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THE BLACK SEA REGION IN EU POLICIES



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1. Introduction

The ideas and views about the establishment of a strong Black Sea Region (BSR) as a strategic part of the European Union could become reality. It seems fashionable today to talk about sustainable development, although it actually exceeds the formalism of the spoken words. The sustainable development of the Black Sea Region, and in this respect the sustainable development of the Black Sea is a concept of great significance: it is a way of life, shared by everyone who lives in or performs any kind of activity in the region. This philosophy includes several important elements, some of which are subjects of the discussion "The Black Sea Region in EU policies". The different aspects of sustainable policies in the region after the Black Sea Synergy and its implementation are of key importance for 350 million people living here and for a territory of 423 000 sq km of the Black Sea Area. They are of great importance for all the people sharing the specific culture, historical heritage and recent development and trying to find their common future.

This report attempts to assess the state of co-operation in the Black Sea Region through historical interpretation, by examining the complex processes of changes and transformations after the 90s, by assessing the contemporary impact of old and new factors for regional development and by looking at problems whose solution would give new perspectives for the region.

Indeed, a great deal of research and analysis has been and is still being carried out for the region, but much of it is from an outside view. This external look draws the core of the problems far away from the people of the region and sometimes reflects neither the realities that are important, nor the needs of the people who it defines. It is therefore necessary in any discussion and analysis on policy formation at various levels, to put people of the region in the first place, for representatives of various groups from the region to be heard and for scientists from the region

to obtain the necessary data to develop their ideas. Only then will each program and each document have a finished state and give the necessary basis for sustainable development of the BSR.

The sea is not only a policy, the sea is not only trade, the sea is not only a road, the sea is not only an energy transfer zone, but also an emotion and a specific spirit of the people living there. This must never be overlooked in any analysis.

2. Background

The theme of the role of the Black Sea in the world is not a new one. It is too pretentious in one report to examine the complete historical significance of the BSR in the transformations of civilization and pay detailed attention to all the people who have inhabited and now inhabit this beautiful area. But we cannot fail to note that this region is more of a bridge between civilizations than a border zone. Numerous linguistic and religious communities have appeared, died out and appeared again and today are still present here - Thracians, Greeks, Scythians, Romans, Byzantines, Bulgarians, Turks, Russians and many others in the complex national kaleidoscope. This makes the region diverse and complicated, but also interesting and important.

In the 10th century the famous Bulgarian poet John Exarch wrote: "The Sea brings together all which is at a distance". Many years later, today, we would like to bring together people from different countries around the Black Sea, to talk about the differences and the similarities and to think about the common future. It is not a dream, it is only a hope!

It is quite clear that the Black Sea area has belonged to European territory since ancient times. The region has played a central role in many historical events – at the heart of the Eastern issue in the 18th century, a crossing point in the period between the two world

wars, at the centre of the battle between East and West after the Second World War, a very disturbed region after the changes in the 90s.

Indeed, the Black Sea area is not a familiar ground of the common European policy to the extent, to which the Northern dimension and the Mediterranean Sea (through the Barcelona process) are involved. The strategy for the Baltic Region and the Mediterranean Union, are facts in the newest EU policy. The other fact we have to take into account is that the Black Sea Region does not possess the true characteristics which could identify it as a united uniform region. However, the term Black Sea Region is more terminology and it is used for the area encompassing the countries whose territories lie around the Black Sea.

The highly sensitive issues in the life of the people in the area are their self-confidence, the feeling that they belong to the Black Sea area and the awareness of their identity as not just a national one, but as one of the Black Sea. This forms a new idea for the regional development – the idea that the Black Sea unites countries, not just to mark the territory geographically but to form a Black Sea Region. 350 million people have a very similar or even common cultural, ethnic or linguistic basis. The layers of cultural and historical heritage surely belong to each one of the countries /juridical/, but at the same time they belong to all the people from this territory. If we try to divide up the situation at the present into constituent parts, we have to consider that it is extremely difficult to do the same with the past. And it is quite clear that the division of the past in this way could provoke conflicts. So it is more than necessary to think about sharing both the past and the present instead of splitting them up.

The territories that are not far away from the border and which are nearest to the Black Sea form a very special area, the so-called border coastal zone, which has often been a subject of controversy, battles and wars.

In terms of the terminology of war it means “no man’s land”, but in terms of the terminology of peace it means “common

land”. In the case of the Black Sea basin this means “common sea”. Carrying out different activities, all the people should remember that they are dependent on the sea, that the coastal territory also is dependent on the sea. This dependence refers to each country and to all the countries at the same time. There is no doubt that it brings countries together and makes them neighbours forever. No matter how great the differences between the countries are in political, economic and social terms, this neighbourhood makes them responsible for a common co-existence in the region, namely in terms of preserving the Black Sea, which is the prime source for the existence of the region. Certainly, the preservation should be accepted in all its aspects.

Regional co-operation among the Black Sea countries should be developed in close interaction with all the actors that are somehow linked to the Black Sea.

For these reasons international support should be very helpful and the role of the EU as the main neighbour in this region is crucial. Therefore the idea that “the Black Sea unites” could develop into the idea of creating a Black Sea Euro Region.

The historical and recent development of the Black Sea countries shows that today they do not seem willing to take a decision on which way is more beneficial and successful. The lines that separate still seem to be stronger than those which unite, regardless of the understanding that the sea always brings people together.

Speaking of co-operation, it is very pretentious to say that the BSR is a political or economic community. As was previously mentioned, the BSR does not have the characteristics which could allow it to be recognized it as a united or uniform region. Furthermore, there are few places in the world where the political elite and citizens know so little about their neighbours as is the situation in the Black Sea area. This is intentional ignorance, which is a result of different historical versions, saying that the nationality is eternal, the government is predetermined, but the region is transitional.

Most BS countries look more seriously on their relationship with others, e.g. with the EU than their relations within the BS area. National airlines fly on a regular basis to the EU countries or other capitals, rather than to the capitals of other BS countries. Looking inside the region itself and outside it reveals different sensitivity and dimensions. Unfortunately, one of the few places where the community can be seen is on the beach.

After the Changes of the 90s

The geopolitical situation in the Black Sea area since 1989 has been shaped by dynamic processes and the heterogeneous nature of the factors involved therein: national, regional and global. Specified otherwise, these factors can be summarized as internal and external to the BS area.

At the beginning of the new Millennium it is not the power of the different states that threatens the stability of the region but their weaknesses. New countries appeared in the Black Sea Region, new borders were formed and many problems were transferred through these borders. Some of the instability is the result of several reasons: internal - in each country, external - among the countries and global – between the BS countries as a whole and the rest of the world.

The ineffective management of the economy in the period of transformation, inadequate services, poverty and loss of values, which were the main pillars in earlier times such as family, origin, genus etc. make the society vulnerable and force the people to fight for their everyday life, sometimes at any cost.

All this has been influenced by the official internal governmental policy, which endeavoured to combine democratic principles with previously used methods and instruments.

The external policies make the situation particularly controversial because of tendencies that appear in a purely regional aspect, for example: tendencies to recover old borders and at the same time the aspiration for

being closer to the countries which form the European Union, because of the stability, economic and social perspectives and higher standards of living there.

In the Black Sea area there are considerable opportunities and challenges that require coordinated activities on a regional level. They include key sectors such as energy, transportation, environment, migration and security. It should be noted that there are two dimensions of the Black Sea Region - narrow and wide. The "Wider Black Sea Region" encompasses not only the littoral states but also Moldova, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Greece, and this leads to an increase in the variety of initiatives for co-operation.

The enhanced regional co-operation does not aim at direct interference in the long lasting conflicts in the region but instead it could provoke better mutual trust and, in the course of time, help with the elimination of some inconvenient obstacles.

External Factors

Therefore, it could be said that the new factors that play a leading role in shaping the region in this very complicated period - NATO and the EU, are increasingly important, especially in view of Bulgaria's and Romania's memberships in both organizations.

The interest of Black Sea countries in broader contact and collaboration with the EU are growing and have become obvious in recent years. The same trends are also appearing in central Asian countries. The Energy and Transport sector brings about a natural spirit of rivalry, but also underpins a common interest in avoiding instability in the Black Sea Region and overcoming the existing threats to regional and international security.

The Black Sea Region and the naturally adjacent Caspian basin lie on two continents, having an aggregate population of circa 350 million people and boasting a foreign trade potential of 220 billion EUR per annum. The

two regions form the second most important source of energy resources after the Persian Gulf and are increasingly becoming a priority transit corridor for energy to the EU. The Black Sea is already becoming a region of major economic co-operation.

The asymmetry of economic and civil society development observed in the countries of the region is a major impediment for their efficient involvement in contemporary integration processes, which the EU tries to overcome by enhanced co-operation and assistance provided to the regional states in applying the principles and practices of good governance.

The pace of the democratic processes and reforms in most of the countries of the region is generally increasing. The major source of reforms in Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Azerbaijan and Armenia are namely their aspirations towards European integration. The EU has recognized in principle the need to support Eastern Europe and South Caucasus countries through involving them in the EU Neighbourhood policy. The effective use of its instruments would contribute to the promotion of democracy and hence to the lasting stabilisation of the region.

In a geopolitical plan the Black Sea Region should be observed in close relation with the adjoining areas of the Mediterranean and the Caucasus Region. The so called "frozen conflicts" in the region of the Caucasus have great repercussions on the stability in the Black Sea. The Caucasus, not having being included in the considerations of the policies referred to in the Black Sea Region, is a potential threat to their success. A good opportunity for binding the two regions together as interdependent and the legitimating of the EU for promotion and improvement of the situation of peace and stability with the participation of all the interested countries could be missed. If this is not taken into consideration, future actions, which eliminate one of the factors for the development of part of the proc-

esses in this region, will be doomed to failure. Policies which do not take into account the widest possible range of influences are liable to face the threat of being brought down because of circumstances that have not been considered at an earlier stage, meaning adequate measures for reactions have not been planned. The acknowledgment of interdependence is the first step towards undertaking effective actions for safeguarding the interests both of these countries and the EU through different initiatives and instruments.

Since 2007, when Bulgaria and Romania became members of the EU, the Black Sea has been a border of the Union. Although we understand that the region is more a bridge than a border, the border line is real and physically exists and this causes all the consequences connected with that fact – certainly this border can be used by people not living in a Black Sea country and for purposes that are far away from the good neighbourhood, so it should be secured like any other external border. The only way in which people from the two sides of the border could have contacts, could realize their interests and could use the common resources despite all the limitations provoked by visas regimes is to be involved in some aspects of a common regional neighbourhood policy. In other words this means that mutual co-operation is the key instrument to be used by governments and people in order to ensure the interest of society.

The puzzle of the Black Sea Region is complex and difficult to arrange. Some more facts should be noted, for clarification of the situation and interests: the bilateral relations between the EU and Russia, the EU and Ukraine as well as the relations with other countries in the BS area. The candidate-membership of Turkey in the EU is also a prerequisite for understanding the complex problems of the Black Sea. These several facts make it clear why BS countries give preference to foreign relations rather than intra-co-operation.

On the other hand, this gives reason to the EU to develop initiatives to ensure its security and that of its citizens, seeking a common policy towards the Black Sea Region, mindful that similar initiatives can accelerate changes in interest of the Black Sea countries, but also in the interest of its 550 million citizens.

3. Black Sea Organizations

There are not many regional organizations and in fact even the few that there are, make little difference as regards solving the problems that the region is facing. Many of the organizations have been established and work as organizations of the civil society, although they are very large, encompass many of the Black Sea countries and create the impression that they are governmental structures. The reason for this is the fact that their members are predominantly states.

GUAM

The GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development is a regional organization of four post-Soviet states: Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova. The charter set objectives for co-operation, such as promoting democratic values, ensuring stable development, enhancing international and regional security and stepping up European integration. GUAM is sometimes seen as a way of countering the Russian influence in the area. However, GUAM leaders repeatedly and officially dismiss such claims and declare their strong willingness to develop close friendly relations with Russia. Moreover, Azerbaijan, the group's main energy power, has managed to avoid any conflicts with Russia in recent years.

Members: Moldova, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Georgia:

Observers: Turkey, Latvia

An annual meeting is held with the Presidents of GUAM member states in Yalta, Ukraine. This is considered the supreme

body of the organization. The executive body is the Council of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the GUAM states. The working body is the Committee of National Coordinators (CNC) consisting of one coordinator from each GUAM member state. The Headquarters of GUAM were opened on February 26, 2009 in Kiev, Ukraine. There are eight working groups, for the following topics: power engineering; transport; trade and economics; information science and telecommunications; culture; science and education; tourism; the struggle against terrorism, organized crime and dissemination of drugs.

Community of Democratic Choice

The Community of Democratic Choice is an intergovernmental organization established on December 2, 2005 by nine states of Northern and Eastern Europe in Kiev. It was mainly signed by countries from the region between the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea ("The three Seas"). Its main task is to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law in this region.

The Community has no clear shape. The Ukrainian Foreign Minister Boris Tarasyuk, for example, said that the community is not a project against anybody, but rather a project in favour of democracy, stability and prosperity. Likewise, President Viktor Yushchenko said that the initiative was not directed against any third countries or institutions and that its purpose was not "to befriend anyone against someone else", but that it must rather be seen as "dialogue between friends, adherents of ideas for promoting democracy and the supremacy of law".

On the other hand Georgi Arveladze, presidential administration head of Georgia, said that the community would in essence be "an axis of democratic countries that do not wish to remain in Russia's orbit."

In addition to the question of its character, its very membership of the community is still not clear.

Nevertheless the President of Moldova, Vladimir Voronin, urged the Community to develop its own institutions, including its own parliamentary assembly, saying that it offered the possibility to integrate those countries that have chosen a European orientation. The Vilnius Conference has already given a hint as to what this means by including Forums for intellectuals, NGOs and youth.

Black Sea Forum for Partnership and Dialogue - BSF

The inaugural session of the Black Sea Forum for Partnership and Dialogue (BSF) was held on June 4–6, 2006 in Bucharest. The Forum is a Romanian initiative, initially meant to hold annual presidential level summits (the venues rotating among participant countries) and thematic or sectoral co-operation meetings during those annual intervals. The Forum is not meant to create new regional institutions, but rather to turn into a regular consultative process among countries of the extended Black Sea Region (defined as including the South Caucasus to the Caspian Sea) and between this group of countries and international organizations such as the European Union. After the inaugural summit, no other summits were planned.

Now that Romania and Bulgaria have joined the EU, the Forum may become an EU initiative for co-operation with the Black and Caspian Sea states similar to the Northern Dimension initiative for the Nordic countries and Baltic Sea states.

Members: Moldova, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Romania.

Observers: Bulgaria, Turkey

Black Sea Economic Co-operation - BSEC

The situation in the 90s after the changes provoked the establishment of BSEC, as an answer to the new geopolitical interests of some countries, but it was not so strong as to change the direction towards a real policy of internal regional co-operation.

On 25 June 1992, the Heads of State and Government of eleven countries signed in Istanbul the Summit Declaration and the Bosphorus Statement, giving birth to the Black Sea Economic Co-operation (BSEC). It came into existence as a model of multilateral political and economic initiative, aimed at fostering interaction and harmony among the Member States, as well as ensuring peace, stability and prosperity, encouraging friendly and good-neighbourly relations in the Black Sea Region.

The BSEC Headquarters - the Permanent International Secretariat of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation (BSEC PERMIS) - was established in March 1994 in Istanbul.

With the entry into force of its Charter on 1 May 1999, BSEC acquired an international legal identity and was transformed into a full-fledged regional economic organization: Organization of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation - BSEC.

Although BSEC has its Secretariat, each Presidency has its own priorities and plans in different areas of activity and, although the government leaders participate in many meetings, there is no noticeable progress.

It is not so difficult to find the reasons. Three big countries are part of this Organization, but no one is motivated enough to finance programs and projects for joint realization. Today the drivers of the development of the Black Sea Region are primarily the EU and NATO.

None of the politicians in the BSR thinks that the BSEC could replace membership in the EU or NATO, although they have been very active in the preparation of the BSEC programs and events and regardless of the substantial power of resources of the BSR itself.

The Black Sea economic co-operation (BSEC) has the potential to become an additional factor for utilizing the appreciable potential of national markets in the region. It also has a capacity for co-operation among

member states in areas such as combat against cross-border organised crime, illegal trafficking of people and terrorism as well as joint action in response to emergencies caused by natural disasters or industrial accidents.

Being EU Member-States, Bulgaria, Greece and Romania have an important role to play in the implementation of the Black Sea Synergy and the establishment of an efficient and pragmatic partnership between the EU and BSEC.

Members: Republic of Albania; Republic of Armenia; Republic of Azerbaijan; Republic of Bulgaria; Georgia; Hellenic Republic; Republic of Moldova; Romania; Russian Federation; Republic of Serbia; Republic of Turkey; Ukraine.

Observers: Arab Republic of Egypt; Republic of Austria; Republic of Belarus; Republic of Croatia; Czech Republic; French Republic; Federal Republic of Germany; State of Israel; Republic of Italy; Republic of Poland; Slovak Republic; Republic of Tunisia; United States of America; International Black Sea Club; Energy Charter Secretariat; Black Sea Commission; Commission of the European Union.

Parliamentary Assembly of BSEC – PABSEC

Established on 26th February 1993 as a parliamentary dimension of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation, the PABSEC has proved to be an effective forum for inter-parliamentary dialogue in the Black Sea Region. With a membership of 76 parliamentarians representing the national parliaments of the twelve BSEC Member States, the PABSEC facilitates the mobilization of efforts by the national parliaments aimed at promoting democratic values, the rule of law, pluralistic society and market economy.

The main objective of the PABSEC is to provide assistance to the national parliaments in enacting the laws that are necessary for the implementation of the projects elaborated within the framework of the Organization of the BSEC and to establish the legislative foundation for

successful multilateral economic, political and cultural co-operation in the region.

Regarding the legislation on which basis different policies in the Black Sea Region could be developed, we should mention the Bucharest Convention. It determines the main principles and priority zones which have to be observed by all the countries and their partners. The next very important step was the establishment of the Black Sea Commission / Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution/. This commission is an organization which deals practically with the implementation of the policies for protecting and preserving the Black Sea and the coastal zone.

4. EU and Black Sea Co-operation

Today, in the second decade of the 21st century, the situation in the region has changed, because of the many problems it is facing – economic, environmental, social etc. and the necessity of meeting them together. These problems could be overcome in different ways: the first one could be fulfilled through independent policy, realized singly by strong countries, with powerful and capable governments. The second way provokes new behavioural elements, which require a common position of the BS countries with the rest of the world.

There are different controversial theses for the future of the BSR in its position as a border of the EU and NATO. This is why it is necessary to analyze the situation not only from the positions of the foreign policy. The sea still brings us together. Many people from different Black Sea countries travel and make trade, representatives from different ethnic groups communicate with each other, despite the propagation of hatred in the past. But the region needs more than trade purely for financial reasons, exchange of workers for infrastructural projects, legal or illegal migration and traffic with different reasons and for different purposes.

The BSR needs more than this. We have to think about this – as politicians and as citizens, because the region is facing another threat - emigration from the coastal zones to the internal parts of the countries.

What kind of co-operation can the BS countries organize? – It is not difficult to write on the topic, because it is referred to in many documents and has been repeated at many regional meetings. But this should be observed as formalism. The core of this very important issue is the political will on one hand and the civil society's activity on another. We have to recognize the people of the Black Sea as participants in the co-operation and prepare the co-operation strategy in such a way that the people will not see the territory only as a bridge.

It is necessary to find a balance between two possibilities – to look inside and to look outside the region. This could be defined as “initiatives for internal co-operation” and “initiatives for common policies”. The former is only in the hands of the BS countries and their governments and has very practical dimensions. The latter should involve outside partners – the EU and NATO - and the real question here is who leads the process. In any case, human rights, democracy, solidarity and tolerance are among the fundamental principles which should be implemented in both the initiatives.

The present is different from the past. Facing new challenges, not desiring to expand internal conflicts or to provoke international wars, the Black Sea countries and their close neighbours laid the beginning of the Program for regional co-operation in the 90s. The first step, as has already been mentioned, was the adoption of a broad common program with initiatives in the political and ecological spheres, investments, crime and corruption, education and science, taxes etc.

The establishment of the Parliamentary Assembly of Black Sea Economic Co-operation strengthened the opportunities and this strengthening of the interaction at the par-

liamentary level is an expression of real political will.

Both structures, the Organization for Black Sea's Economic Co-operation and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation could be determined as a formula for the new geopolitical reality.

Therefore we can say that the steps of creating new relations with the EU and also the membership in the EU were not late. This led to a redesigning of the real map of the region as a whole.

There is great diversity in both directions. Firstly, it should be noted that in both initiatives the striving to respect the principles of democracy, solidarity and protection of human rights has been seriously advocated. Secondly it should be noted that the participants in both initiatives were the same – the EU as a whole and the Black Sea countries as single players. Thirdly, it should be added that there are many opportunities for bilateral, trilateral and other formats of relationships between participants.

It is more than obvious that the responsibility of today's politicians from the Black Sea countries is very high, because they should join the two initiatives – for internal co-operation and for common policies. Whether these are two separate ways or a single highway is the question today.

It is crucial for the development of the Black Sea Region to find the intersections between these two paths. Only this can provide a guarantee for European development of the region and the establishment of the Black Sea Euro Region format.

When talking about interaction space we should not forget that two of the EU countries are at the same time Black Sea countries, and this can be adopted as a natural area of responsibility for supporting and realizing the idea of the Black Sea Region's European development.

5. Black Sea Synergy

There is no doubt that the Black Sea Synergy is a fundamental document which inherited the successive endeavours of the EU in the face of its institutions to achieve peace, to guarantee human rights and fundamental freedoms and to accelerate the democratic processes in the BSR.

In May 2007 - 15 years after European establishment of the Organization for Black Sea Economic co-operation - the Council adopted conclusions on the Commission Communication "Black Sea Synergy – a New Regional Co-operation Initiative". It invited the future Presidencies and the European Commission to continue work on an enhanced and coherent EU engagement in and with the Black Sea Region. The Black Sea Synergy Initiative is complementary to the European Neighbourhood Policy, the enlargement policy for Turkey and the Strategic Partnership with the Russian Federation.

The region is crucial to Europe principally because of its location at the juncture of Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle East and the transit of oil and gas. Challenges facing the region include serious environmental problems, legal and illicit movements of people and goods as well as insufficient border patrol problems. The poor levels of economic and political governance in the region, as well as the slow pace of reforms in many of the littoral countries, are both a cause and an effect of this predicament.

The importance of the Black Sea Region for the EU has been demonstrated with the acceptance of the EC as an observer in the PAB-SEC during the celebratory meeting devoted to the 15th anniversary of the Organization.

The European Union reached the adoption of the Black Sea Synergy after emphasizing the problems of the Black Sea Region in a number of EU documents and EP resolutions concerning the EU's relations with the countries in the region and after the declared priority for the Black Sea at the beginning of

2007 by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, caused by the fact that the Black Sea was an Eastern boarder of the EU. Areas of interaction of mutual interest include the environment, security, transport, energy and transfer, education, as well as science and culture. It is essential that the Synergy also involves the perspective given in the appropriate time to develop an independent strategy for the development of the Black Sea Region.

Many events, organized on a different level, by different structures showed the great interest, the high expectations and at the same time the great fear that something new and unknown was happening, the necessity to manage the new processes in a way which could ensure the stability and peace for the people in the BS countries, some of which are part of the EU.

The Black Sea Synergy fully covers the content of the initiatives for common policies. The new steps of initiatives for common policies open a new page in the regional EU policy, making it stronger and more competitive in a global aspect.

Democracy, respect for human rights and good governance

In the Black Sea Synergy it was stressed that the efforts of the EU in this regard are principally bilateral. It was evaluated that regional actions can play a substantial role in underpinning and invigorating national measures. Therefore, it concludes that the EU initiative will support regional initiatives in developing effective democratic institutions, promoting good governance and rule of law through sharing experience on measures to promote and uphold human rights and democracy, providing training and exchange programs and stimulating a regional dialogue with civil society.

In the period between 1995 and 2007 the EU started a series of initiatives in some countries of the BSR, namely Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan. The problems and the difficulties, which accom-

panied the initial efforts after the changes at the beginning of the 90s, were assessed and some new ideas and opportunities were discussed before the accession of the Black Sea Synergy. Bulgaria and Romania became members in 2009. Some negotiations with different countries in the region were prepared, discussed and accepted. The support has been given to some European NGOs in order to help in the development of structures of civil society in these countries.

Unfortunately, the process involved very few local NGOs and the impression was of an externally inspired process, not taking into account the nationally recognized needs. Many reasons for that were found and have been taken into account for the next steps in the relations.

The first of a series of Black Sea Synergy civil society seminars on human rights issues took place in May 2008 in the Republic of Moldova. This event presented standards on freedom of expression in a civil society perspective. Participants included government officials and members of civil society from the Black Sea countries. Recommendations to governments concerning freedom of expression were adopted.

The Synergy accession is a step forwards, although some specific problems have not been clarified. The synergy relies on the bilateral and regional approach but, without definition of the concrete problems, purposeful actions cannot be undertaken. The regional actors can identify the problems as they are acting in the same environment where they are generated but if the EU wants to participate with a clear vision and mission it has to identify itself the specific issues and the results it wants to achieve in solving them. On this basis it can develop its relations with the regional actors with a clear vision instead of vague ideas.

The protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the observance of the commonly accepted European standards in this field is a major priority for the EU and for Bulgaria and Romania as its members as

well. Bulgaria supports the view that the international community needs to be able to respond to serious and systematic violations of human rights and take measures to prevent their escalation. As an EU member state Bulgaria acclaimed the Human Rights Charter and put its efforts into the realization of the Charter's principles, implementing them to all the bilateral contracts on the Black Sea level. In this context, Bulgaria supports the founding of a Standing Human Rights Council as an auxiliary body to the UN General Assembly.

Movement and security

Unconditionally, the challenges that the region is facing mean that the regional stability must be a top priority of the initiatives for policies.

Following the general principles of the European Neighbourhood policy the initiatives for policies must provide the most important steps to ensure the stability and security of the region

This point as a focus of the Black Sea Synergy stresses the attention on the improvement of border management and customs co-operation at regional level as a tool for fighting organized cross-border crime (human trafficking, arms and drugs) as well as preventing and managing irregular migration. It is underlined that important illegal migration routes run through the Black Sea Region, making regional co-operation on these issues particularly relevant. Attention is also paid to the assumption that intensified regional co-operation will enhance the performance of national law enforcement, in particular in the fight against corruption and organized crime. Finally the paper says what Black Sea regional actors can do in order to achieve good results. This means: developing best practices; introducing common standards for saving and exchanging information; establishing early warning systems relating to trans-national crime and developing training schemes. The countries in the region are encouraged to develop further practical co-operation on countering cross-border crime in general, by channelling experience from other

similar initiatives in South-Eastern Europe and the Baltic area.

The Conclusions on the Global Approach to Migration adopted by the European Council in June 2007 endorsed a number of priority actions, including the establishment of a Co-operation Platform on Migration in the Black Sea Region. In April 2008 the EU decided to establish this platform, bringing together Member States, EU agencies, countries bordering the Black Sea and regional organizations. The platform will aim to provide for a focused and strengthened migration dialogue and for improving practical co-operation between Member States and the countries in the region, as well as between those countries themselves. The proposal for a Co-operation Platform in the field of Migration and Development is meant to supplement the already existing dialogue between the EU and the Black Sea States, as well as between the states of the region themselves, and to add a regional dimension to the management of migration. It aims at becoming an important communication channel with the EU in the field of migration and development, bringing the realities of the Black Sea Region to the attention of the European Union central institutions. It also has the potential to facilitate the flow of information on possible financing sources for projects in the region. There are advanced plans to fund the further development of the Burgas Black Sea Coordination Centre. Each Black Sea country is expected to establish national centres that will feed/exchange relevant information to/through the Coordination Centre. The Commission is co-funding two projects against trafficking in people through labour market based measures and police measures respectively.

Migration, both legal and illegal, is one of the key challenges to the security, stability and economic development of the Black Sea Region. Despite the efforts of institutionalizing regional co-operation in migration policy, the Black Sea countries continue to address such issues in isolation from one another. The regional co-operation in this field should not only

be encouraged by the EU in documents and statements but there should be certain steps in building the fundamentals of active, viable collaboration between the countries from the region. The role of the EU as a mediator through organization of different events, where representatives of the countries from the region will take part and where specific steps in fighting the common issues will be discussed and measures will be developed, is one step further that can help significantly. Furthermore, as a participant in these events, the EU will be able to play an active role in the formation of the actions in protecting its own interests, not only through its member-states but directly.

The development of the network with the existing coordination centre in Burgas should be accelerated so that a more coherent and complete picture of the scope of the problems and the methods for their combating can be made.

Employment and social affairs

With regard to employment and social affairs, according to the Black Sea Synergy, the EU should support initiatives aimed at strengthening social cohesion and fighting poverty and social exclusion through technical assistance schemes (exchange of information and best practice; awareness-raising; training).

Activities at regional level have already started. They either address specific issues of the Black Sea Region (such as a seminar on social dialogue that took place in 2008) or, in a larger context, thematic subjects (such as the seminar on gender equality in November 2007). The same goals have been covered by the regional conference for the implementation of the Life Long Learning program in 2008, for the European Qualification Frame in 2008 etc.

"Frozen" conflicts

The Black Sea Synergy envisages coping with the "frozen" conflicts through increased political involvement of the EU in the ongoing efforts to address the conflicts (Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Kara-

bakh) and finding ways of enhancing its participation. It underlines that special attention must be paid to promoting confidence-building measures in the regions affected, including co-operation programs specifically designed to bring the otherwise divided parties together.

Tackling the underlying issues of governance and lack of economic development, lack of social cohesion, of security and of stability is seen as one mean of addressing the overall climate.

The EC Commission has continued to advocate an active EU role in addressing the underlying causes of these conflicts in the Black Sea regional framework. Attention has been paid to promoting confidence-building measures also in a wider regional context, including co-operation programs specifically designed to bring the otherwise divided parties together.

Ways of involving all the actors - those who are directly involved in the conflicts and those who have interests related to those conflicts - should be found. Bearing in mind the important role of Russia in most of those conflicts and as one of the greatest world powers with interests in the region, it should also be involved in activities, encouraging the dialogue and searching for lasting policies towards resolution. The EU as an entity should play an active role in the processes concerning these issues as a party that has its own interests and visions in the region.

The Sofia Process - Frozen Conflicts Initiative is devoted to one of the most important issues for the whole world. It aims to elaborate a new international practice which would balance old traditions and new challenges in international relations. The goal is to define ways to find a common approach for the international institutions trying to solve frozen conflicts.

Energy, environment, transport

The Black Sea Synergy identifies the Black Sea Region as a production and transmission area of strategic importance for EU energy supply secu-

urity; a region that offers significant potential for energy supply diversification and therefore an important component of the EU's external energy strategy. Energy supply security diversification is in the interest of the European partners from the region, as well as the EU itself.

The Commission will continue to enhance its relations with energy producers, transit countries and consumers in a dialogue on energy security that is expected to promote legal and regulatory harmonization through the Baku Initiative and in the framework of the ENP and the EU-Russia Energy Dialogue. This will also be pursued through the expansion, when appropriate, of the Energy Community Treaty to Moldova, Turkey and Ukraine, also through the Memoranda of Understanding with Azerbaijan and Ukraine, PCA (Partnership and Cooperation Agreements), and trade agreements, WTO (World Trade Organization) accession negotiations and, where appropriate, via other bilateral energy agreements. The objective is to provide a clear, transparent and non-discriminatory framework, in line with the EU *acquis*, for energy production, transport and transit.

The Black Sea Synergy paper underlines that the EU is helping the countries of the region to develop a clearer focus on alternative energy sources and on energy efficiency and energy saving, which will release important energy resources.

The EU is working closely with regional partners to enhance energy stability through the upgrading of the existing and the construction of a new energy infrastructure. In this context, the Commission is developing, in co-operation with its partners, a new trans-Caspian trans-Black Sea energy corridor. This corridor should include several technical options for additional gas exports from Central Asia through the Black Sea Region to the EU. In addition, given the growing quantities of oil transiting the Black Sea, which have led to increasing safety and environmental concerns, the EU has a specific interest in developing a sustainable and ecological oil dimension to its co-operation in the region. Al-

ready a number of Bosphorus bypass projects are under consideration.

The EU therefore should encourage the significant investments necessary to achieve the above objectives.

The Commission will examine the possibility of a legal framework between the EU and the ENP region that covers the common interests of security of supply, of transit and of demand. A feasibility study will be launched to determine whether it is necessary to develop such an overall legal framework covering producer, transit and consumer countries.

The Black Sea Region has made good progress in mobilising existing instruments and resources. The Republic of Moldova, Turkey and Ukraine have confirmed their intention to engage in formal negotiations to join the Energy Community Treaty, which provides for the implementation of the Community acquis in the electricity and gas sectors. Georgia was accepted as an observer in December 2007.

Concerning energy infrastructure, the Commission has sponsored a feasibility study on a Trans-Caspian-Black Sea Gas Corridor which is examining all the transportation options (pipeline and non-pipeline).

The January 2009 gas crisis once more underlined the extent of the EU's dependency on external sources of energy and has delivered a clear message to European citizens and decision-makers: Europe needs a coherent and coordinated external policy for energy. Growing global energy demand, highly volatile prices for oil and gas and increasing resource nationalism need a coherent European response and new initiatives. Energy security and climate security have ceased to be abstract ideas. They are two sides of the same coin.

The EU needs a thorough energy policy developed and agreed upon by all its members and neighbours, especially in the BSR. It is quite clear that, while bilateral contracts and negotiations are necessary, they cannot lead to a consistent strategy for the whole EU.

Being a major transit corridor for the energy resources of Central Asia and the Caspian basin, the Black Sea Region is becoming increasingly important for the new Energy policy of the European Union insofar as the strategic objectives of this policy relate to energy supply security and diversification.

The issues of access to the energy resources of the Caspian region and Central Asia and the transit of these resources through the Black Sea Region to the European market are matters of paramount importance for the EU. In this context Bulgaria considers that it is of crucial importance to include measures aimed at strengthening the partnerships between the key producers/suppliers (Russia, the Caspian Region and Central Asia), major energy importers (the EU) and transit countries such as Ukraine, Turkey and Southern Caucasus states.

The Black Sea Synergy underlines that the Commission should continue to actively support regional transport co-operation with a view to improving the efficiency, safety and security of transport operations. The EU would build on the experience of all the various transport initiatives relevant to the Black Sea area. With its recent Communication, the Commission has launched a debate on how to enhance transport connections and streamline the various ongoing activities. Efforts should continue in the context of developing the transport axes between the Union and the neighbouring countries as identified by the High Level Group. There is a need for close coordination with ongoing initiatives, which should lead to a clear division of labour or even a partial merger between existing regular events and structures. The TRACECA Strategy until 2015 should continue to provide an important basis for regional transport development.

Transport policy dialogue with a view to regulatory approximation would remain a central goal. The Commission intends to assist in identifying those actions that will help to achieve uniform and consistent application of

relevant instruments and standards. Competitiveness, the capacity to attract traffic flows, improving safety, security, interoperability and intermodality should be decisive factors in drawing up plans for the future. Aviation safety and extending the common aviation area are important objectives. Given the growing hydrocarbon transportation needs, maritime safety would be high on the agenda. In particular, the practices and procedures of the Paris and Black Sea Memoranda of Understanding on Port State Control should be harmonized at the highest level of performance. The Commission proposes to fully exploit the advantages offered by short sea shipping and inland waterways, notably the Danube.

The Commission has started streamlining the various transport co-operation efforts. It has launched exploratory talks with the countries of the region on extension of the trans-European transport networks. This involves the possibility of preparing the TRACECA structures to serve as institutions for the south-eastern axis.

Through a series of related projects the Commission has increased its focus on maritime safety and security. Furthermore, it has begun to implement the Motorways of the Sea concept in the Black Sea, closely linked to the TRACECA program.

Work has started on extending the Common Aviation Area to the Black Sea countries, involving improvement of safety oversight and strengthening of the civil aviation authorities.

The European Union is now making considerable efforts to encourage the integration of existing transport modes and the use of intermodal systems. The development of a seamless web of integrated transport chains, linking road, rail and waterways is a key objective of the Common Transport Policy, as outlined in the Transport White Paper. Such integration would lead to improved flexibility, quality, and cost effectiveness and would stimulate competition between transporters instead of between transport modes.

A range of obstacles still stands in the path of optimum use of all existing infrastructure. The research agendas developed by the European Technology Platforms point to the need to take a new "transport systems" perspective that considers the interactions of vehicles or vessels, transport networks or infrastructures and the use of transport services, which can only be developed at a European level.

Under the Seventh Framework Program (FP7), the European Union is encouraging the development of sustainable, innovative, intermodal and interoperable regional and national transport and logistics networks, infrastructures and systems.

As research and development costs continue to rise substantially in all fields, collaborative activity at EU level is essential to enable a "critical mass" of researchers to address pressing multi-disciplinary challenges in a cost-effective way, especially the challenge of interoperability and intermodal transport, with particular reference to water and rail transport.

The transport sector offers favourable opportunities for implementation of the EU neighbourhood and strategic partnership policies, for establishing an area of prosperity, stability and security at Europe's frontiers. The strategic objectives of Bulgaria are to promote transport links between the Black Sea countries, while at the same time improving safety and security levels in the transport sector, including through measures suggested by the Commission Communication "Extension of the major trans-European axes to neighbouring countries – Guidelines for transport in Europe and neighbouring regions" and mitigating its adverse environmental impact.

Development of Inter-modal Transportation (IMT) is another strategic objective, which is developed with several projects:

- Development of Rail-Sea-Rail-River IMT Link between the countries of the Black Sea Region and Europe.
- Motorways of the Sea

New joint initiatives in the Motorways of the Sea context are placed on the table. Further developments of the Motorways of the Sea concept include an analysis of the current status and measures for implementation of the concept, such as:

- Enhance the role of the Short Sea Shipping Promotion Centre;
- Develop Motorways of the Sea Program for the Black Sea, as well as a Coastal Shipping Program and a Black Sea Motorways map.

A Memorandum on the coordinated development of a Black Sea Motorway Ring was signed. The main idea underlying the Black Sea Motorway Ring is to link all member countries of the Organisation of Black Sea Economic Co-operation (BSEC).

Recent years have seen a steady increase in ship traffic in the Black Sea Region. When it comes to safety levels, the quality of maritime navigation can only be increased with the coordinated efforts of all coastal states. A project on increasing the safety of commercial navigation could be helpful in sharing experience and increasing the standards of inspections applied by the Port State Control authority. The VTOPIS project, which has been adopted by some port administrations, could be a perfect instrument for improving ship traffic and for ensuring safety in the region. The readiness for the implementation of the system by other administrations is a good sign of co-operation. The establishment and operation of a Regional Monitoring and Information Support Centre for Black Sea Navigation in the framework of such a kind of project could show the reality of the trend ideas for policies and its ability to protect the interests of citizens of the Black Sea Region.

A study is being undertaken to identify the main causes and consequences of accidents with sports/leisure vessels, as well as to propose measures to avoid such accidents.

Attention should be paid to the safety of the Black Sea Region in terms of environmental

issues, turning the region into an environmentally safe one and reducing the levels of environmental risks. The preservation of the environment is one of the fundamentals of sustainable development. The higher risk of ecological crisis directly influences the life and health of the people, the economy and the security of the affected countries and, on some occasions, the stability of whole regions. Economic prosperity, good governance and the resolution of the "frozen" conflicts can all be undermined in the case of environmental catastrophe that can destabilize the region for a long time.

As regards the protection of the environment, as written in the Black Sea Synergy, member states will be encouraged to work within the framework of regional sea conventions. The implementation of multilateral agreements and broader strategic co-operation are also essential, as is regional activity to combat climate change.

The Commission is examining the conditions for European Community accession to the Convention to protect the Black Sea against pollution. It has supported studies on the legal changes that would allow for accession. Full membership of the Bucharest Convention is particularly relevant in view of the recently adopted Marine Strategy Framework Directive. The latter relies largely on regional co-operation, including the framework of regional sea conventions.

Work has begun on exploring the feasibility of replicating the approach of the DABLAS Task Force for other environment sectors, waste being the most promising area. Furthermore, the Commission has launched a project to continue and intensify the work of the Task Force. As a result, the DABLAS Secretariat will provide services for the full DABLAS region, as well as direct investment support to river basin management related projects.

The Commission is making efforts to focus on enhancing the capacity of countries from the Black Sea Region to implement the Kyoto Protocol and to participate in international negotiations on a post-2012 agreement.

In 2008 the EU supported an initiative to establish an informational monitoring system for the protection of the Black Sea and the Black Sea coastal zone by reducing oil pollution. "Environmental monitoring of the Black Sea Basin: Monitoring and Information Systems for Reducing Oil Pollution" is the pilot project, financed directly by the EU through the Black Sea Commission in Istanbul.

Therefore, the proposed project should enable the coastal states to better prevent and respond to operational/accidental/illegal oil pollution. Within this long term policy approach, and in support of decision making towards reduction/elimination of oil pollution in the Black Sea, the project will pursue the following objectives: an improved information system for combating oil pollution; an enhanced monitoring system of operational and accidental pollution; enhanced response capabilities, including risk management and planning for emergencies.

Discussions are under way with EU partners about region-wide efforts to address climate change.

Very rigorous monitoring and control in this field is needed, bearing in mind the seriousness of the matter. The EU should play the important role of guarantor for the water preservation of the Black Sea as well as its fauna and flora. Negotiations for the implementation of high standards should take place.

The EU should have a consistent and profound strategy that takes into account the whole situation in the region concerning the environment - bilateral relations, multilateral agreements, different regional initiatives etc. Results can be achieved with a view of the entire picture and not by observing its constituent parts.

Other aspects of the Black Sea Synergy

The lessons learned in the implementation of the EU's regional policy programs for Bulgaria and Romania could be turned to ac-

count for regional development programs throughout the area.

The involvement of regional organizations should guarantee an appropriate level of regional co-operation, following the example of the Organization for Black Sea Economic Co-operation (BSEC), to which all the countries in the region belong. Civil society organizations, under the aegis of the Black Sea Forum, could also provide a fertile medium for co-operation initiatives.

It is important to mention that the Black Sea Synergy does not propose the creation of new structures or institutions and relies on the Black Sea states and the interaction between them, whether based on bilateral relations or discussions at a regional level.

The EU – BSEC relation is seen as a link, primarily ensuring dialogue at the national level. In June 2007 the Commission obtained observer status in the PABSEC.

The strengthening of the European Neighbourhood Policy, including the building of a thematic dimension to the ENP and the gradual development of deep and comprehensive Free Trade Agreements, would enrich Black Sea co-operation. Regional contacts should be facilitated by the removal of obstacles to legitimate travel and the promotion of university exchanges through the Erasmus Mundus and Tempus programmes. The Neighbourhood Investment Facility for countries with ENP Action Plans will help finance infrastructure investments, particularly in the fields of energy, transport and the environment.

The position of the European Union is that enhancing of regional co-operation is not directed towards dealing with long-lasting conflicts in the region, but will facilitate in generating more mutual confidence, which will contribute to the removal of existing obstacles.

August events in Georgia and the January 2009 gas crisis in Russian – Ukrainian relations demonstrated that the European Union was not ready to face those threats that are in the region. *De facto* the Black Sea Synergy does not identify

any threats and risks to further development. It just suggests spheres for co-operation based on the past experience of interaction with the separate states or groups of states. This ignoring of risks leads to the inability to understand why such co-operation projects are hindered. Black Sea Synergy is in the process of working, but there is no Business Proposal for the region. For successful realization of any project you should identify how much are you ready to invest in it, how long it will take, whom you need for its realization, but also what risks are involved and what should be done for their minimization. The EU has already decided with whom to co-operate and how much to invest but has not considered risks and actions for minimization.

Tackling most of the problems that the Black Sea Region faces today is in the hands of the central governments. Nevertheless, the lobbying of such initiatives as well as the further real implementation to minimize risks and oppose threats to the future development of the Black Sea area are in the hands of the local authorities of the respected states. Moreover, such risks as environmental, illegal migration, cross-border organized crime, and safety of navigation, security of pipelines as well as security and safety of the transport infrastructure can be minimized or even resolved on the regional level, using local facilities and existing financial instruments.

6. Black Sea Co-operation – Problems and Prospects

Initiatives for internal co-operation have great significance for the Black Sea countries themselves, giving them a common starting point for equal rights in their relations with the outside world.

It is extremely difficult to make a dividing line between the two initiatives (the initiatives for internal cooperation and the initiatives for common policies), although each one is subject to different priorities.

That is why it is very important to say that both initiatives have to work together for the implementation of the goals in all sectors of

socio-economic life as well as the common goals in the international aspect.

Co-operation in the frame within most of the region can follow the policies of the sectors. It is very important to mention that relations today between BS countries and their co-operation follow also the traditions which have been created during the long historical periods, despite many changes and reverses. The co-operation has passed through different formats and models, it has had different successes, but has always existed and a substantial part of it has been realized by and through the sea.

In the context of the co-operation between the countries from the Black Sea Region we should regard the Black Sea Region in its entirety or, in other words, the “Wider Black Sea Region”. Exactly this wider and systematic approach towards all security components can provide for adequate assessments and effective measures. This approach will help in identifying the security challenges that can be tackled effectively by the international and multilateral organizations or/and individual states with the necessary experience and expertise. The interests of the countries from the Wider Black Sea Region and the possibility of influence over the processes should be taken into account as well as ways of their involvement in different regional initiatives and dialogue should be sought, so that they can feel that they are a part of the region and active participants in the regional processes, which will give them the opportunity to openly state their interests. If they are left outside those processes, this may provoke mistrust and a lack of openness and prediction, which can create obstacles for achieving progress in the Black Sea Region in different fields.

It is necessary to consider more profoundly the bilateral and multilateral relations, which seek different levels and forms of co-operation – such as meetings, discussions, scientific arguments, conferences etc. Special attention should be paid to those bilateral relations that include member-states

of the EU – i.e. Bulgaria and Rumania. The EU is one of the parties in the formation of the policies and the protection of the interests in the Black Sea Region. The rest of the countries (excluding Bulgaria and Romania) will follow their common interests and the EU cannot directly influence their decisions when they do not correspond to their interests. Bulgaria and Romania as member-states are bound by its common policy and its vision in the region and as separate entities they can protect these interests in the region. This is why the bilateral relations between these two countries and the others from the region can prove to be very important for the possibility of the EU to realize its goals and policies in the most efficient way.

One of the major issues in the co-operation models which could be created between the BS countries is coordination. Numerous meetings, discussions, conferences, round tables etc. have been organized under the moderating role of different organizations and institutions. Many projects, focused on different parts of the BSR, followed them.

Co-operation in the environmental area is one of the main topics in the BS basin. Environmental impacts know no borders, so the supporting points should be viewed as a basis of each national policy in the region. But their evaluation, as well as the activities related to them have been carried out on a different level, with different priorities and at different speeds - here, we have to bear in mind the different status of the countries and the strong political processes of establishment of their new status after the radical changes of the early 90s.

In the complex labyrinth of bilateral and multilateral relations, the countries from the region must draw a clear policy line and main principles, which they must maintain further in their national and international agreements. If this does not become reality, the Black Sea Region will continue to be exploited as a transfer zone of raw materials or a transport corridor with no added value, including a political one, and without any capacity to

be a “player” in the field of “greening of the synergy”. In other words, the region will continue to be a subject of plain discussions, explanations and interpretations. It is necessary for each country, on the principle of the inclusive approach, to determine its contribution to the BS environment.

Together, the countries harbour a rich natural heritage, natural areas and landscapes which are hugely important to protect on their own account, and which are the key for economic and social development. The hard shipping in the BS basin requires the development of a policy for emergency and disaster control on the Black Sea territory, including the co-operation of financial and human resources as well as scientific potential.

The mountains, forests, lakes, coastlines and river floodplains of the region are still relatively intact and provide critical environmental services for local populations and national economies. This could lead to “greening” of the national industries and regional economic relations.

The natural wealth of the region is indeed under severe pressure today. Marine resources in the Black Sea have declined due to over-fishing, pollution, unplanned development of coastal zones and intense maritime traffic, while unique terrestrial ecosystems, such as those in the Caucasus Region, the Danube Delta and the East Carpathians are under threat. Land for growing food; forests for paper, pulp and construction; water for growing crops; rivers for navigation and coastal resources for commercial fishing and tourism; continued demands for oil and gas extraction are just some of the resources under stress. In addition to this comes the daunting spectre of climate change impacts which will affect the availability of natural resources in unpredictable ways.

Greening of the Black Sea co-operation as well as greening of the Black Sea Synergy is of key importance in preserving the region. In this sense the Black Sea Commission and the Black Sea Environment Program pursue the following objectives:

- Applying new co-operation platforms in order to highlight regional perspectives, establishing better regional priorities and increasing the reliability of countries at a regional level;
 - Introducing the water management principles introduced in the Water Framework Directive of the EU;
 - Further strengthening the capacity of stakeholders in the decision-making process – national authorities and institutions, scientific and business communities, NGOs, the Black Sea Commission and its Secretariat;
 - Obtaining better understanding of the Black Sea status and tendencies – introducing a harmonized and effective Black Sea Monitoring System;
 - Implementing policy actions, including amendments to national laws as appropriate, addition of a new Protocol to the Convention or drafting of other international instruments;
 - Introduction and dissemination of the basin approach with special emphasis on the transposition in coastal countries of relevant EC Directives dealing with environment management practices;
 - Improving coordination mechanisms with traditional partners of the Black Sea Commission and the Black Sea Environment Program;
 - Creating a better environment for the implementation of various investment projects, including strategic partnerships with donors and international financial institutions as well as ensuring appropriate use of various financial instruments.
- The following list describes possible water management and protection projects, including proposals for joint management between Black Sea countries and EU Member-States
- Technical assistance to local river basin management authorities (with jurisdiction in the Black Sea basin), for the Black Sea Region around Varna (Basin Directorate for Water Management in the Black Sea Region) to fulfil the requirements of the Community legislation and international conventions with respect to the monitoring and management of coastal waters;
 - Providing assistance to local river basin management authorities in the Black Sea Region to prepare a National Strategic Action Plan for avoiding Black Sea pollution, complementary to the Black Sea Basin Management Plan;
 - Technical assistance for exploration of the impact zone between surface and ground waters in fulfilment of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) requirements for the Black Sea basin – jointly with Romania;
 - Providing assistance to local river basin management authorities in the Black Sea Region to prepare Pilot River Basin Management Plans;
 - Applying biological and hydro-morphological monitoring on coastal sea waters in fulfilment of WFD requirements – jointly with Romania;
 - Evaluating contamination with trace elements in coastal aquatic territories, using screening methods in accordance with WFD requirements. Determining natural and background concentrations – jointly with Romania;
 - Evaluating the self-treatment capability of rivers in the Black Sea basin – jointly with Romania and other Black Sea basin countries;
 - Mitigating saline intrusion on the Black Sea coast – jointly with Romania, Turkey or Georgia;
 - Sharing experiences with local authorities responsible for managing the Black Sea

basin in the area of risk management and crisis prevention in a specific river basin – jointly with Russia and/or Ukraine.

One major step forward in the co-operation between the Black Sea countries is their participation in the Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Program 2007-2013. The Program itself is also confirmation of the integral approach in the implementation of two initiatives – for internal co-operation and for common policies. The main objectives of the program cover the most important areas in seeking new solutions on a regional level:

- Supporting cross border partnerships for economic and social development based on common resources;
- Sharing resources and competencies for environmental protection and conservation;
- Supporting cultural and educational networks for the establishment of a common cultural environment in the Basin;
- The program has already provoked and will surely continue to organize new partnerships, which subscribe to the idea of “common borders, common solutions”

With respect to the Black Sea environment there should be co-operation between the BS countries in accordance with the Strategic goals and recommendations for the EU maritime transport policy until 2018. It is well known that maritime transport is a relatively environmentally sound mode of transport, which nonetheless has much potential to become even cleaner than it already is. It must be involved, through a gradual reduction in the carbon footprint of vessels and port infrastructures, in the efforts to combat climate change, so co-operation in this respect is more than necessary. In this sense the BS countries will be very important participants within the framework of a ‘single European sea’ and, consequently in the development of a European maritime transport policy as part of a common maritime area.

Co-operation in maritime policy and fisheries

The Black Sea Synergy states that the EU’s emerging maritime policy should embrace all the countries in the region, and focus on developing a cross- sectoral maritime co-operation network as well as on improving co-operation and integration on the surveillance of the sea. As regards fisheries, the management of fishery resources should be strengthened to promote sustainable and responsible use of stocks.

In the framework of the adopted Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union the Commission is promoting better co-operation between national authorities responsible for offshore government activities, including in the Western Black Sea Region, through the creation of an integrated network of maritime surveillance systems. In this context, it will also look at the possibility of extending such a network to other non-EU Black Sea littoral states.

The Black Sea countries have already established Exclusive Economic Zones and are currently preparing to develop a regional Strategy for Integrated Coastal Zone Management. In 2008 the Commission adopted a Road Map in order to facilitate the development of maritime spatial planning. Member States in the Black Sea Region are encouraged to start their own reflection on maritime spatial planning and learn from the experience of other Member States.

The Commission is in the process of establishing a European Marine Observation and Data Network for all sea basins, including the Black Sea.

EU fishery management measures have been established in the Council Regulation fixing the fishing opportunities and the conditions relating to certain fish stocks applicable in the Black Sea for the relevant year. These measures refer only to Bulgaria and Romania while fishery management and a correct ecosystem approach need to involve all countries around the Black Sea. Therefore the Commission has started working on options for establishing regional fishery

management co-operation. The results of this analysis and the concrete proposals will be consulted by the Member States and the Black Sea coastal states.

Concerns about foreign fish being sold in Europe and what to do about the future of Europe's fishery industry were aired in a hearing held by the Fisheries Committee on 8 April 2010. Overfishing, plunging stocks and falling prices have created a perfect storm battering the fishery industry. Many of their representatives were in Brussels to set out their stall to MEPs.

According to figures from the Commission, 30% of the fish stocks are outside what they term "safe biological limits". In layman's terms this means that they are not able to produce enough to replenish the fish caught. Particularly hard hit is North Sea cod, of which over 9 out of 10 fish are caught before they can breed.

Criticism is being levied at the current EU trade policy that it promotes the complete elimination of tariff protection products, sector fisheries and aquaculture, which could be a disaster for European fisheries as it would be in direct competition with third countries.

The most heavily regulated fishing fleet in the world has to adhere to minimum prices set by the EU while "often inferior products" are allowed into the EU at very low prices. The average price of fish has gone down 18% since 2005

Fish producers also said they wanted clearer labelling and transparency to be able to compete with whitefish substitutes and farmed fish from third countries and to balance supply and demand in the EU's fish market.

Producers want to keep "withdrawal prices" - a minimum price guarantee to keep market prices up. If they still cannot find a buyer at the minimum price set by the EU, the fish will be withdrawn from the market.

Many of the 2002 reforms concentrated on the subsidized scrapping of vessels to reduce fishing capacity.

The Chair of European Parliament's Fisheries Committee Carmen Fraga Estévez warned against relying too heavily on imports and losing our own European fishing fleet. "If we depend more on imports, supply wouldn't be guaranteed, nor low prices" said the Spanish MEP from the European People's Party.

A key issue facing any reform is what is to be done to reduce the amount of "by-catch" - namely fish caught and then thrown back into the sea.

Swedish Green MEP Isabella Lövin was sceptical about what could be done about minimum prices. She said that in Sweden alone 5,000 tons of cod were discarded between 1995 and 1996. "European fishermen shouldn't be fishing for the waste dump, but for the consumers" she said.

Trade

In the trade sector, as written in the Black Sea Synergy, the closer economic co-operation needed to encourage trade liberalization should be based on preferential trade relations, WTO accession, agreements with Russia and Ukraine, and the implementation of ENP action plans to promote harmonization of laws and regulations. The EU has continued to encourage Black Sea regional trade liberalization, supporting in particular the efforts of partner countries to join the WTO.

Research, Science and Technologies

Co-operation in the context of research and education networks is another aspect of co-operation. It aims at developing on-line services and e-commerce, the interconnection of all countries in the area to the pan-European research backbone GEANT and providing high-speed connectivity. The BS countries use different financial instruments, including EU educational or scientific programs. The Tempus program is another instrument for co-operation in the field of higher education.

In the field of science and technology, the EC intends to promote capacity-building and S&T policy dialogue with the Black Sea coun-

tries, through the 7th Research Framework Program and other relevant instruments.

The BS countries use mainly the bilateral contracts and agreements for educational co-operation. Furthermore many concrete agreements between universities and other educational structures have been signed or continued in the period of transformations. The Black Sea University Network has been established and its activity is devoted to the strengthening of education and scientific collaboration. The topics of the 10th Congress of BSUN-Universities and Community included "Co-operation between and Development of Universities in the 21st Century" and the forthcoming conference in Sevastopol, Ukraine answer to the priorities of the EU and the new strategy EU 2020. This shows also the ambitions to increase the capacity and competitiveness of higher education and realize co-operation on all possible levels. Understanding the importance and significance of the role of higher education in the region is reflected in national support of the BS countries for all these events.

The Commission has been supporting institutional co-operation and structural reforms in higher education via the Tempus program. Black Sea regional co-operation in higher education will benefit from the new phase of the program that will give priority to multi-country projects. Higher education co-operation and academic mobility continues to be fostered via the Erasmus Mundus programme.

The Commission increased the internet capacity available across the Black Sea to researchers in Southern Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) by switching on the region's largest computer network for research and education. The EU-funded regional research and education network Black Sea Interconnection (BSI) links the Southern Caucasus countries and connects them to the high bandwidth, world-leading, pan-European GÉANT network that already serves 30 million researchers. This new connection will enable

researchers and students to collaborate with their European peers in 40 countries, by sharing large amounts of data over the network.

The Commission also supports regional scientific co-operation, i.e. through the INCONet EECA project, which started in January 2008.

Co-operation in the field of education, science, research and innovations, based on existing relations between the countries from the region is needed.

What is necessary is collaboration between the EU and the countries from the Black Sea Region for the creation of policies focused on education, research and science, infrastructure, cultural diversity and tolerance, security and post- conflict rehabilitation.

With the purpose of encouraging research and innovations, the Parliamentary Budget and Finance Commission adopted the National Strategy for the Development of Scientific Research 2009-2018. The document envisions the gradual increase of public expenditure for scientific research and innovations until they reach the average level for the EU. The Strategy envisions the state securing financial support for new companies which adopt high technological scientific products. The state will use different tools for risk financing – venture funds, guaranty funds, etc.

Tourism

Tourism is one of the main sources of income for the population from the coastal zones. Every year in the state budget hundreds of millions of Euro are received from the profits of the Black Sea resorts. For this reason this branch should be developed - so that it can offer a constantly improving product to its clients, who, in most of the cases, are citizens of the EU. The successful development of tourism is directly related to stability in the region and the ecological situation. Successful policy in this field will be a warrant for further development of tourism.

Tourism should be recognized by the EU as a field of interest, the problems should be

identified and specific steps developed so that satisfactory results can be achieved. Tourism is also important because it directly connects people from different countries and cultures and lets them interact without the mediation of any institution. It is one of the ways for improving relations between countries and overcoming prejudices and problems that belong to the past. Tourism in the BS countries could be more successful if many of the still existing problems were solved, i.e. organizational, visas, etc. This requires specific solutions and flexible policies in the region itself and on the level of EU – BS countries.

Counteracting corruption schemes and frauds

One of the main goals of the EU concerning the Black Sea Region is sustainable development. However, another important thing is the harmonious development of the separate regions, as well as raising the standard of life - factors that will change the entire state of the region. Active corruption schemes and schemes for frauds can sufficiently hamper and, in the case of lack of counteraction, can hinder the achievement of the aforementioned goals. Thus one region will be given the chance to develop more at the expense of others and an improving standard of living can remain only a good intention. A further result from the spreading corruption can be the undermining of the people's trust in the efficiency of the EU as an entity, which for its part, will influence the international image of the Union and will give reasons for its critics and opponents to attack it. Furthermore, this can influence its image on the international scene.

Intercultural dialogue

Intercultural dialogue can serve as a basis for understanding and co-operation in the other fields. The Black Sea Region is an arena where numerous different cultures and religions interact.

The cultural and historical heritage of the Black Sea Region shows many common features, the language of some of the people

has similar origins. In some historical periods of the development, this area had a common ideology.

In order to avoid any tension in this sphere today it is necessary for the intercultural dialogue to be enhanced. It is intolerable for the region to become a scene of conflicts based on different culture and religion. What should come to the fore are the common goals and values that should be clearly exposed and a firm will for their observation and support. Intercultural dialogue can not only turn out to be an irreplaceable means for the achievement of this goal but it can also help in the cultural enrichment of each country from the region and the development in future of stronger neighbourhood relations, based on mutual trust and understanding. The policies of preserving the cultural historical heritage, traditions, language origin and communication using a language from the region could play a bridging role for a common future. The intercultural dialogue and co-operation in the cultural area could help the region to become more united and bring it near to a region with uniform characteristics or a uniform identity. Co-operation programs for cultural exchange, regional festivals, folklore and handicraft fair, mutual investigation and research of cultural historical heritage are among the instruments which could change the tension accumulated over recent last years. The area of culture is the real bridge across the sea and through the geographical borders. The internal cultural co-operation should be combined with the EU initiatives for common policies.

It is unnatural that other European people know more about the Black Sea Region than the people from the region themselves. There are many NGO's and associations, which could create coordination centres and networks for dissemination of information and if this happened in the original regional languages, this should be the best way for stability and understanding. To speak in one voice in different languages is better than to speak in different voices in an unknown language.

7. Bulgaria's Role in Black Sea Co-operation

In their "double" role Bulgaria and Romania, as members of both the EU and BSR, could play a very important and strengthening role in the processes that are taking place in the region. Both countries could be real promoters and best translators of the EU policies to the governments and people of the Black Sea Region. This role is based on the inherited good relations and contacts with other countries in the previous periods of their mutual development. The first obligation of Bulgaria and Romania as members of the EU is to implement the principles and priorities of EU policies. The second obligation as Black Sea countries is to support the implementation of these policies on the territory of the Black Sea basin as progressive ones, to apply new models of co-operation for strengthening the socio-economic development, which is of mutual interest.

There are two additional facts that reinforce Bulgaria's position as an important factor in the Black Sea co-operation and raise its importance in the Balkan region: Bulgaria's southern neighbour is Turkey - a candidate EU member, and also a Black Sea country, to the west Bulgaria borders the Western Balkans. The formation of this area between the Black Sea and the Adriatic Sea and the development of opportunities for integration into the European policies design a comprehensive perspective of a really united Europe.

As a country that practically implements a "bridging role" between the Western Balkans and the Black Sea, Bulgaria could accumulate and generate new initiatives, which could be determined as "stabilizing", taking into account also the good history of its relations with Balkan countries and with the countries on the Black Sea coast.

Democracy, respect for human rights and good governance

Bulgaria pays its tribute by keeping good relations with all the countries from the region and serving as an example for good practic-

es, human rights protection and democratic freedoms. Every year numerous forums, round tables and discussions with international participation are organized to discuss those issues and present the opportunities and the necessary actions in these aspects. Bulgaria also is an active member of OSCE, whose priorities and actions concern the issues already mentioned.

Movement and security

Bulgaria actively pursues a policy aimed at ensuring reliable protection and control at the EU external frontiers. These activities are focused on efficient countering of terrorism, cross-border crime, illegal migration and trafficking of people, illegal trafficking of goods, drugs, weapons etc.

At a national level, a set of legislative, institutional, administrative and organizational measures is being undertaken to address border security threats in the aquatic territories and build an efficient system for protection and control of the sea border.

Bulgaria is prepared to partake in all forms of cross-border co-operation designed to enhance security and stability in the Black Sea Region, and commensurate with the applicable Community and international laws in this area.

In order to increase the Efficiency of Border Control at the EU External Sea Frontiers, Bulgaria is addressing the following issues: increasing internal security in the region by improving the collaboration among all those institutions in Black Sea countries that are concerned with national security and navigational safety, protecting the sea frontiers and the environment by harmonisation of risk analysis techniques; improving the coordination of joint operations and onboard searches for illegal immigrants, illegal shipments of drugs, weapons and hazardous substances; jointly developing a methodology for fighting corruption in the specialized agencies of Black Sea countries.

In order to improve Communication and Coordination between National Border Coordination Centres of Black Sea countries, Bulgaria aims at improving coordination between border agencies in the Black Sea Region and in particular at strengthening the capacity of the Black Sea Border Coordination and Information Centre in Burgas and the National Border Coordination Centres of Black Sea countries.

The realisation of successful democratic reforms for economic growth and increasing the welfare of the citizens in the South-eastern Europe is a process directly related to the results from the counteraction of trans-border crime. In this respect Bulgaria pays great attention to the development of regional co-operation in order to enhance the level of security and support of stability in the region. The effective protection of our borders is of crucial importance in achieving this goal. Bearing in mind the position of Bulgaria as an outside border of the EU, this issue is observed as a key priority and special attention is paid to the legislation and the institutional capacity that is necessary for effective border control.

Bulgaria successfully implements the Integrated Border Management Strategy (which aims at an "integrated and global response" to the challenges posed by the phenomenon of irregular immigration through common external borders) and its Action Plan. Bulgaria is also working on the preparation and the realization of modern forms of exchange of information at an international level: the use of liaison officers; the development of common contact posts on the border checkpoints; the practical application of trans-border observation and pursuit; the conducting of massive control of the external borders and implementation of compensative measures on the internal borders, related to the decline in the number of check-ups; the introduction of newly facilitated procedures for passing through border checkpoints as well as new specialized border police training. One of the most important things regarding our succession to Schengen and one of the top priorities for Bulgaria is integrated border management.

Taking into account the more active and globalizing criminal activity without borders and the need for active co-operation and mutual support as well as enhanced operational police contacts in this relation, Bulgaria ratified and is a participating state in the Police Co-operation Convention for South-eastern Europe, whose aim is to adopt the Schengen standards in South-eastern Europe through the conclusion of a multilateral convention for the improvement of strategic police collaboration in the region.

Employment and social affairs

Bulgaria is trying to cope with the problem of unemployment following the crisis. There are constant round tables and conferences, discussing the issues regarding the integration of minorities and regarding gender equality. The increased number of women at high levels of government is a fact.

"Frozen" conflicts

The Bulgarian recipe is a balanced ethnic model, which does not mean that the model should not develop and Europeanize. Bulgaria is interested having stability, integration and neighbourly relations around it and it cannot be just a consumer of security in the EU and NATO. Bulgaria forms a natural bridge between the EU countries and the Caucasus, Russia and Ukraine. In 2009 the "Sofia Process" initiative was announced, which goal is finding an approach for solving the "frozen" conflicts. The reason for this project is that Sofia should come up with initiatives and should contribute to co-operation among the countries. It will have a secretariat in Sofia and partners in all countries of the region.

There is much instability, unresolved conflicts and tension in this region, including Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which directly affects Bulgaria's security and it is of its own interest and of interest to the EU that these conflicts are being brought to their resolution.

Energy, environment, transport, security

A basic element in the European environmental policy is the increase in the share of renewable energy sources (RES) in the structure

of the energy consumption of the member countries, which is now less than 1 percent. It is expected to increase rapidly, due to the significant interest of investors aroused in 2008 by the preferential buyout rates of RES generated power in Bulgaria and the reduced interest in many European countries in energy from alternative sources because of its high price. The memorandum signed by EBRD regarding 250 million euro, with which the bank will start a program for crediting of industrial projects toward the increase of energy efficiency in Bulgaria is an additional stimulus.

Bulgaria is prepared to undertake a key role in strengthening the co-operation between the Danube and Black Sea countries. Being both a Danube and a Black Sea country, Bulgaria is well placed to contribute to the implementation of EU environmental initiatives and policies in the region.

Bulgaria attributes specific importance to many of the following strategic energy projects included in its Operative Program for Cross-Border Co-operation in the Black Sea Basin and in the National Strategy for Integrated Infrastructural Development.

- Project Title: NABUCCO
- Project Title: Construction of the Burgas-Alexandroupolis Oil Pipeline
- Project Title: AMBO
- Project Title: Construction of a Gas System Interlink between Bulgaria and Turkey
- Project Title: Construction of a Systems Interlink between the Gas Transmissions Systems of Romania and Bulgaria.
- Project Title: Construction of Systems Interlink between the Gas Transmissions Systems of Greece and Bulgaria.
- Project Title: Construction of Regional Terminal for Receiving (Regasification) of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) at the Bulgarian Black Sea Coast.
- Project Title: South Stream

An agreement has been signed between Bulgaria and Greece, which will facilitate cross-border railway traffic. Bulgaria signed the Code of Conduct on co-operation in the field of civil aviation incident investigation of the European Civil Aviation Conference. Bulgaria and Romania came to an agreement concerning the acceleration of the construction on Romanian territory in connection with the Danube Bridge 2. The Maritime Administration Executive Agency started two partner projects for clean waters.

Bulgaria shares the following strategic interests regarding environmental co-operation in the Black Sea Region, as concerns the rehabilitation and protection of the Black Sea and is working on their implementation with other BS countries:

- Enhancing co-operation in the area of flood prevention along the Danube and minimizing the risks of industrial pollution;
- Introducing the water management principles provided in the Water Framework Directive (WFD) of the EU;
- Obtaining a better understanding of Black Sea status and tendencies – introducing a harmonised and effective Black Sea Monitoring System;
- Introducing and disseminating the basin approach with special emphasis on the transposition of relevant EU Directives on environment management practices in the coastal countries;
- Creating a better environment for implementation of various investment projects, including strategic partnerships with donors and international financial institutions, and ensuring appropriate use of various financial instruments.

Bulgaria has joined one of the Community's major initiatives in support of intermodal transportation – the Marco Polo II program.

- Project Title: Investigating the interest of operating Passenger Services Varna – Odessa – Istanbul.

The aim is to create technical and organizational capabilities for operation of services between these ports, involving also the private sector by means of Public-Private Partnership or other forms of co-operation.

Policy coordination among Black Sea countries

- Project Title: Optimization of Social Dialogue and Public-Private Co-operation in the Navigation and Harbour Sectors of Countries with Black Sea Outlets.
- Project Title: Development of Vision and Strategy for Integrated Black Sea Coastal Zone Management to Increase Maritime Transport Competitiveness and Ensure its Sustainable Development.

Bulgaria is ready to take a proactive approach to disseminating the principles and ideas of the future maritime policy in the region by applying the integrated, cross-sector and interdisciplinary maritime policy model as proposed by the Green Paper. Promoting the principles of Integrated Black Sea Coastal Zone Management is consistent with the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management in Europe (30 May 2002).

Co-operation in maritime policy and fisheries

As regards development of relationships with Black Sea countries in the area of fisheries, fish resources and aquacultures in the Black Sea, Bulgaria is working on the following proposals:

- Project Title: Establishment of a Black Sea Regional Advisory Council (RAC)

The establishment of RACs by Council Decision 2004/585/EC is one of the key

reforms to the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) of the EU approved in 2002. RAC's main role is to generate and provide advice on fishery management in the Black Sea to ensure sustainable development of this sector in the region, sustainable development of fish stocks through an integrated approach based on protection of the Black Sea and on the principle of pre-emption, ensuring better transparency of scientific advice through encouraging dialogue between research institutions and fishermen. Stakeholders' early involvement in the RAC decision-making process is another priority for CFP formulation and is crucial for its successful implementation. The joint formulation of fishery policies in the Black Sea will also be largely beneficial to co-operation between the individual countries in exercising control on illicit fishing in the region.

- Project Title: Introduction of Common Provisions on the Use of Sparing Fishing Devices as well as Sanitary Norms for Aquaculture and Transportation of Fish Products.

The project will contribute to harmonised implementation of the key aspects embodied in the consolidated Community legislation dealing with hygienic requirements related to fish products.

- Project Title: Developing a Market Information Sharing System

A Market Information Sharing System would be an efficient tool for promoting fish trade in the Black Sea Region.

- Projects for delivery of training events and seminars to third countries in the Black Sea Region, concerning the work of fishing inspectors, inspection of fish put on the wholesale market, sanitary/hygienic requirements and product storage requirements.

Trade

Bulgaria has been a member of WTO since 1 December 1996. As of 1 January 2007 it has been a member State of the EU. All EU member States are WTO members, as is the EU (until 30 November 2009 known officially in the WTO as the European Community for legal reasons) in its own right.

Bulgaria supports the efforts of the Black Sea partner countries to join the WTO.

Each country creates its own goals, prepares its strategies and action plans. It is necessary that each BS country weaves its view for the region into these strategies. This is the way to meet its close neighbours.

Bulgaria has its strategic goals for the region and all Bulgarian people accept for the country the role of a geopolitical and geostrategic crossroads in the Black Sea Region between East and West.

Strategic goals of Bulgaria towards the region are connected with the safeguarding of its national security through achieving lasting stability in the region and the creation of favourable conditions for the development of the Bulgarian economy through increasing the co-operation in the Black Sea Region on a bilateral and regional basis.

In the context of co-operation in the Black Sea Bulgaria adheres to the principles of consistency, continuity, respect for the rights of building bilateral relationships or relationships in other formats of mutual interest, stability in the relations with the EU, covering standards and norms in various sectors and policies leading to sustainable patterns of development. The principles include those of inclusion and striving for consensus, but if they cannot be achieved, it is possible to apply asymmetric geometry. Support for the activity of the Parliamentary Assembly of Black Sea Economic Co-operation and the Organization of Black Sea Economic Co-operation is among the Bulgarian priorities for internal co-operation

Research, Science and Technologies

Bulgaria is using the possibilities for co-operation through the Research Program of the International Centre for Black Sea Studies as well as through the establishment of a research network, devoted to the problems of the Black Sea and the co-operation with the now forming European network for research and policy development.

initiatives. The aim of all Bulgarian institutions and authorities is the intensification of their activity and their participation in the current policies of the region.

In "soft security measures", we believe that the regular working visits to the Black Sea Border Coordination and Information Centre in Burgas as well as widening the scope of its activities will be of interest for all BSEC Member-States and not only for the littoral states. The aim is to contribute to strengthening the efficiency of border management.

EU participation in the development of regional co-operation in all its aspects is of key importance for the interests of Bulgaria. The Bulgarian strategic objectives mentioned above could be safeguarded an active involvement of NATO and the EU in the region. In this context the successful implementation of the Black Sea Synergy in addition to the EU Neighbourhood policy is of paramount importance for Bulgaria. The attempts of some countries to isolate the region, which means preventing NATO and EU involvement in the processes of the regional co-operation, contradict the Bulgarian national interests. The Bulgarian interests lie in developing regional co-operation, based on the principles, values and standards of the European processes of integration. The observer status of the Commission to the BSEC could be instrumental in furthering regional co-operation.

Different elements have to be used for the achievement of the long term objectives:

- Strengthening security and stability, good neighbourly relations and partnership with and among all the countries of the region;
- Promoting democracy, rule of law, human rights and good governance;
- Providing support for a functioning market economy, encouraging economic development and prosperity;
- Extending collaboration with civil society;
- Developing co-operation at municipal and regional level.

The co-operation in the Black Sea Region is based on common values and principles, shared by all countries and defined by the UN Charter, the basic OSCE, the Council of Europe and BSEC documents, as well as the bilateral agreements between the countries from the region and the EU and NATO.

Bulgaria supports enhanced co-operation among the Black Sea countries, based on the following principles:

- shared responsibility for the development and prosperity of the region and ownership of the regional co-operation process;
- an inclusive approach, ensuring that no country of the region is excluded;
- a pragmatic approach;
- synergy between various regional initiatives and programs;
- each country being able to decide whether to participate or not in a given project developed with the initiative of concerned countries in the region;
- co-financing from regional partners or other sources, including international financial institutions, government and private funds, establishing partnerships of the Northern Dimension type;
- openness for co-operation with the EU and other international, regional and lo-

cal organizations and institutions, as well as business associations, academic and research institutions and non-governmental organisations.

Bulgaria will actively promote the formulation and implementation of an enhanced EU policy in the Black Sea Region.

In the near future regionalism and regional organizations in the context of the global structures will have growing importance. The reasons for this are the fact that they are close to the problems, they are aware of the specifics, concerning the psychology and the needs of their people and hence they could offer the most efficient way for achieving any purpose with the minimum of negative reactions or opposition. However, in order to overcome past tensions and rivalry, regional organizations or actions on a regional level need outside impetus: one that can offer something worth enough to make them co-operate, despite their differences.

All sectors of the economy and social development are particularly sensitive and important for the region. The main goal is to safeguard, preserve and keep the Black Sea basin as a bearer of the marine origin. Strengthening the presence of the Black Sea Region and its validation as the region with a European sounding and characteristics can be achieved by the creation of an independent strategy for its long term development.

This conclusion is based on the analysis of all the documents and activities in the region, some of which are analyzed in this report as well. There are many deficits which make the policies for the region not only incomplete, but which do not allow the implementation of all the initiatives in the region and for the region to follow the principle of "getting results". The main deficits are associated with the lack of effective information coverage of the region, the use of the original languages of its countries, insufficient consensus on the objectives of the programs, the neglect of important sectors of our recent development, such as tourism, the fight against organized crime, lack of a com-

prehensive vision for co-operation in the region based on its diversity, lack of efficiency in the coordination of all the efforts exerted by different institutions and organizations, lack of decentralization of the policies to the region itself.

The Black Sea Synergy is a very important initiative but not enough for full manifestation of the whole diversity and complexity of the region. There are many roads to achieve this – through the intensification of the BSEC and PABSEC activities, through creation of new structures like the Black Sea Assembly in which all countries and the EU can participate in a predetermined format, or through the creation of a Black Sea Union, as was suggested by the EP. But the first step is and should be the adoption of an independent BS Strategy. This could be understood as a road map for the region in the future. The considerable thing that

should be emphasized today is that the Black Sea Region is no less important than the other regions, such as the Mediterranean, the Baltic, and the Danube, for which independent strategies have already been set up. This could lead to faster growth and development.

The Black Sea Region needs a vision for itself as part of the global community. This will give it stimulus to develop and to build strong relations within this region. Only if they see their future as part of a bigger entity (such as the EU) will the Black Sea countries have the incentive to concentrate on the future instead of on the past. The EU has the unique chance of helping the region build its own future, sticking to and following the main principles of the Union. Furthermore, thus the EU will help itself by forming a stable and competitive, conflict-free and rule-abiding region, which is part of Europe.

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