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Black Sea NGO Forum, 14th edition
Strengthening the capacity of the CSOs in the Black Sea to foster regional cooperation and stability

Bucharest, 13–15 October 2021

Online (via Zoom)

The year 2020 was a special one in terms of the challenges it brought to all nations. At the same time, it was a year that allowed civil society to reflect on its mission and vision and the need for qualitative changes in the communities it represents. The investment in people is the only way to contribute to social stability and economic development, including in the Black Sea region.

The Black Sea NGO Forum 2020 edition was held in an online format. Our focus was to raise awareness about civil society challenges during the pandemic and to identify opportunities for further cooperation.

During the annual reunion, the participants highlighted their main achievements at local and regional levels 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. In their turn, the Black Sea NGO Forum institutional partners presented the progress made for the implementation of the European Union’s policies in the Black Sea Region: the Black Sea Synergy, the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea, the Black Sea Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda and the European Green Deal.

Thus, the context, challenges and opportunities marked our annual reunion of 2020 and influenced the future trends and sustainability of the civil society sector.

In 2021 the Black Sea NGO Forum continues to be a driver of change in the Region, and an open space for debates, sharing mutual knowledge and encouraging cooperation among civil society representatives.

The 2021 edition, through its online format, will contribute to the identification of the common challenges that the civil society organizations 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" in order to understand the nature of the evolution of the impact of the pandemic on NGOs the Black Sea region, based on the premise that a healthy democracy works on the basis of dialogue between the government and the



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population. The recommendations and conclusions of these 2 studies are essential in understanding the importance of the dimension that civil society has in the society of the 21st century and the creation of a favorable framework for its development and the relationship with different actors. Also, together, we will explore the following topics:

- *The multi-stakeholder approach of cooperation and its contribution to the cohesion of common interests in the Black Sea region;*
- *The further advance of the 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;*
- *Sustainable democratization and sustainable economic development as sources of prosperity and stability; the civil society view on sustainable development in the Black Sea region;*
- *Enabling Environment for CSO activities in the Black Sea Region in 2021 - advocacy for quality policies and opportunities for civil society to improve its capacity and contribution to the EU policies objectives in the Black Sea region;*
- *New ideas for advancing efficient/resilient/innovative policies that will also address climate change challenges in the Black Sea Region;*
- *The impact of an organized civil society call for action;*
- *Personal and organizational storytelling: diversity and inclusion, trends, insights and experiences, fireside chat and personal stories;*
- *People as drivers of positive changes.*

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

The 14th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum is organized by the Romanian NGDO Platform - FOND, with the financial support of the European Union.