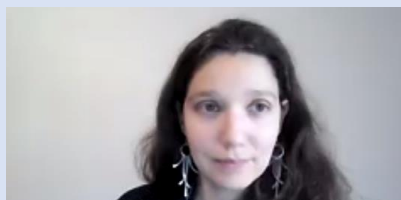
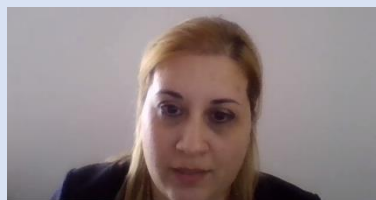
Even if the Black Sea is unique, rich in resources and culturally diverse, overfishing and overpopulation are just some of the challenges that harm the ecosystem. To support the Black Sea, NGOs need to act together and work together. In this sense, the Blue Growth strategy represents a unique opportunity for increased prosperity and stability in the region.

The strategic document created has four pillars and aims to create a common vision for the Black Sea, guiding all the actors to come together and address the challenges to promote Blue Growth. SRIA and its Implementation Plan will guide stakeholders from academia, funding agencies, industry, policy, and society to manage the fundamental Black Sea challenges to promote the Black Sea region's blue growth and economic prosperity. To conclude, we stress some of the successful activities carried out by the Black Sea Connect like The Black Sea Young Ambassadors Program, funding for projects, opportunities to develop SRIA.



Plenary Session IV

The Black Sea NGO Forum in 2021: SDGs and Development Effectiveness Principles in the spotlight



Highlights:

- Presentation of the study "CSO Development Effectiveness Principles for the Black Sea region";
- Promoting the role of civil society cooperation for achieving sustainable development;
- Presentation of best practices and trends in development effectiveness policies.

Moderator: Ms Ingrid Marinescu, Executive director FOND

Speakers:

Ms Luciana Ghica, Associate Professor, University of Bucharest, Faculty of Political Science/ Director, Center for International Cooperation and Development Studies (IDC) & **Mr. Bogdan Radu**, Senior Lecturer, Babes-Bolyai University, Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences

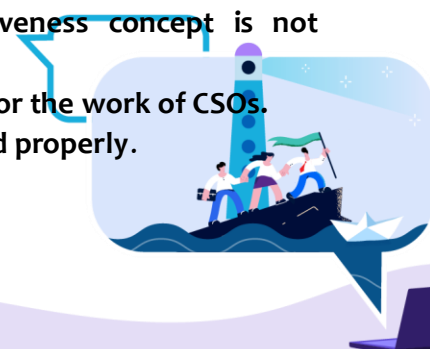
Ms Anja Bosilkova-Antovska, Policy and Advocacy Coordinator, Balkan Civil Society Development Network

Ms Farwa Sial, Senior Policy and Advocacy Officer, Eurodad

Ms Celia Cranfield, Senior Policy and Advocacy Adviser, CONCORD

Key points:

- People's knowledge regarding the development effectiveness concept is not extended.
- The pandemic context continues to be a challenging factor for the work of CSOs.
- ODA represents an important instrument and should be used properly.



Development effectiveness refers to the impact of development cooperation, and it is a concept often used in today's societies. Considering that FOND focuses on sustainable development, there was elaborated a document meant to offer a broader perspective about Development Effectiveness Principles for the Black Sea region and especially for the participants of the BSNGO Forum. According to the study "CSO Development Effectiveness Principles for the Black Sea region", elaborated by Ms Luciana Alexandra Ghica and Mr Bogdan Mihai Radu and commissioned by the Romanian NGDO Platform for Development FOND, peoples' understanding concerning development effectiveness, it is not very clear.

Considering this aspect is essential to build upon these needs and elaborate materials that translate information and help operationalise the Istanbul principles. The most common problem, also confirmed by the study, is that people don't know how to work with concepts like Istanbul Principles or how to use them within their work.

During this plenary session, the participants have had the opportunity to compare the situation in two sub-regions: The Black Sea region and Western Balkans. Regarding trends in development effectiveness policies in the Western Balkans, civic space is shrinking because of the pandemic. The government and political party affiliated organisations continue to take over the public area of the CSO and also the public funding available for NGOs. Another trend in Western Balkan societies is the increased pressure on the CSOs under the pretence of money laundering. This particular trend could be observed in previous years and states in the Black Sea region. Because of the pandemic, essential freedoms were restricted. While restrictions were imposed that affected the freedom of assembly, citizens found ways to protest. There were attacks, restrictions and a lot of pressure on journalists and CSOs.

Moreover, the assaults have continued to worsen, making it harder for CSOs to be involved in decision-making processes consulted regarding the measures adopted. Regarding trends in capacities and CSO accountability, the pandemic situation has shown that CSOs adjusted quickly to reach constituencies. There is also a positive side of the pandemic that has revealed new ways of communication, doing activities, and increasing the visibility of the CSOS in the citizen's eyes.

ODA is an important aspect of the process of development cooperation. Generally speaking, the term ODA Modernisation refers to the modernisation of the statistical system to improve its accuracy while reflecting the changes in the development cooperation sector. Regarding the distribution of aid, in the 1990s, there was a dramatic fall in aid effort from US\$60.9 in 1991 to US\$48 in 1997. By 2004, aid was restored to its actual level of 1991, and by 2013, flows from DAC members started peaking until 2017. Regarding the newly instrument, Development Assistance agenda, it contains an enhanced role of finance and focuses on mobilising private cross-border financial flows. There are critiques concerning the privatisation of aid because it is costly and ineffective and lacks transparency. Some of the recommendations made by **Eurodad** regarding aid are to reorient the role of ODA, enhance the provision of public goods, and eliminate economic conditionality in grants and loans.



CONCORD also highlighted the importance of ODA as being one of the most powerful tools for people and the planet. The Official Development Assistance has increased because of the pandemic. So in 2020, the EU's ODA represented 0.50% of its GNI, up from 0.42% in 2019. On another note, the inflated aid represents a real concern, which has fallen for the fourth consecutive year and now represents 13% of all reported ODA.

In the last three years, the ODA has increased and decreased, and in this manner, if we continue at the best scenarios, the percentage of 0.7 targets will be reached in late 2030. The European Union allocated in 2019 a total amount of money, representing 12.9% (12.0% in 2018) of all bilateral EU ODA (from either Member States or EU institutions). EU and member states should meet the ODA commitments assumed and the targets set by the EU. Inevitably, the European block should focus on development effectiveness and achieving the SDGs. Last but not least, there should be genuine, meaningful partnerships built with partner countries and civil society since ODA is a limited resource and should be used properly.



Parallel Workshops

The triple "O" factor in a partnership - Opportunity, Openness and Odds

Nowadays, libraries represent a crucial element in the civic sector. In fact, through cooperation and partnerships, CSOs and libraries can have a more significant impact on societies. In this sense, making partnerships represents one of the subjects discussed during the **Workshop The triple "O" factor in a partnership - Opportunity, Openness and Odds**, prepared by the Progress Foundation.

Traditionally, through cooperation, there are more opportunities to be developed. Still, to create long-lasting partnerships, CSOs need to treat every person as a potential partner and be aware of the potential possessed.

As partnerships represent a tool for cooperation, to build partnerships, a professional network is needed. In this sense, and to keep up with changes, libraries are becoming more digitised and innovative. Libraries have evolved, and people are interacting more with them, becoming important partners in societies. In addition, in the past few years, libraries interacted more with the community and tried to improve the civic movement.

What helped the most for the societies' development was the initiatives of different programmes in libraries that helped people acquire digital skills and obtain better jobs, including them more in society as active citizens. To sum up, **librarians and libraries are making efforts to build communities, but only through partnerships, their actions can be supported.**

CSO Development Effectiveness Principles in the Black Sea region, with the Financial Support of CPDE-SIDA Program

The Regional Workshop on Developing the Capacity of the CSOs from the Black Sea Region in **Implementing the Development Effectiveness Principles for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** is addressed to CSO representatives from the Black Sea NGO Forum from the EU and non-EU Black Sea countries and Belarus, engaged in International Development Cooperation activities.

The first session of this regional Workshop took place during the annual reunion of the BSNCO Forum and was dedicated to understanding the importance of the Istanbul Principles, unpacking their significance and the interrelationship between them. Considering that the Istanbul Principles have a universal application to CSOs rules and practices and their usage as a guiding document, it is fundamental for CSOs to include them in their work.

The Principles were approved in Istanbul in 2010, and they formed a foundation for the international framework for CSOs Development Effectiveness and the Busan Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. After two years of consultative processes and several international meetings, there has been an agreement on 8 Principles. They are the result of a long, participative and universal approach.

In December 2012, the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness was created in Nairobi by 50 civil society leaders and representatives to unite all CSOs on the issue of efficient development cooperation.

All governments should uphold fundamental rights, which are a precondition for effective development.



Plenary Session V

Personal Stories: From personal experience to regional/global impact - the unwritten convention of civil society



Highlights:

- To highlight the impact of an organised civil society's call for action.
- Personal and organisational storytelling: diversity and inclusion, trends, insights and experiences, fireside chat and personal stories.
- People as drivers of positive changes.

Moderator: Ms Cristina Rigman, Passionate Leadership & Adaptability Strategist, Speaker, Trainer & Coach

Speakers:

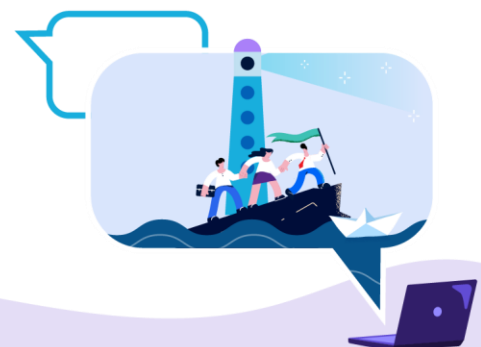
Ms Mariana Ianachevici, Chief Executive Officer, The Association for Child and Family Empowerment "AVE Copiii"

Ms Hanna Liubakova, Journalist, Non-resident fellow, Atlantic Council

Ms Marta Meloni, Project Manager, Africa e Mediterraneo and partner of the EU program Snapshots from the Borders.

Key points:

- Solidarity kicks in uncertain times not only in organised contexts but in challenging ones.
- People can be and should be drivers of positive change.



To remain focused in a challenging context is never easy. But even in difficult times, people are full of skills and determination when high stakes are involved, even if we talk about authoritarian regimes or the complex social context of a vulnerable category.

As in the case of **Belarus**, since when the presidential election took place last year, people's trust and solidarity for journalists grew and was transformed in new ways of disseminating information. Ordinary citizens assumed the role of new media. They started to act as local bloggers publishing factual information and making the situation in their country known, despite high risks for their safety. Moreover, more and more people understood the real value of journalists, and their work and citizen's journalism became essential. This is the proof that in such sensitive contexts, new alliances rise and grow their willingness for a greater purpose because nothing will change as people will do, as the power lies with the people.

In **the process of doing good**, civil society organisations are often taking from the responsibility of the state acting as a substitute, especially as providers of services. This is also the case for children included in the maternity care, for which the effort is made to integrate them after they turn 18 years old it is not enough. In such a context, CSOs develop services for these vulnerable categories. One way to do so is to ensure that they can access vocational school classes after they leave the maternal care system. The whole idea is to give the minimum to those who cannot take care of themselves.

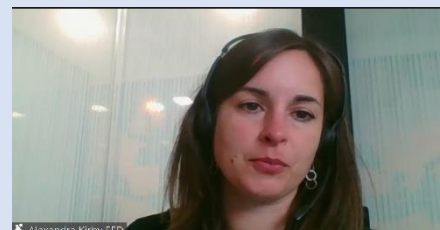
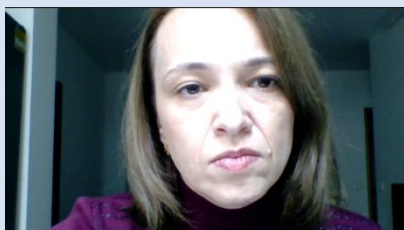
The multi-stakeholder partnership is also a successfully proven method of achieving more remarkable results. And this is the case for the project "**Snapshots from the border**", which started in 2016, with the involvement of local authorities and civil society, committed to global goals in the framework of SDGs. The project is constructed on three pillars: awareness, advocacy, and communication address the subject of migration to understand this phenomenon as a multi-faceted one and improve the critical understanding of European, national and local decision-makers, and public opinion about global interdependencies determining migration flows towards European borders.

Like never before, dialogue is essential to address and reduce the distance between local authorities and civil society.



Interactive Session

CSOs Dialogue with Donors: Cooperation in the Spotlight, World Café Session



Highlights:

- 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.

Moderator: Ms Angela Grămadă, Project Manager, FOND

Speakers:

Ms Maria Florea, Program Officer, Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation, German Marshall Fund

Ms Alexandra Kirby, Senior Program Manager, European Endowment for Democracy

The pandemic situation has affected both the civic sector and also the donors. Because of the pandemic context, donors' expectations tended to be reshuffled as they are still dealing with grant-making challenges in pandemic times.

Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation (BST) continues to support civil society and achieve better regional cooperation while ensuring that they are offering proper types of grants. Hence, for Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation, it is important to build a better society and reinforce organisations, mainly to focus on building regional cooperation and encourage CSOs to work together and form partnerships and initiatives.

Because of the pandemic context, BST is promoting the idea of offering grants to smaller organisations because of the risk to come out of the pandemic with 30-40% of the civil society gone. In this respect and for a better approach, one of the things that should be granted particular focus is flexibility. CSOs have to be flexible in their policies and self-aware about very diverse needs otherwise ignored.

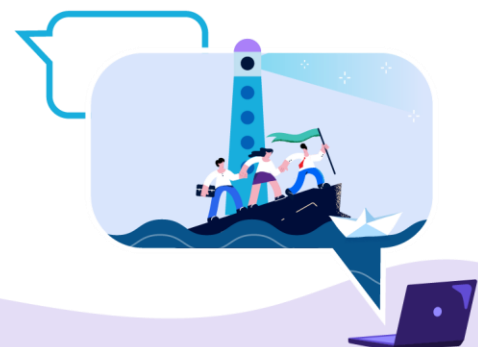
The challenge of any donor is how to strengthen the resilience of civil society and independent media. **European Endowment for Democracy's** in its activities is flexible by supporting non-



traditional activities. As the organisation does not have specific topics or priorities or automatic areas for financing, people are encouraged in sending their applications any time. In particular, EED is interested in the essence of the project, not the criteria.

Concerning the new generation and the new activists, donors need to take risks and support young people. Most importantly, donors need to be open, receive fresh ideas, and fund them. In this sense, a closer relationship is encouraged as donors need to know about better ways of doing things, to make changes in the application or award extensions, when is the case.

Regarding the resilience of the civil society, in many cases, CSOs are not doing everything they can because of the lack of resources. In this regard, more critical is strengthening resilience in many different ways, not only from an organisational perspective.



Conclusions and acknowledgements

The 14th edition of the **Black Sea NGO Forum: Strengthening the capacity of the CSOs in the Black Sea to foster regional cooperation and stability** has been organised in an online format and aimed to contribute to the identification of the common challenges that the civil society organisations are facing right now by presenting the main findings of two studies developed by FOND this year "*Shrinking Civic Space post-COVID-19 pandemic in the Black Sea region*" and "*CSO Development Effectiveness Principles in the Black Sea region*". Throughout its three online days, the Black Sea NGO Forum gathered on Zoom platform 135 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, Greece, Italy, Romania, Estonia), Non EU countries (Great Britain) and the Balkans (North Macedonia).

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



We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of our participants for their active involvement during this 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 the 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

