



## Every year NGOs meet at the Black Sea NGO Forum

The **Black Sea NGO Forum** was launched in **2008** by the Romanian Federation of Development NGOs and its partners throughout the region with support from the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation in the framework of the Black Sea Synergy. It continues in 2009 in cooperation with the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Commission and the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation.

### *First Edition: 'Time to Meet' - Bucharest, 2008*

In 2008, the **first edition** of the Forum gathered over 100 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine**, other **European Union** member states and important actors in the wider Black Sea Region.

The Forum aims at increasing the level of **dialogue and cooperation** among NGOs in the wider Black Sea region, as a means of **strengthening NGOs** and their capacity to influence regional and national policies.

Our **vision**, as civil society is that, historically, the Black Sea has been rather a cooperation medium than a barrier. Naturally it has allowed for communication and exchange (either cultural or economic). Non-governmental organizations in the region are very similar, in terms origin, path and challenges they are facing. There are numerous **lessons learnt and expertise** which are worth sharing. Non-governmental organizations have the vocation to act jointly to bring **positive social change** for both their countries and for the region as a whole.

The accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the European Union (EU) moved the border of the EU to the Black Sea, thus creating **new opportunities for cooperation**. Romania and Bulgaria have joined the 10 New Member States (NMS) of the EU in becoming donor countries and taking responsibilities within the external action of the EU. Similar historical context and problems have lead NMS to be particularly interested and able to share





experience and expertise and to contribute with resources to supporting economic, social and political reform in neighbour countries in the wider Black Sea region.

The Black Sea NGO Forum is complementary to other regional initiatives (for instance the recently launched Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum). It looks for creating synergies, avoiding overlapping activities and making full use of the civil society potential in the region. There are three main defining elements of this Forum, within the Black Sea Synergy framework:

1. The focus of the Black Sea NGO Forum is on **non-governmental organizations** as a particular transformative force throughout the region, bearers of democratic values and advocates of open societies, human and social rights, peace and solidarity throughout the region.
2. The Black Sea NGO Forum aims to bring together NGOs from **all the countries in the wider Black Sea region** (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine), as a forum for specialized regional dialogue and cooperation and with other non-governmental organizations and institutions active in the region.
3. The Forum brings around the same table **civil society, EU and international donors and officials** from the region or involved in the region, thus supporting capacity building for these actors in order to overcome current gaps in access to information and funds, as well as in implementation practices.

The first edition of the Forum acknowledged that within this region, which is extremely complex from a political point of view, cooperation among NGOs from the civil society represents a real potential for stability and prosperity in the wider Black Sea region.

### *Second Edition: 'NGOs in Times of Crisis' - Bucharest, 2009*

The **second edition** of the Forum will take place between October 29 - 31 in Bucharest. Based on the first edition's evaluation and suggestions, this year the set-up of the Forum will include more **space for discussion and participation** - 2 series of 5 parallel panels, on the following topics:

- Democracy: Fair elections & Election monitoring
- Human rights: Freedom of the media & Freedom of expression
- Environment: Climate change / Black Sea regional cooperation
- Children rights: Child protection / Violence against children
- Social protection: Social services / Health services
- Strengthening Civil Society
- Advocacy & Policy
- Financial Sustainability & Fundraising
- Legitimacy of the sector & Relations with governments
- Volunteering & Public participation

**Study-visits** to Romanian NGOs will be organized for the participants to become acquainted with the contribution of local civil society to the process of transition and reforms before and during the accession to the EU. Participants will be able to choose to visit NGOs in their specific field of work (democracy and good governance, human rights, freedom of expression and mass media, environment, child protection, social services, health).