



International Union of Black Sea NGOs

(Black Sea NGO Network)

Newsletter

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OPINION of the European Economic and Social Committee on the Setting up civil society organizations networks in the Black Sea region (Exploratory Opinion)

At its 446th plenary session, held on 9-10 July 2008, the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the opinion on: *Setting up civil society organizations networks in the Black Sea region.*

The document particularly cites the following:

Conclusions and recommendations:

1.1 Black Sea Synergy is designed to focus political attention on the region and to capitalise on the new opportunities gained from Romania's and Bulgaria's membership of the EU. Black Sea

Synergy concentrates on five issues: good governance, transport, energy, environment, and the fight against cross-border crime.

1.2 The Black Sea Synergy should also contribute to the promotion of the European social model, and the principle of social and civil dialogue. It should also address poverty reduction in the Black Sea region in cooperation with relevant international organisations.

1.3 The EESC calls on the Black Sea governments, regional and international organisations to involve civil society in regional dialogue and cooperation and to offer a fresh perspective on major topics, such as sustaining political stability, democracy, rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms; promotion of economic reforms, development, and trade; cooperation in the field of transport, energy and the environment; and people-to-people contacts.

1.4 In the EESC's view there are significant opportunities and challenges in the Black Sea region that require coordinated action at the regional level involving civil society, especially in key sectors such as energy, transport, environment, movement and security.

1.5 The EESC welcomes the different private and public initiatives that have been set up to support active participation of the civil society and social organisations in the shaping of the future of the region. In particular, the EESC supports involving existing cooperation networks for civil society and social organisations in the Black Sea Forum for Partnership and Dialogue (BS Forum) and Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC).

1.6 The EESC promotes establishment and strengthening of the role of national ESCs and Tripartite Commissions in all Black Sea countries, and development of regional cooperation among tripartite structures in the region. In countries without national ESCs, social partners should be encouraged to engage in the consultation process and creation of national ESCs.

1.7 The EESC encourages the carrying out of a comprehensive research on the situation of the civil society and social partners in the countries of the Black Sea region.

1.8 The EESC and the ILO will organise a joint conference in November 2008 on the Role of Civil Society Organisations in the countries of the Black Sea Region: Regional network creation and promoting social dialogue. The conference will involve regional stakeholders and will be the follow-up of the exploratory opinion.

The full text of the document in word format is available at http://eescopinions.eesc.europa.eu/EESCopinionDocument.aspx?identifier=ces\rex\rex245\ces1218-2008_ac.doc&language=EN link

and in PDF format at

<http://www.blackseango.org/pagini/materials-from-the-region-1.php>

IUBSNGO/Network News

- IUBSNGO President Hripsime Kirakosyan participated in EESC-ILO joint Conference on Civil society in the Black Sea region and the Eastern Partnership countries – Promoting civil and social dialogue in Brussels on 2 and 3 March 2009. More detailed information about the conference can be found in the next article.

- IUBSNGO President Hripsime Kirakosyan and Secretary General Hrachya Amiryan participated in Armenia-Turkey NGO Forum held in Yerevan, Armenia on March 14-15, 2009 with the aim of making contacts with Turkish NGOs for future cooperation within IUBSNGO framework.
- Global ICSW Executive Director Denys Correll, Past President Solveig Askjem and ICSW Europe Regional President Eva Holmberg-Herrström will arrive in Yerevan on March 26. The visit aims at discussing all the joint activities and working plans with IUBSNGO President and the Secretariat.

Conclusions of the conference “Civil Society in the Black Sea Region and Eastern Partnership Countries – Promoting Civil and Social Dialogue”

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the International Labour Office (ILO) held a conference on Civil society in the Black Sea Region and the Eastern Partnership Countries – Promoting civil and social dialogue on 2 and 3 March 2009 in Brussels.

Representatives of civil society of the EU, Black Sea and the Eastern Neighbours countries, including employers' and workers' organisations, participated in the conference. During the conference they had the opportunity to exchange views on civil society's contribution to the Eastern Partnership and the Black Sea Synergy initiatives, the promotion of effective social dialogue in the region, and civil society networks at national and regional level.

After two days of discussions on these subjects, the participants in the conference adopted the conclusions: Here is an extract from the conclusions:

1. The participants in the conference welcome the strengthening of relations with the EU Eastern Neighbours, Turkey and Russia through the Black Sea Synergy and the Eastern Partnership initiatives.
2. They welcome the substantial complementarity existing between these two initiatives that share some important fields of action despite pursuing different objectives and using different instruments.
3. Therefore, the participants call for coordination of the future actions developed in the framework of the Eastern Partnership and the Black Sea Synergy by building on existing cooperation.

Involvement of civil society in the Eastern Partnership and Black Sea Synergy initiatives

4. The participants consider that civil society should be actively involved in these two initiatives through its networks at national and regional level, in order to promote civil and social dialogue in the partner countries.
5. The participants underline the urgent need for capacity building of social partners and other civil society organisations in the regions. They call for access to funding for these organisations to be facilitated in order to enable them to participate fully in the Black Sea Synergy and Eastern Partnership initiatives.

6. The participants encourage the EESC to continue playing a supportive role in the establishment of civil society networks at national and regional level and to continue to strengthen its relations with civil society organisations in the partner countries.
7. The participants call for civil society to be consulted in the upcoming negotiation processes for Association Agreements between the EU and partner countries, especially regarding the role of civil society and the possibility of establishing civil society joint consultative committees in the framework of these agreements. The civil society should be also closely involved in the process of designing, implementing and monitoring the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plans.
8. The participants welcome a number of initiatives by civil society in the Black Sea region. This cooperation pattern should be further developed into regular meetings involving all civil society actors including social partners, building on the principles of democracy, independence, and representativity.
9. The participants call, in the framework of the Eastern Partnership, for civil society to be an active participant in the institutional structure of the initiative through the setting-up of the Civil Society Forum and participation in the four thematic platforms planned. Given that the suggested areas of action are of primary interest for civil society and their important expertise and know-how in all these fields, the representatives of civil society should be regularly invited to participate in the platforms.
10. The participants request that the establishment of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum should start immediately after the official launch of the initiative in order to make it operational in the second half of 2009.
11. The participants call for the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum to include all representative actors of civil society – social partners, NGOs and other interest groups – in order to add real value for the implementation of the Eastern Partnership Initiative, especially in fields such as improved market access, labour mobility, migration, social and economic development and people-to-people contacts. For issues related to employment and labour policies it is also important to provide a specific role for organisations of workers and employers and the social dialogue.
12. The participants consider that the Civil Society Forum could serve as a platform for exchange of best practices regarding the role of civil society in the national decision-making process and on the development of social dialogue.
13. However, the participants estimate that the Forum should also have a consultative role in respect of the implementation of the Eastern Partnership, issuing proposals for actions under the four thematic platforms and addressing reports and recommendations to the Heads of State and Government meetings and ministerial meetings.
14. The participants call on the Summit of Heads of State and Government to request the EESC to play a key role in the setting-up of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, given its experience in developing civil society networks at national and regional level. Appropriate funding should be made available to enable full and effective participation of civil society representatives in this forum.

The full text of the document is available at http://www.bsngon.com/news/documents/EESC-ILO%20Joint%20Conference_Conclusions_eng.doc

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR BLACK SEA STUDIES (ICBSS)

Policy Brief No 11 February 2009

A Memo on How to Make the EU – BSEC Relations Relevant and Productive

By Tedo Japaridze

In light of the recent emergence of the “Black Sea Synergy” and the “Eastern Partnership”, and following the developments in the wider Black Sea area, the European Union and the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation need to explore in a more efficient and critical manner the perspectives of their interaction in the foreseeable future. The purpose of this Policy Brief is to consider certain built-in structural and institutional elements in the relations of these two institutions, and to identify balances in their interaction, reflecting on some regional perceptions and misperceptions which nourish or even re-shape the existing reality in the region.

To download the Policy Brief #11 in PDF version visit www.icbss.org

Policy Brief No12 February 2009

Black Sea Synergy and Eastern Partnership: Different Centres of Gravity, Complementarity or Confusing Signals?

By Yannis Tsantoulis

This comparative analysis is primarily based on the two Communications published by the European Commission entitled *Black Sea Synergy – A New Regional Cooperation Initiative* of 11 April 2007 and *Eastern Partnership* of 3 December 2008, and on the *Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the Eastern Partnership*. The basic idea is to analyse the key features of both the Black Sea Synergy and the Eastern Partnership and consider the impact of these two policy approaches for the region as a whole. Overall, the objective is to briefly assess the content of these two policy initiatives/approaches and examine their interaction and the level of their complementarity – if there is any. To this end, after a brief and focused presentation of each policy, this paper undertakes a more detailed comparative analysis of the key official documents launching the Black Sea Synergy and the Eastern Partnership reflecting thus on the potential implications and the probability of a future modus vivendi.

To download the Policy Brief #12 in PDF version visit www.icbss.org

TRIALOG Information Service (TIS)

The TRIALOG Information Service (TIS) is addressed to NGOs and individuals who are interested in development issues in the context of EU enlargement.

Read the TIS online at: <http://www.trialog.or.at/tis>

The TRIALOG project is funded by the European Union. The project was initiated in March 2000 for a duration of 3 years. A second phase was started in September 2003, now the project is in its third phase (2006-2009).

TRIALOG's overall objective:

Strengthening development cooperation through the **full integration** of **development NGOs (NGDOs)** from **New EU Member States (NMS)** and **Accession Countries (AC)** into CONCORD and other European networks.

BSEC and PABSEC upcoming events

BSEC

- The twentieth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs will be held in Yerevan, Armenia on April 16, 2009.
- Meeting of the Working Group on Institutional Renewal and Good Governance will be held in Istanbul on March 19-20, 2009.

See the calendar of all BSEC events at <http://www.bsec-organization.org/Pages/CalendarEvents.aspx>

PABSEC

- The 33rd Plenary Session of the General Assembly - Friday, 12 - Saturday, 13 June 2009
- Bucharest
- The 34th Plenary Session of the General Assembly - 18 – 19 November 2009, Moscow
- The 32nd Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee Meeting - 7 - 8 April 2009, Batumi
- The 33rd Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee Meeting - 29 - 30 September 2009, Chisinau

See the calendar of all PABSEC events at <http://www.pabsec.org/calendar.asp>

Armenia Turkey NGO Forum

On 14-15 March 2009 Civil Society Development Centre (Turkey) and Civil Society Institute (Armenia) organized the Armenian - Turkish NGO Forum in Yerevan, Armenia. The meeting brought together about forty NGO activists from different thematic areas. During two days of conference they discussed concrete means to establish civil dialogue between Armenia and Turkey.

The event was organized by Civil Society Development Centre (STGM) in collaboration with Civil Society Institute (Armenia) with the support of British Embassy in Turkey.

The aim of this event was to establish dialogue and coordination among NGOs from Armenia and Turkey as well as to strengthen the advocacy capacity of NGOs in both countries in order to influence strategies about common problematic areas in the region. The forum focused on creating a pool of concrete project ideas and on determining strategies in order to increase the number of partnerships and projects.

There were 20 participants from each country attended the meeting in different thematic areas of civil society which are: Gender, youth, democracy and rule of law, environment.

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Black Sea Security Program Regional Workshop

The Armenian International Policy Research Group (AIPRG) and the Harvard Black Sea Security Program in cooperation with Institute for National Strategic Studies of the Ministry of Defense of Armenia organized the seventh Harvard Black Sea Security Program Regional Workshop on October 27-28th, 2008.

The primary topic of discussion were Black Sea security concerns, common approaches to Black Sea, Caspian Sea Security, NATO and EU approaches to the region. The event was a follow-up to the annual Harvard Black Sea Security Program, which took place in April, 2008 at the John F. Kennedy School of Government as well as in many ways a continuation of the AIPRG January 2008 conference on the Wider Black Sea Security.

The primary missions of the workshop were: 1) to provide a forum for regional experts to discuss critical security issues pertaining to the Black Sea region, 2) to strengthen and expand the regional network initiated by the Black Sea Security Program's annual April conference, and 3) to involve American general officers and policy makers in dialogue about security in the Black Sea region 4) to explore the ways of cooperation with NATO.

The workshop was sponsored by the US Embassy in Armenia, Ministry of Defence of Armenia, the NATO, Eurasia Partnership Foundation (USAID).

For more information please visit <http://www.aiprg.net/en/rcontent/7/>

Forthcoming Conferences and Events

2nd International Black Sea Symposium

“The Black Sea Region: the State of Play and the Way Forward”

Kalymnos, Dodecanese, Greece; 30 June – 5 July 2009

Building on the successful 2008 event, the ICBSS will host the 2nd International Black Sea Symposium on “The Black Sea Region: the State of Play and the Way Forward” to be held on the island of Kalymnos, Dodecanese/Greece, on 30 June - 5 July 2009.

The International Black Sea Symposium (IBSS) provides a **forum for study, dialogue and networking in a multicultural and interdisciplinary environment**, thus contributing to understanding and cooperation in the Black Sea region and beyond.

The event targets **young professionals** (22-35 years old), primarily from the countries of the wider Black Sea area, EU member states, the United States and Central Asia. A maximum of 40 participants will have the opportunity to gain insights into issues of importance for the future development of the Black Sea region during a four-day intensive course of interactive sessions led by prominent experts. Sessions alternate with conflict resolution workshops guided by expert facilitator Prof. Benjamin Broome of Arizona State University.

The language of the Symposium is English.

For more information and application documents visit www.icbss.org

Applications are welcome until 31 March 2009.

Publications

“European Union Engagement in the Black Sea Region: Efforts to Combat Illegal Migration”

by Yuliya Klymko-Overchenko

This paper analyzes the European Union’s engagement in the Black Sea Region and its efforts to combat illegal migration. It is argued that the EU’s interest in the BSR evolved very recently and primarily concerns its security considerations. Due to existing regional challenges, such as state fragility, unresolved conflicts, organized crime, illegal migration, and environmental distortion, the BSR is considered as a new regional dimension to the EU’s security. Illegal migration is endemic to the region and involves all countries in the BSR.

The full text is available at http://www.harvard-bssp.org/static/files/382/EU_engagement_BSR.pdf

“The EU's New Black Sea Policy”

by Michael Emerson

Publication date: 30 June 2008

After the accession of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, the European Union moved quickly to fill an obvious gap in its vision of the regions to its periphery, proposing the ‘Black Sea Synergy’. The EU shows a certain degree of commonality in its approaches to the Baltic Sea region, the Mediterranean and now the Black Sea. While the political profiles of these maritime regions are very different, they naturally give rise to many common policy challenges. This paper sets out a ‘typology of regionalisms’ and examines where the EU’s Black Sea Synergy is going to find its place.

Available for free downloading from the website of Center for European Policy Studies (<http://www.ceps.eu>)

ICBSS Xenophon Paper No 6 “Good Governance and Public Administration Reform in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Member States”

By Stella Ladi

The ICBSS launched the Xenophon Paper series in July 2006 with the aim to contribute a space for policy analysis and debate on topical issues concerning the Black Sea region. As part of the ICBSS’ independent activities, the Xenophon Papers are prepared either by members of its own research staff or by externally commissioned experts. While all contributions are peer-reviewed in order to assure consistent high quality, the views expressed therein exclusively represent the authors.

The Xenophon Papers are available for download in electronic version from the ICBSS’ webpage under www.icbss.org

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