

## **Synergies between Black Sea and Northern Europe Cooperation** *Exchange – Enhance – Elaborate*

*International Conference, 27 April 2007*

### **Background and need**

The fall of the Iron Curtain gave a new face to the European continent: two regions in particular were (re)shaped, after decades of being historically frozen. Countries in the North and East of Europe had discovered at that time new horizons, new opportunities, but also a set of new challenges, many of them common. **Individual states in Northern Europe, on the one hand, and in the Black Sea area, on the other hand, realised that a synergy of their efforts, associating with their neighbours for achieving the same function/goal, had more chances of success, than acting alone.** The goal was to ensure security, stability and prosperity in their countries and, in a broader view, to their regions. This led to looking for the best means for addressing common risks and opportunities, with a view to reaching better and more sustainable regional development. Various initiatives were therefore created, trying to respond to these needs.

**In Northern Europe**, structures of cooperation had been developed also in the past (Nordic Council, Nordic Council of Ministers, in 1952 and 1971 respectively), but the great diversity of regional instruments appeared mainly after 1991: the Baltic Assembly, the Baltic Council of Ministers, the Council of Baltic Sea States, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Arctic Council etc. In 1997, Finland initiated efforts of promoting the creation of a “Northern Dimension” for EU’s policies, becoming functional in the following years and working since then as a framework aimed at addressing the specific challenges and opportunities arising in the region and at strengthening dialogue and cooperation between the EU and the region.

**In the Black Sea region**, mainly due to its greater hegemonic background and thus, the lower degree of development of most of the countries in the area, each state has first directed its efforts towards national recovery. Regional cooperation became a true priority only later in the 1990’s. The Black Sea Economic Cooperation was created in 1992 and became a full-fledged regional organisation in 1999. Other initiatives have appeared and functioned meanwhile, grouping all or some of the countries, in various formats: GUAM, the Community of Democratic Choice, the Black Sea Naval Task Force, Operation Black Sea Harmony, Black Sea Border Security Initiative, Danube-Black Sea Task Force, the Commission for the Protection of Black Sea against Pollution, the Black Sea Forum for Partnership and Dialogue.

#### **The two regions share many common features:**

- heterogeneity in composition, as the nations in each region differ historically, culturally, socially;
- presence of the Russian Federation;
- diversity of regional instruments, with different degrees of functionality and efficiency;
- important number of Euro-regions;
- high potential regarding energy resources, either as source or as transit area, therefore special importance to the European energy security;
- relation with the EU: each region is partly neighbour to the EU, partly member of the EU, and covering around half of EU’s frontier to the East and South-East.

**The Joint Declaration of the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership**, adopted by the heads of state present in Bucharest on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2006, states that the Forum “will serve as a regional platform designed primarily to define a common vision of democratic and sustainable development. The Forum will therefore provide an inclusive, flexible and open framework for generating new ideas, channelling and mobilising governmental and nongovernmental, regional and international efforts and resources in the pursuit of these goals”.

**Against this background, an exchange of experience gained in the field of regional cooperation between the two areas, organised in the spirit of the Bucharest declaration of the Black Sea Forum, appears extremely useful, in several ways:**

- it would allow the direct stakeholders from both regions to find out specific information relevant to regional cooperation;
- it would foster better understanding of risks and challenges that regions and individual countries face;
- it would give the chance to each region/country of the region to promote and support its own policies towards partners / create inter-regional partnerships.
- it would provide a common platform for collectively promoting policy dialogue and concrete forms of cooperation with the EU;
- it would contribute to achieving the objectives of the Black Sea Forum Bucharest Joint Declaration, helping to “consolidate regional commonalities, through providing new ideas and proposals for an intensified dialogue and cooperation [...], based on good neighbourly relations and effective partnerships, while taking full account of the existing regional and international endeavours that can be of assistance in the pursuit of this fundamental objective”.

### **Goal and Objectives**

**The goal** of this project is **to improve the mechanisms of regional cooperation in Northern Europe and in the Black Sea respectively, by creating synergy and coherence, as well as to foster collaboration between the two regions, in the framework of the European Union and beyond.**

**The objectives** would be:

- to **exchange** information, experience gained, expertise, lessons learnt, referring to methods, means and outcomes of regional cooperation, as well as obstacles;
- to **enhance** the forms of cooperation within the respective regions, but also among the regions (via the Black Sea Forum);
- to assess the existing types of relation with and within the EU and **elaborate** new potential ones, with a view to consolidating EU’s approach towards each region.

### **Stakeholders. Implementation**

The goal and the objectives can be achieved by organising discussions and debates among representatives of stakeholders in both regions. The seminar would welcome around 100 participants from various backgrounds:

- Regional initiatives (organisations, structures, mechanisms, councils, centres etc.) from Northern Europe and from the Black Sea region;
- Governments of the countries from the two regions (MFA departments dealing with regional cooperation), or their embassies accredited in Bucharest;
- Regional, European or international Banks and other financial institutions
- European institutions
- Civil society, especially research centres and institutes conducting/having conducted studies on the theme of regional cooperation in the European framework

A seminar involving stakeholders from the two regions and possibly other interested actors will take place in Bucharest on 27 April 2007. It could consist of a political track and an expert-level track, in fields of interest (environment, maritime safety, business development). The seminar could produce a common document of lessons learnt and avenues for cooperation, to be presented to governments.