

Black Sea NGO Forum, 8th edition

2nd - 3rd of November 2015
Holiday Inn, Tbilisi, Georgia

- Conference Report -



INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVE

The 8th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum was organized by the Romanian NGDO Platform (FOND) with the support of the European Commission, the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme – Regional Centre for Europe and Central Asia, and the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness – CPDE and the Civil Society Institute (Georgia).

This year's edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum continued the previous edition's discussions, aiming to **finalize a strategic framework with thematic and cross-cutting cooperation areas for civil society at the Black Sea** with the purpose of consolidating regional cooperation and providing focus and sustainability to regional initiatives.

To this end, we relied on participants' valuable input and expertise to identify and prioritize the most important cooperation areas for civil society in the region, through a facilitated participatory process.

VISION

Our vision is that **the Black Sea represents a cooperation space rather than a barrier**. Cooperation among NGOs from the civil society represents a real potential for stability and prosperity in the wider Black Sea region. There are numerous learned lessons and expertise that are worth sharing in order to produce real changes in the region.

MISSION

The Black Sea NGO Forum aims to:

- ❖ Increase the level of dialogue and cooperation among NGOs in the wider Black Sea Region;
- ❖ Strengthen the NGOs capacity to influence regional policies; and
- ❖ Increase the number and quality of regional projects, partnerships and thematic networks.

STRATEGIC PROCESS

Following participants' valuable input and recommendations expressed during the Forum's editions and in response to the study on the ["Impact of the first 4 editions of the Black Sea NGO Forum 2008-2011"](#), as well as taking into consideration the conclusions of the follow-up events of the 2012 and 2013 editions of the Forum¹, the 7th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum (8th-10th of December 2014, Kyiv, Ukraine) launched a multi-stakeholder regional consultation with the purpose of starting the process of creating a Strategy of Civil Society in the Black Sea Region.

In this context, a first step was to identify the common needs and challenges for having an enabling environment in which civil society carries out its activity, as well as to find potential solutions through concrete regional cooperation initiatives in key thematic sectors.

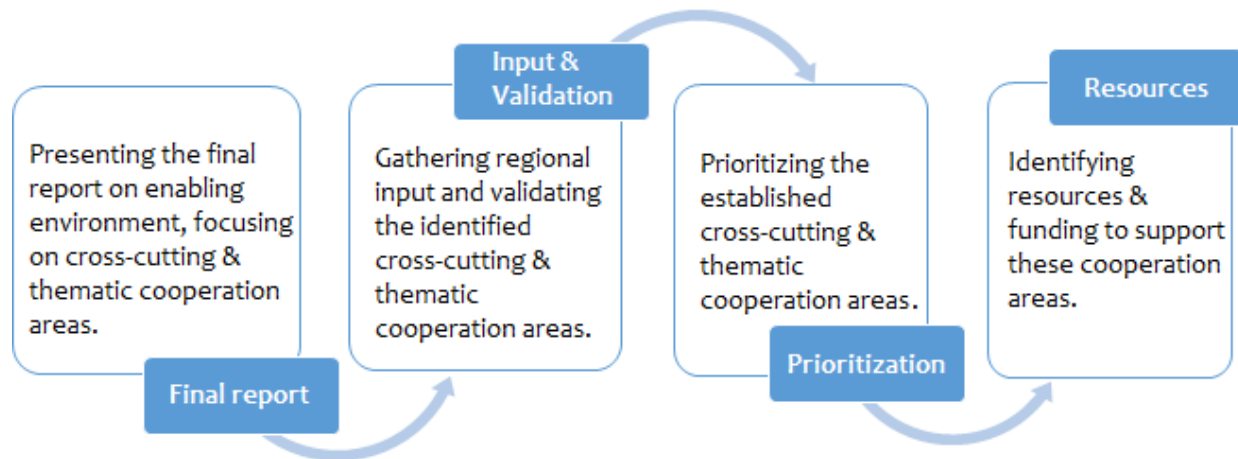
The next step was to develop the results of the regional consultation on enabling environment for civil society into a more substantial research that would provide a more in-depth perspective on the existing challenges and potential solutions, and potentially serve as a periodical assessment instrument that will allow for the strategic framework to adapt to the existing context.

The conclusions of the [Report Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development in the Black Sea Region](#) were discussed at the Preparatory Meeting of the VIIIth edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum (9

¹ "Debate: Opportunities for Regional Cooperation at the Black Sea" (26 June 2013, Bruxelles, European Parliament); "Strategic Consultation Meeting on the Future of the Black Sea NGO Forum" (30 June 2014, Bruxelles, The Permanent Representation of Romania to the European Union).

September 2015, Bruxelles), with the purpose of initiating a debate with the main European stakeholders on the most important cooperation areas for civil society in the Black Sea region and the role of the Black Sea NGO Forum in supporting them.

As a result, it was decided that the main approach of the 2015 edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum will comprise the following steps:



DAY I - 2ND OF NOVEMBER 2015

Official opening: An overview on the current regional and international contexts

Special Guest Speaker (video message)

Mr. Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations

In his recorded video message, Commissioner Hahn highlighted the importance of the Black Sea for the European Union, as part of the Black Sea Synergy, a policy with the aim of fostering pragmatic regional dialogue and cooperation, by working together to tackle common challenges in order to contribute to improving the life of the people round the Black Sea.

In order to do so, structured dialogue and strong cooperation between national authorities and civil society organisations (CSOs) are essential. Therefore, the aim of the EU is to help CSOs in the region become strong actors and partners in their home countries. Amidst the political tensions, CSOs play a crucial role in the democratisation process, by developing their advocacy, networking and monitoring capacities.

The Commissioner underlined EU's commitment to play a constructive role in the Black Sea Region as it does in all the other sea basins surrounding the EU. In this sense, the European Union will continue to bring together in an integrated manner all its policies and instruments in order to enhance the opportunities of cooperation with EU's partner countries in the Black Sea Region.

The EU is ready to further develop concrete projects in the Black Sea Region, especially with CSOs, and to contribute to a future development of a common economic agenda of the Black Sea in order to tackle concrete problems. The network created by the Black Sea NGO Forum is a proper space where more concrete projects and joint initiatives could be development to the benefit of the people living in the Black Sea Region.

Panel

Moderator: Ms. Natalia Budescu, President, The Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND / Executive Director, The Association for Cross-Border Cooperation “Lower Danube Euroregion”

Mr. Edward Iosiper, Director, Analysis and Policy Planning Directorate, Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Gigi Gigiadze, Deputy Minister, Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Carlo Natale, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia

H.E. Ambassador Michael B. Christides, Secretary General, Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation – BSEC

Mr. Justin Kicullen, Co-Chair, CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness - CPDE

During the opening session, the speakers' presentations underlined the strategic importance of the Black Sea Region, the need for an enhanced dialogue and cooperation and the essential role played by civil society organisations (CSOs) in achieving overall development in the region.

In this context, the Black Sea NGO Forum is an example of success that provides the space for networking, dialogue and concrete cooperation initiatives and has the potential to encourage and foster long-term political cooperation in the region.

Civil society cooperation across the region is particularly important for advancing political reforms and encouraging civic engagement at local, national and regional level. But perhaps even more important is the development of a strong civil society as a pre-requisite to cooperation in the region. In this sense, civil society must be recognised as an equal partner in development, and human rights, the empowerment of the people and democratic partnerships should be at the core of this process.

Therefore, in tackling the challenge of regional cooperation, multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaboration between CSOs and institutional stakeholders is equally important. In this sense, the European Union, through its delegations in the Black Sea countries, aims to support the dialogue between CSOs and local authorities. Moreover, the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation – BSEC, whose mission is to increase the number of regional partnerships and achieve synergy in the region, began to collaborate with CSOs in the region, encourage the exchange of experience and best practices, and provide resources and networking with governmental institutions.

Plenary session I: Enabling environment for civil society in the Black Sea Region – A cross-cutting priority?

Description

This session was dedicated to the launch of the Report Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development in the Black Sea Region, developed as part of the follow-up activities of the VIIth edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum (8th-10th of December 2014, Kyiv, Ukraine). In the first part of the session, the key findings of the report were presented, highlighting the major common points and differences between Black Sea countries regarding enabling environment for civil society. The second part was reserved for reactions from a panel of experts, sharing their perspectives and comments on the report.

I. Presenting the findings of the report

Panel

Ms. Tanja Hafner Ademi, Executive Director, Balkan Civil Society Development Network – BCSDN

Ms. Milka Ivanovska, Junior Policy Officer, Balkan Civil Society Development Network – BCSDN

Key points

The [Report Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development in the Black Sea Region](#) was developed following a desk and field research conducted in the period May – July 2015 by two experts from the Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN) – Ms. Tanja Hafner Ademi and Ms. Milka Ivanovska, with the support of the Romanian NGDO Platform - FOND.

The aim of the report was to present an overview of the current state of enabling environment for civil society organisations (CSOs) in eight Black Sea countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Russia and Turkey. A second objective of the research was to gather

proposals from participants on the main cooperation areas that should be included in a future strategic framework for civil society cooperation, as well as recommendations on the role of the Black Sea NGO Forum in supporting the elaboration and implementation of such a strategic framework.

The analytical framework of the research was based on a combination of the methodology of the [Monitoring Matrix](#), developed by BCSDN and the [Civil Society Partnership for Development Effectiveness \(CPDE\) Framework for Assessing Enabling Environment Progress](#). It analysed 4 areas and 10 core dimensions related to: basic legal guarantees of freedoms, the framework for CSOs' viability & sustainability, public institutions/state – CSOs relationships and donor CSO-relationship, looking at both the legal dispositions and aspects of the state of play in practice².

The report found that all countries in the region are affected to a certain degree by limitations to an enabling environment for CSOs, confronting with key challenges related to: restrictions of freedom of association and peaceful assembly; burdensome reporting requirements; absence of systematic tax/fiscal framework for CSOs; absence of comprehensive and mandatory legal framework for CSO involvement in policy-making; involvement of CSOs mainly in politically non-sensitive issues; partial access to public information; barriers to access foreign funding; most foreign funding is project-based, and not core-funding.

The respondents concluded that **enabling environment for CSOs is a common regional issue and should be made a cross-cutting priority for civil society cooperation at the Black Sea**. Among the **concrete proposals to tackle the challenges on enabling environment** were: organizing multi-stakeholder exchanges of good practices on enabling environment; offering capacity building trainings for government bodies relating with CSOs on legal and regulatory issues, participatory policy development, transparency and access to information issues; implementing a national/regional monitoring tool (including a regional website for anonymous reporting of situations affecting organizations) and then using the findings for coordinated advocacy for enabling environment at regional and country level; organizing regional conferences to bring together donors, government and civil society experts on particular areas of CSO laws and regulatory issues; conducting systematic research on donor funding of civil society in the region to be presented at regional conferences; advocating for a culture of philanthropy and diversity of funding sources for CSOs in the region etc³.

As regards the second aim of the research – gathering input on the strategic framework and the role of the Black Sea NGO Forum, the participants considered that **the added value of the Black Sea NGO Forum is that it is an impartial mechanism for facilitating regional cooperation** between CSOs, donors and domestic governments.

According to the participants, **the Forum is expected to perform the following key roles:**

- Information-sharing (online platform, newsletters, alerts, civil society factsheets);
- Advocacy for foreign donors support & initiate a funding hub for joint initiatives;
- Research, exchange and facilitation on enabling environment issues and thematic network cooperation (hub of hubs).

In their view, **the most important cooperation areas** that should be included in a future strategic framework are related to:

² Detailed information on the areas and core dimensions analysed is available in the presentation made by Ms. Hafner Ademi and Ms. Ivanovska during the event: <http://www.blackseango.org/resources/bsf-presentations/2015-2/>.

³ More concrete recommendations on each of the dimensions included in the research are present in the report.

- On matters concerning enabling environment for civil society development in the region;
- Horizontal cooperation in specific thematic areas.

II. Perspectives & recommendations from the expert panel

Panel

Moderator: Mr. Alexandru Coica, Programme Coordinator, East-Europe Foundation

Mr. Brian Tomlinson, Executive Director AidWatch Canada / Monitoring & Evaluation Working Group, CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness – CPDE

Assoc. Prof. Dimitrios Triantaphyllou, Chair, Department of International Relations / Director, Center for International and European Studies (CIES), Kadir Has University Istanbul

Mr. Ștefan Cibian, Board Member, The Romanian NGDO Platform - FOND / President, The Romanian Association for International Development and Cooperation (ARCADIA)

Key points

Mr. Tomlinson highlighted that **the closing space for CSOs is not only specific for the Black Sea region, but it is a global trend that could be reversed using effective strategies** such as: engaging in broader coalitions that would include the issues of CSO enabling conditions within the pre-occupations of broader social movements; supporting courageous local leadership; taking advantage of global and regional initiatives to profile civil society space (including the Black Sea NGO Forum); and improving CSO legitimacy as representing citizen's voices.

Moreover, Mr. Tomlinson presented **the initiative of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) of undergoing a second monitoring round of the development effectiveness commitments assumed in Busan**, especially indicator two – the progress on enabling environment for CSOs. The countries from the Black Sea Region & Balkans undertaking monitoring processes are Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Kosovo and the Republic of Moldova and CSO representatives from these countries were encouraged to be involved in this process⁴.

Prof. Triantaphyllou **connected the issue of enabling environment for civil society with the wider social and political context**, making a parallel between what is happening at regional and at the level of the EU. The effectiveness of CSOs is hindered by the shrinking space in which they are able to operate, caused by authoritarian governments, but also by tension and conflicts in the region. At its turn, European Union is affected by economic recession, growing poverty, and more recently the refugee crisis. This combination of factors has had an important impact on the society as a whole, and civil society in particular also at European level. In spite of this hardship, the EU still serves as a guiding light for CSOs in the Black Sea Region and Balkans.

Also, Prof. Triantaphyllou touched upon the subject of **engaging youth as a potential solution** to this social crisis. However, it is a challenge to reach out to young people, taking into consideration that they too have become disenchanted and they started doubting the validity of education. We have to think about actions to counter this bleak outlook.

⁴ More information about the second monitoring round can be found here: <http://effectivecooperation.org/wordpress/2nd-monitoring-round-2015-2016/>

According to Mr. Stefan Cibian, **what is needed to remedy the current situation is solid knowledge and good practices.** The most significant problem detrimental to development is that public authorities do not conduct substantial research when elaborating policies. Progress can be made by engaging more in research, specifically within public organizations. “How does civil society contribute to local development?”, “Do we have data?”, “How do we collect data?”, “How do we use data?” - All these issues must be addressed in partnership with public authorities.

Regarding enabling environment for civil society, Mr. Cibian highlighted that **an important aspect is that the values associated with enabling environment are embedded at the level of the communities.** To understand this, the relationship between civil societies and communities needs to be further looked into. Also, we should put more emphasis on **building sustainability models** without which civil society cannot exist or develop properly.



Plenary session II: Bringing visibility for civil society of the Black Sea Region at the international level – An overview of recent changes in the development effectiveness agenda & opportunities

Description

Continuing the tradition begun in 2013, the VIIIth edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum included a session dedicated to CPDE’s work at an international and regional level. This session’s goal was to present recent updates on the development effectiveness agenda and civil society’s engagement through CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) and discuss about ways of increasing the effectiveness of cooperation.

Panel

Moderator: Ms. Adela Rusu, Executive Director, The Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND

Ms. Izabella Toth, Senior Corporate Strategist, Cordaid / European Representative, CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness – CPDE

Mr. Vazha Salamadze, Director, Civil Society Institute Georgia / Non-EU Sub-region Representative, CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness – CPDE

Ms. Tanja Hafner Ademi, Executive Director, Balkan Civil Society Development Network – BCSDN

Key points

The session began by introducing the global context of development effectiveness and highlighting the work of CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness – CPDE at international level.

CPDE is an open platform that unites civil society voices from around the world on the issue of development effectiveness.

One of the current top priorities of CPDE is monitoring the implementation of the new set of development goals (Sustainable Development Goals – SDGs) established at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015. There are 17 SDGs working towards ending poverty and hunger, ensuring inclusive and equitable education for all, achieving gender equality, promoting sustainable energy, sustainable consumption, sustainable use of natural resources etc⁵.

The last two SDGs refer to the political environment necessary for the successful implementation of these goals, they call for enhanced accountability, inclusive development and legitimate politics, working together with other stakeholders, improving means of implementation and financing for development. Taking into consideration the challenges concerning enabling environment for civil society at global level, implementing these last two goals might prove difficult. Moreover, given that the implementation of the SDGs was is not mandatory for national governments, there could be a potential lack of commitment from the part of some EU member states.

In this context, **CPDE works for:** institutionalizing participation in the global architecture, pushing for the governments to commitment to aid and development, ensuring the recognition of human rights, promoting legitimate and responsible politics and ensuring equitable partnership between actors.

In order to develop a strong basis for CSO participation, **CPDE works with a strong focus to support country, sub-regional and regional, and sectorial civil society**, combining this with the coordinated regional and global work on development effectiveness.

The Black Sea Region and the Balkans form together the Non-EU sub-region which is represented within CPDE by a sub-regional representative. According to Mr. Vazha Salamadze, Director at Civil Society Institute Georgia and, at that time, CPDE Non-EU Sub-regional Representative, the work of CSOs from the Black Sea and the Balkans needs to be more visible at global level and also CSOs in this region have to be more engaged in the global processes in order to advocate for an enabling environment and to foster development. CPDE provides an excellent framework for this, giving CSO representatives the opportunity of reach out to and engaging with high-level institutions. However, one challenge of the Non-EU sub-region is engaging both the Black Sea Region and the Balkans.

The mandate of Mr. Salamadze will soon expire and the position of Non-EU sub-regional representative⁶ is up for election. The Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND, as focal point for the Black Sea Region and the Balkans, has launched a call for applications among the participants at the Forum for this position and the deadline has been extended until the 10th of November 2015. The results of this process were announced after the Forum, the new sub-regional representative being Ms. Antonîța Fonari, Secretary General at the National Council of NGOs from Moldova / Vice-president of the National Participation Council of Moldova.



⁵ More information about the Sustainable Development Goals is available here: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

⁶ More information on CPDE's working structure is available here: <http://www.csopartnership.org/about/governance-and-management/>

Parallel Thematic Workshops

Black Sea Youth Network Cooperation – Coordinator: National Youth Council Romania

This workshop was held by the **National Youth Council Romania** with the **main purpose to emphasize the importance of the cooperation between various youth organizations** (national youth councils, NGOs), coming from different Black Sea region countries. It was also an opportunity to **continue working on the Black Sea Youth Network Initiative**, to build cooperation bridges and contribute to a future mutual understanding in the Black Sea region. Another aspect of the workshop was the opportunity of cities in the Black Sea region to hold the **European Youth Capital** title. This year, Cluj-Napoca is holding the European Youth Capital title which gave the opportunity to Romania to become an important actor on the international youth stage, improving the international cooperation and influencing the international youth policies. In the following years, 2016 and 2017, two other cities from the Black Sea Region will hold the title: Ganja, Azerbaijan in 2016 and Varna, Bulgaria in 2017, representing another turning point where the Black Sea region collaboration has an important role.

The workshop was **structured** in:



- Presentations of individual activities of National Youth Councils by country;
- Presentation of the activity of the Black Sea Youth Forum (BSYC) in the last 3-4 years;
- Presentations of representatives of the countries that hold or will hold the European Youth Capital: Romania - Cluj2015, Azerbaijan - Ganja2016, Bulgaria – Varna 2017.
- World Café activity - 3 different tables on specific issues: Opportunities of BSYC, Challenges and solutions of

BSYC, Ideas for developing the BSYC.

Speakers:

Ms. Nurdan Terzioglu, Turkey, Youth Organisations Forum (National Youth Council)
Mr. Aleksandar Ivanov, Bulgaria, National Youth Council
Ms. Anna Mkrtchyan, Armenia, National Youth Council of Armenia (NYCA)
Mr. Andriy Kolobov, Ukraine, National Youth Council
Mr. Igor Ciurea, Moldova, National Youth Council
Mr. Aleksandr Bolotnov, Russia, National Youth Council of Russia
Ms. Natia Tsvariana, Georgia, National Council of Youth Organizations of Georgia
Ms. Natalia Ermicioi, Romania, National Youth Council

The **key points** expressed during the workshop were the following:

- Creating working groups in different fields/shared priorities;
- Organizing an online space for exchanging ideas;

- Undertaking research to identify common problems;
- Building advocacy campaigns to solve the identified problems (ex. human rights and youth participation);
- Creating a newsletter about the activities of the Network, better promotion through social media, more inclusive networking activities.

Conclusions and follow-up

Youth organisations in the Black Sea Region will continue the common work to **build the Black Sea Youth Network Initiative into a sustainable structure that will consolidate youth cooperation** in the region on the one hand and on the other hand, will **represent the youth voice of the region and a reliable partner for regional cooperation** collaborating with partners and other actors to **improve the inter-generational dialogue and trust**. In order to achieve their aim, the participants of the workshop continued their discussions also during the „open space” session within the Youth Working Group.

Islands of Integrity and Effectiveness – Introductory Workshop to an Innovative Anti-Corruption Methodology – Coordinator: Partners Foundation for Local Development – FPDL Romania

The Introductory Workshop to an Innovative Anti-Corruption Methodology was conducted by **Ms. Ana Vasilache, Partners Foundation for Local Development (FPDL) Romania**.

The **main objectives** of the workshop were:

- Exchange information between participants about their activities and experiences in addressing corruption in their countries;
- Deepen the understanding about the A-C Methodology developed by FPDL in collaboration with Ronald MacLean Abaroa, former Mayor of La Paz, based on Professor Robert Klitgaard conceptual frames;
- Be informed about previous and recent efforts in building the capacity, of a network of change agents - certified A-C Practitioners, to apply the A-C Methodology;
- Exchange ideas about strengthening Anti-Corruption Practitioners Network functionality and participants' interest to join.

The **structure** of the workshop was:

- Presenting workshop objectives and getting to know each other;
- Exchanging information about participants activities and experiences in addressing corruption
- Islands of Integrity and Effectiveness, an innovative A-C Methodology – concepts and process, previous and recent dissemination and application through a network of “change agents” – certified Anti-Corruption Practitioners;
- Exchange ideas about strengthening Anti-Corruption Practitioners Network functionality and participants' interest to join.

Key points

The Workshop started with a get-acquainted session, followed by participants exchanging information and experience about their main activities in the anti-corruption field.



Ms. Ana Vasilache further introduced the practical and strategic **Anti-Corruption Methodology**, developed in collaboration with Ronald MacLean Abaroa, former Mayor of La Paz, based on Professor Robert Klitgaard conceptual frames.

The A-C Methodology was introduced with the name “islands of integrity and effectiveness”, centered on the idea of “pockets of effectiveness” in the public sector: public organizations, which provide public goods and services relatively effectively in a hostile environment

dominated by poor management and bad governance because. **The methodology supports municipalities address the vulnerability to corruption and reinvent better and fairer local governments through problem identification, engagement with multiple stakeholders, step-by-step experimentation, and political acceptance.**

Further on, Ms. Ana Vasilache presented features of FPDL innovative anticorruption methodology, promoted for more than 10 years and successfully disseminated, adapted and applied, in more than 10 CEE/SEE countries and 25 local governments attracting the interest of many mayors, practitioners and academics. Afterwards she introduced Ms. Aferdita Mekuli, UNDP Regional Hub in Istanbul, FPDL partner in implementing in 2015-2016 the **project – ACT „Anti-Corruption Training that goes beyond training”, financed by the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which aims to build the capacity of “change agents” in three countries, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.**

Conclusions and follow-up

Following the thematic workshop, some of the participants interested in the topic, formed an Anti-Corruption Working Group to follow-up on the discussions during the Open space. They proposed as their main common goal to **strengthen the Anti-Corruption Practitioners Network in the extended Black Sea Region**, with FPDL support and under the Black Sea NGO Forum structure, which can provide them with opportunities for experience and ideas exchange.

Strategic Management of National Coalitions on Child Protection in Our Region– Coordinator:
ChildPact Romania - The Regional Coalition for Child Protection

The workshop on Child Protection in the Black Sea Region, coordinated by **ChildPact – The Regional Coalition for Child Protection**, was organized in the context in which civil society networks are crucial for the regional efforts to improve people’s lives, promote democracy, fight against corruption or protect the environment. But civil society networks / coalitions lack adequate funding and technologies, which leads to gaps in efficiency and internal democracy. The internal democracy deficit needs to be strategically addressed, so that fundraising and advocacy prospects can be improved.

The workshop had **two aims**:

- To discuss governance issues pertaining to national and regional networks in the Wider Black Sea Area;
- To collect input for a Governance Manual that ChildPact plans to create for its members and as inspiration for other networks in the region.

The workshops was structured around the following **issues**:

- Why we need to talk about the governance of civil society networks?
- Governance Structures in the Moldavian Civil Society Networks. Case Study: APSCF Moldova
- The Governance Model of the Bulgarian National Network for Children.



Speakers:

Ms. Mariana Ianachevici – ChildPact President and APSCF Board Member

Mr. George Bogdanov - ChildPact Vice-President and Executive Director of the National Network for Children, Bulgaria

Ms. Mirela Oprea – ChildPact Secretary General and Senior Liaison Manager at World Vision Middle East and Eastern Europe

The Regional Coalition for Child Protection - ChildPact is a success story of the Black Sea NGO Forum which began in 2011, when World Vision has convened a special panel to discuss the situation of child protection systems in the region and strategies for sharing knowledge and expertise at regional level. Participants from 7 different countries agreed that much can be learned together and proposed the creation of a regional network for child protection NGOs. ChildPact was thus created to respond to a common need for better care for children.

Since then, the Black Sea NGO Forum continued to offer annually a space for debating child protection issues. Today, ChildPact has 10 member coalitions from 10 different countries and represents 600 NGOs which work with 500,000 vulnerable children. Witnessing the importance of regional cooperation, ChildPact has called on BSEC to establish a special child protection working group within this institution and advocated for the creation of a regional mechanism for child protection together with a regional child protection fund.

Knowledge for Development – Coordinator: *The Romanian Association for International Cooperation and Development – ARCADIA*

The workshop Knowledge for Development was delivered by **The Romanian Association for International Cooperation and Development – ARCADIA (Romania)** as part of the Black Sea NGO Forum, bringing together organizations and individuals who can launch a knowledge network. **The purpose of this network** is to forge partnerships and joint initiatives and at the same time to give a stronger voice to its members when dealing with regional bodies and global actors.

In order to reach this purpose, the **main goal of the workshop** was to **build a development knowledge network that contributes to a better understanding of the development of the region** through consistent and continuous dialogue.

Therefore, the workshop had the following **objectives**:

- To bring together knowledge-generating organizations and practitioners (scholars, researchers, policy-makers, etc);
- To discuss and agree on a concept of knowledge networks in the Black Sea Area;
- To identify a list of core organizations and people taking up the responsibility of the development of the network;
- To raise awareness about similar initiatives from other areas that could be transferred and adapted To the regional context;
- To identify new financial resources and partners.

The agenda of the workshop included exploring regional cooperation models, presenting two models of knowledge networks and guided discussions in working groups.

Speakers

Ms. Diana Rusu, Secretary General ARCADIA

Mr. Stefan Cibian, President ARCADIA

Prof. Dr. Giga Zedania, President, Black Sea Universities Network / Rector, Ilya State University Tbilisi

Key points

Participants were presented with an initial comparative research of the types of regionalization unfolding at the EU's border, around the 3 seas: Black Sea, Baltic Sea and Mediterranean Sea. The main ideas outlined as good practices of the regionalization process were coordination between regional institutions, local actors that challenged the traditional top-down approach and enforced some bottom-up elements, multilevel governance system & entrepreneurial system of assuming leadership on different topics among the countries in the area, main focus on low politics: economy and business development, social welfare and environment protection, horizontal cooperation between member states along functional lines & territorial approach (goes beyond cross-border cooperation).

The two models of knowledge networks presented were:

- **ARCADIA** - as a brain regain model for the CEE states in the field of international development, built as an independent professional association reuniting Romanian professionals working around the globe working through an online platform for working groups and messages (NING) and a virtual office and developing projects in collaboration with national authorities and regional bodies, partnering with national NGOs.

Website: <http://arcadianetwork.org/>

- **Black Sea Universities Network** – a Knowledge – Based Cooperation Platform with the main goal to support the efforts of BSUN member universities (over 120 universities from 12 member countries of the Economic Cooperation from the Black Sea Region - BSEC) in the process of reform of higher Education and integration in the European Higher Education Area and exchange of best practices in the field of qualifications' framework.

Website: <http://www.bsun.org>

In the end, the participants discussed in working groups following 3 questions: 1) *How relevant is knowledge for the Black Sea region and why?* 2) *What kind of networks do we need in the region in order to deploy and use the knowledge?* 3) *What kind of experiences we have to offer ourselves or for the organization so that a network of knowledge can be built?*

Conclusions and follow-up

Knowledge sharing and transfer is very much relevant for the Black Sea Region and it should become a cross-cutting priority. Moreover, the decline of civic space is an opportunity for civil society organizations to use all available resources in a consolidated and coordinated manner. All participants acknowledged the need for a specialized open network focused on knowledge sharing and knowledge products.

As a follow-up of the workshop, participants reunited during the „open space” session in a working group on Knowledge Development, theme which was voted as one of the top 5 thematic priority areas for civil society regional cooperation.



DAY II – 3RD OF NOVEMBER 2015

Plenary session III: The role of donors in supporting civil society at the Black Sea

Description

This session aimed to present various funding instruments that could be accessed in order to develop projects/ initiatives to support civil society development and also horizontal thematic cooperation in the Black Sea region.

Moderator: Ms. Anamaria Molcuțescu, Black Sea and OSCE Policy Officer, Eastern Partnership, Regional Cooperation and OSCE Division, European External Action Service

Mr. Edward Iosiper, Director, Analysis and Policy Planning Directorate, Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Svetoslav Stoyanov, Policy Officer, Maritime Policy Mediterranean and Black Sea, Directorate-General Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, European Commission

Ms. Andreea Gavrilă, Public Manager, Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme, Directorate - MA European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration

Ms. Bianca Baumler, Outreach and Knowledge Management Officer, European Endowment for Democracy

Mr. Martins Murnieks, Program Officer, Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation

Key points

During this session, the role of civil society in a democratic society, the importance of civil society development, as well as the means to support civil society were discussed by the following donors:

The Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

As official development assistance donor, Romania views the Black Sea region as a strategic priority, given the geopolitical importance of this region, as well as the common political background with the majority of the countries here.

In this context, Romania's own experience with democratisation could be useful to other countries going through a similar process, from the perspective of sharing good practices, as well as lessons learnt on what approaches are not the most appropriate or effective.

- ❖ *The Black Sea region is of strategic importance for the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*
- ❖ *Having passed through a democratic transition, Romania is ready to share both its good practices and its lessons learnt.*

This is also true with regard to civil society development, which is particularly important given its crucial role in holding governments accountable, promoting political dialogue and contributing to the overall goal of ensuring stability of the region.

From this point of view, support should be given to create synergies that would help the Black Sea region become more cohesive. In this sense, there is the need to promote coherent public policies, combat corruption, support education, encourage the exchange of good practices, create training programs for public authorities etc.

The European Commission

The European Commission supports civil society in the Black Sea region through numerous financial instruments, such as:

- Cross-border cooperation or transnational / interregional programmes (notably: CBC Black Sea, RO-MD, MD-UA, RO-UA, RO-BG, BG-TR, EL-BG, AR-GE, Danube Transnational Programme);
- East Regional Programmes (EaP SMEs development support, EaP Youth Window, EaP Culture programme, EaPIC, Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility);
- Other programmes – COSME, Horizon 2020, Erasmus +.

The European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF)

The Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) implements the Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) in order to generate “blue growth”, a concept aiming to harness the potential of Europe’s oceans, seas and coasts for job creation, economic growth and sustainability. The IMP has identified 5 sectors with high potential for sustainable growth – renewable energy, biotechnology, coastal & maritime tourism, aquaculture and maritime resources.

In this context, the role of civil society has become more and more important by: providing input to related policies, support & monitor the implementation of these policies, craft partnerships at local level (e.g. community-led local action groups – FLAGs) and drive social change.

To this end, the European Commission has set up the European Maritime Fisheries Fund (2014-2020), through which it aims to promote sustainable fishing, support coastal communities diversify their economies, finance projects to create new jobs in the blue economy sector, improve maritime cooperation etc.

Part of the EMFF, a call for proposal⁷ was launched to support actions in the context of the integrated maritime policy related to:

- Piloting public-private partnerships amongst Black Sea and/or Mediterranean stakeholders; and
- Promoting the networking between maritime clusters in the Black Sea and/or the Mediterranean on concrete initiatives/topics related to the overall goal of the call.

The call was opened to stakeholders from the EU Member States and partner countries bordering both sea basins, as well as private actors (for profit and non-profit) active in the targeted sea basin.

Why apply?

- ❖ *Focus on sustainable development, environmental protection in the maritime region;*
- ❖ *Encourages public-private partnerships (PPPs).*

⁷ <http://www.blackseango.org/call-for-proposals-for-integrated-maritime-policy-related-actions-in-the-mediterranean-and-the-black-sea-deadline-26-november-2015/>

The Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme

The Black Sea Basin Programme is part of European Union's Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) under its European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI).

So far, one previous cooperation framework was implemented – the Black Sea Basin ENPI CBC programme 2007-2013, under which 62 projects⁸ were financed from 8 countries surrounding the Black Sea Basin.

The new Black Sea Basin ENI CBC Programme, designed for the period 2014-2020 aims to improve the welfare of the people in the Black Sea Basin regions through sustainable development growth and joint environmental protection. The programmes' specific objectives refer to:

Why apply?

- ❖ *Supports cross-border cooperation in the field of business, entrepreneurship and environmental protection;*
- ❖ *Involves EU & non-EU countries from the Black Sea Region.*

- Promoting business and entrepreneurship within the Black Sea Basin, especially in the following fields – tourism, culture and agriculture;
- Promoting coordination of environmental protection and joint reduction of marine litter in the Black Sea Basin, through joint environmental monitoring and awareness raising.

Apart from these priorities, the new programme will also support horizontal issues referring to: 'people-to-people-actions, promoting local/regional good governance,

regional integration/ coordination, gender equality and youth opportunities.

Two calls for proposals will be launched within the programme, one in 2016 and the other in 2018 and the specific information will be made available on the Black Sea Basin Cross-Border Cooperation Programme's website⁹.

European Endowment for Democracy (EED)

EED is a donor organisation that fosters and encourages democratisation and sustainable democracy in countries undergoing a transition process or struggling for democracy. The geographical priority areas are: Eastern Partnership and Russia; and Northern Africa and the Middle East.

As opposed to other donors active in the region, EDD:

- Supports grassroots organisations, individuals, as well as non-registered groups;
- Offers emergency, core-funding and bridge funding – between two other funded project periods;
- Has a flexible and simple application procedure – awarding grants is demand driven and applications are received in an ongoing manner.

Why apply?

- ❖ *Supports grassroots organisations, individuals and informal groups;*
- ❖ *Offers emergency and core funding;*
- ❖ *Flexibility – ongoing application process.*

In 2015, EED has supported 124 initiatives in the priority area Eastern Partnership and Russia as follows: Armenia (16), Azerbaijan (25), Belarus (19), Georgia (5), Moldova (16), Ukraine (38) and Russia (5). The

⁸ A list with all financed projects is available here: <http://blacksea-cbc.net/projects/our-projects/>

⁹ <http://blacksea-cbc.net/black-sea-basin-2014-2020/>

initiatives were dedicated to: protecting/creating space for freedom of expression; building the capacity of political actors and movements; increasing civic participation; supporting pro-democracy groups & activists in hostile environments; offering emergency support in times of crisis¹⁰.

It is worth mentioning that EED gives priority to initiatives that cannot be supported by other donors or financial instruments¹¹.

Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation (BST)

Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation (BST) is a private donor organisation that promotes regional cooperation and good governance in the Wider Black Sea region, comprising the following countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine.

BST aims to strengthen civil society, promote peace and security, bridge divided communities, promote dialog in the society and promote cooperation within the Black Sea region and beyond. To this end, BST has 4 programmatic areas:

- Civic participation;
- Cross-border initiatives;
- Eastern links;
- Confidence building.

Each programmatic area includes different countries (for example, Romania, Bulgaria and Moldova are not eligible for the programme Civic Participation) and applicants should also take into consideration the in-country priorities for BST. Moreover, BST encourages partnerships and innovative project ideas. The application process is flexible and the communication languages are English and Russian¹².

Another form of support offered by the Black Sea Trust is the Marshal Memorial Fellowship (MMF), leadership development program comprising 6 months of distance learning and 24 days of first-hand experience to facilitate knowledge, networking and best practice exchange. The fellowship is open to EU, Black Sea Region, Balkans young leaders¹³.

Why apply?

- ❖ *Is dedicated specifically to regional cooperation;*
- ❖ *Supports partnerships and innovative project ideas*
- ❖ *Flexibility.*



¹⁰ More information on the projects supported by EED is available at: <https://www.democracyendowment.eu/we-support/>.

¹¹ More information on the application procedure is available at: <https://www.democracyendowment.eu/support/>.

¹² For more information on BST grant-making, please visit: <http://www.gmfus.org/bst-grantmaking>.

¹³ More information about the MMF, as well as MMF alumni can be found at: <http://www.gmfus.org/transatlantic-leadership-initiatives/marshall-memorial-fellowship>

Open space: Parallel Thematic Working Groups

The Parallel Thematic Working Groups were organized with the main purpose to **identify and prioritize the most important cooperation areas for civil society in the Black Sea region**, based upon the participants' valuable input and expertise. The general aim was **to finalize the strategic framework with thematic and cross-cutting cooperation areas for civil society at the Black Sea** (a process started during the previous edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum, 8th – 10th of December 2014, Kyiv) that will **consolidate regional cooperation and provide focus and sustainability to regional initiatives** on one hand and on the other to **transform civil society from a beneficiary into a partner in development at political level**.

The consultation process on the main thematic cooperation areas for civil society was facilitated by **Mr. Ken Phillips**, international consultant and partner at Organization Futures, based upon the following **guiding points**:

- Identifying **key challenges** in the identified thematic cooperation areas;
- Proposing **concrete regional initiatives/ projects/ programmes** in the identified cooperation areas that can help address the key challenges mentioned;
- Identifying **ways through which the Black Sea NGO Forum can support regional cooperation** in the identified thematic cooperation areas.



The Consultation Process

The consultation process was prepared by conducting beforehand **A PREPARATORY ONLINE SURVEY FOR THE OPEN SESSION**. As a support for filling in the survey and also preparing for the open session, a document „Starting point for a Strategic Framework for the Black Sea NGO Forum” was send in advance to all participants.

Both the online survey and the document were built upon participants responses in the application form for the Black Se NGO Forum regarding what should be the main thematic and cross-cutting cooperation areas for civil society in the Black Sea region and what role should the Black Sea NGO Forum have to support regional thematic cooperation for civil society.

The online survey¹⁴ had 6 sections:

1. What are the greatest barriers to achieving regional cooperating among CSOs?	4. What do you want to see from the Black Sea NGO Forum?
2. What initiatives can you commit to support?	5. Guidance. Please give us an example of succes in one of the areas indicated in question 4 above
3. How do you intend to do so?	6. Contact details

¹⁴ <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2GLSWP8>

Main findings¹⁵

1. **Barriers** to achieving regional cooperation among CSOs: **donor support, tradition of civil society and collective program results.**
2. **Top initiatives respondents are willing to support:** Networking and collaboration among CSOs in the region; Education and awareness raising; CSOs capacity building and sharing of best practices and knowledge; Community mobilization and civic engagement in decision making; Developing regional joint/ multi-stakeholders projects/initiatives and Youth participation
3. **The role of the Black Sea NGO Forum:**
 - **The role of an open platform** for discussions, brainstorming, sharing know-how, experience, good practices and facilitated cooperation;
 - **Networking:** more emphasis on cross-border and thematic-focused networking among and between CSOs in the region; facilitate dialogue between CSOs and government, donors other stake-holders;
 - **Coordination role:** facilitate the cooperation process and support the creation of regional thematic working groups, coalitions, partnerships;
 - **Capacity building support,** especially for small organizations, to be actively engaged in advocacy efforts and policy making at national and regional level;
 - **Hub of resources:** collect and share the best approaches and experiences in the region; search and share information regarding financial opportunities in the region; lead research activities; provide consultancy and training;
 - **The role of a monitoring body:** ensure a better implementation of the Istanbul Principles as well as for achieving the needed goals toward the development effectiveness or encourage the creation of “watch dog” regional centers, instruments or tools;
 - **Promote best practices, projects, raise awareness** on the pressing problems in the region and **offer visibility** for CSOs in the region.

Step 1

After presenting the overview of the responses from the online survey, participants got the chance to **propose topics for the Working Groups (WGs)**, in which people could join, and offer to lead.

Proposed cooperation areas for civil society in the region:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Anti-Corruption | • Media & Communication |
| • Citizen Engagement | • Networking |
| • Education & Culture | • Sustainable Development |
| • Human rights | • Youth |
| • Knowledge Development | • YouthBank |

¹⁵ In Annex I you can find graphic summaries of the responses from both the online survey and application form.

Step 2

The following **group work session** focused on establishing priorities for each group and on drafting an **action plan**. Each WG had a list of **guiding points** to follow:

- Theme and goal of the WG
- Key action steps and the leadership team
- Barriers / Opportunities
- Funding potentials, follow-up, proposals
- How the Forum could help and support needed (stepes)

Upon completing their work, each WG presented its plan (Power Point Presentations or Flip Charts).

Step 3

In the end of the session, **participants voted each proposed topic to endorse it as a priority** (or not) and finally to **endorse the strategic framework**.

A list for participants to sign for the WGs they want to join post-Forum was also opened. You can consult this list [HERE](#). Should you wish to join a certain working group, please let us know by sending an email at forum@blackseango.org.

Top 5 priority cooperation areas for CSOs	TOPIC	LEADER	VOTES
	1. Knowledge Network	Richard Girogosian, Armenia, Regional Studies Center	33
	2. Anti-Corruption	Sergey Gerasymchuk, Ukraine, Ukrainian Association of Management Consultants	20
	3. Citizen Participation & Volunteering	Mykhailo Zhernakov, Ukraine, Ukrainian Legal Foundation, Reanimation Package of Reforms	20
	4. Youth	Natalia Ermicioi, Romania, International Relations Department, European Youth Capital 2015	18
	5. Education and Culture	Hovsep Khurshudyan, Armenia, "Free Citizen" Civic Initiatives' Support Center NGO	18

Emerging priority
cooperation areas
for CSOs

TOPIC	LEADER	VOTES
6. Sustainable Development	Natalia Budescu, Romania, The Romanian NGDO Platform-FOND / The Association for Cross-Border Cooperation “Lower Danube Euroregion”	17
7. YouthBank	Stefan Cibian, Romania, The Romanian NGDO Platform-FOND / The Romanian Association for International Development and Cooperation-ARCADIA	16
8. Human rights & freedoms	Nazim Tural, Turkey, Society & Legal Studies Foundation	15
9. Networking	Antonita Fonari, Republic of Moldova, National Council of NGOs of Moldova/ National Council of Participation National Council of NGOs from Moldova	14
10. Media & Communication	Arsen Kharatyan, Armenia , Eurasia Partnership Foundation	8

CONCLUSIONS

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

Taking into consideration our participants’ recommendations, the following activities are envisioned for the next period:

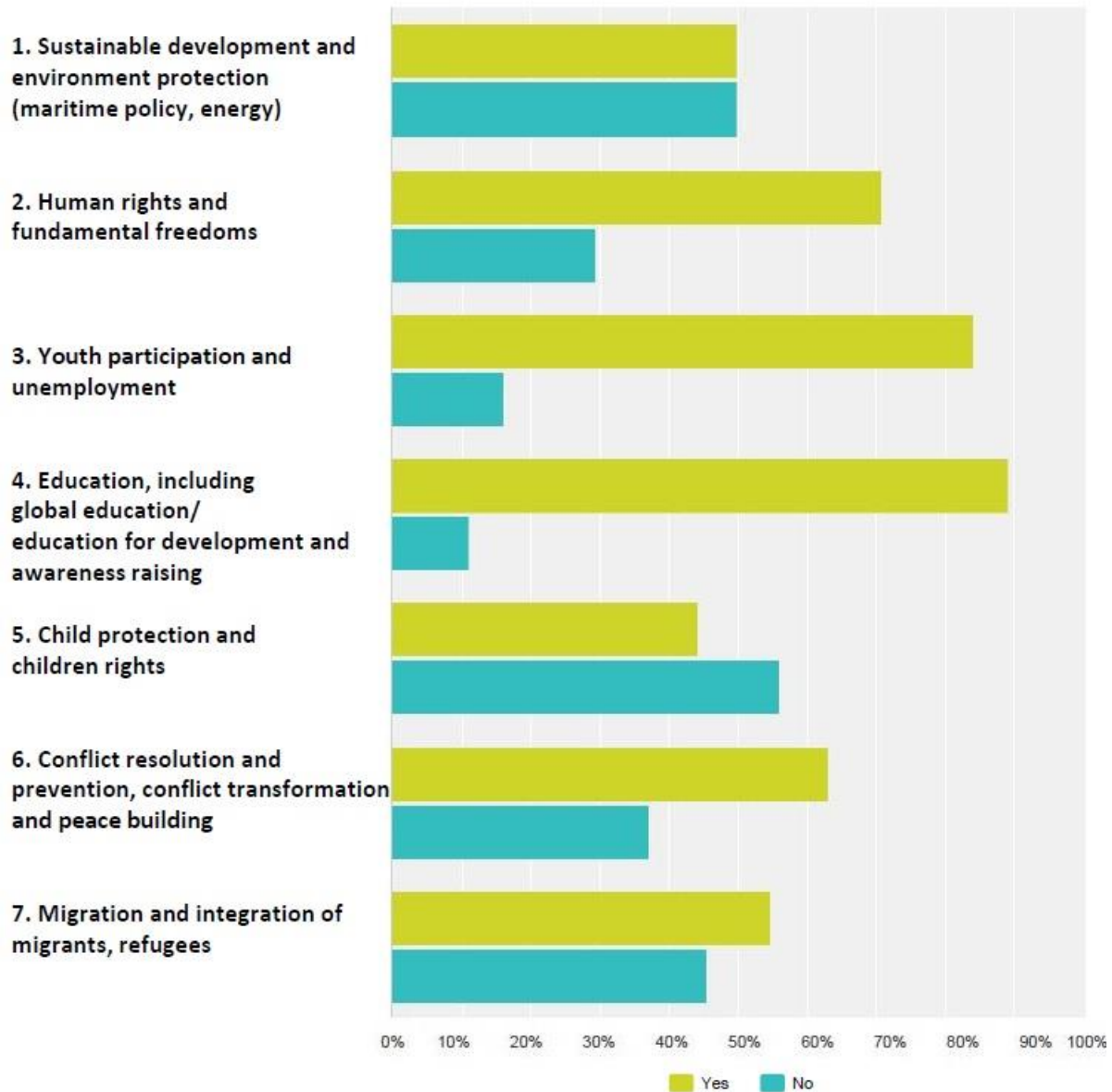
- ❖ **Finalizing the Strategic Framework for Civil Society Cooperation in the Black Sea Region.** Following the participants request the document “A starting point for a strategic framework with thematic and cross-cutting cooperation areas for civil society at the Black Sea” will be updated with the results of the discussions and vote organised at the 8th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum. Moreover, in order to make sure that all of the participants’ valuable input is included in the Draft Strategic Framework, this document will be sent for feedback to all participants after the Forum;
- ❖ **Facilitating and supporting the activity of the Working Groups (WGs),** with the purpose of encouraging the creation of regional thematic networks.
- ❖ **Continuing to monitor the state of enabling environment for CSOs in the region,** carrying out research on the specific enabling environment dimensions (legal framework, policy influencing, donor – CSOs relationship) with a focus on exchanging best practices, and organising a thematic regional meeting in order to facilitate the exchange of best practices between CSOs on enabling environment issues.

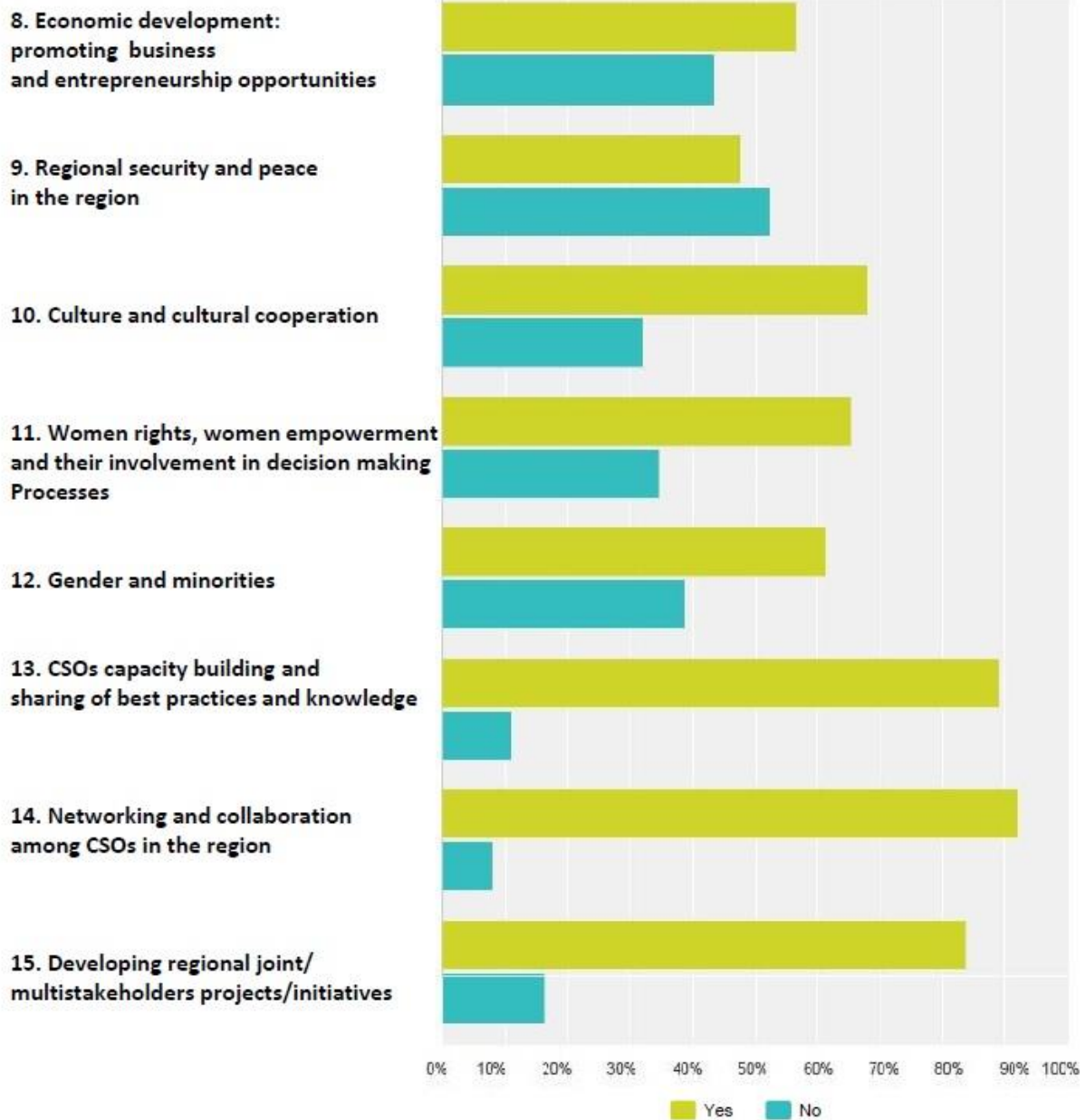
Annex 1. Selected results of the Preparatory Online Survey for the Open Session

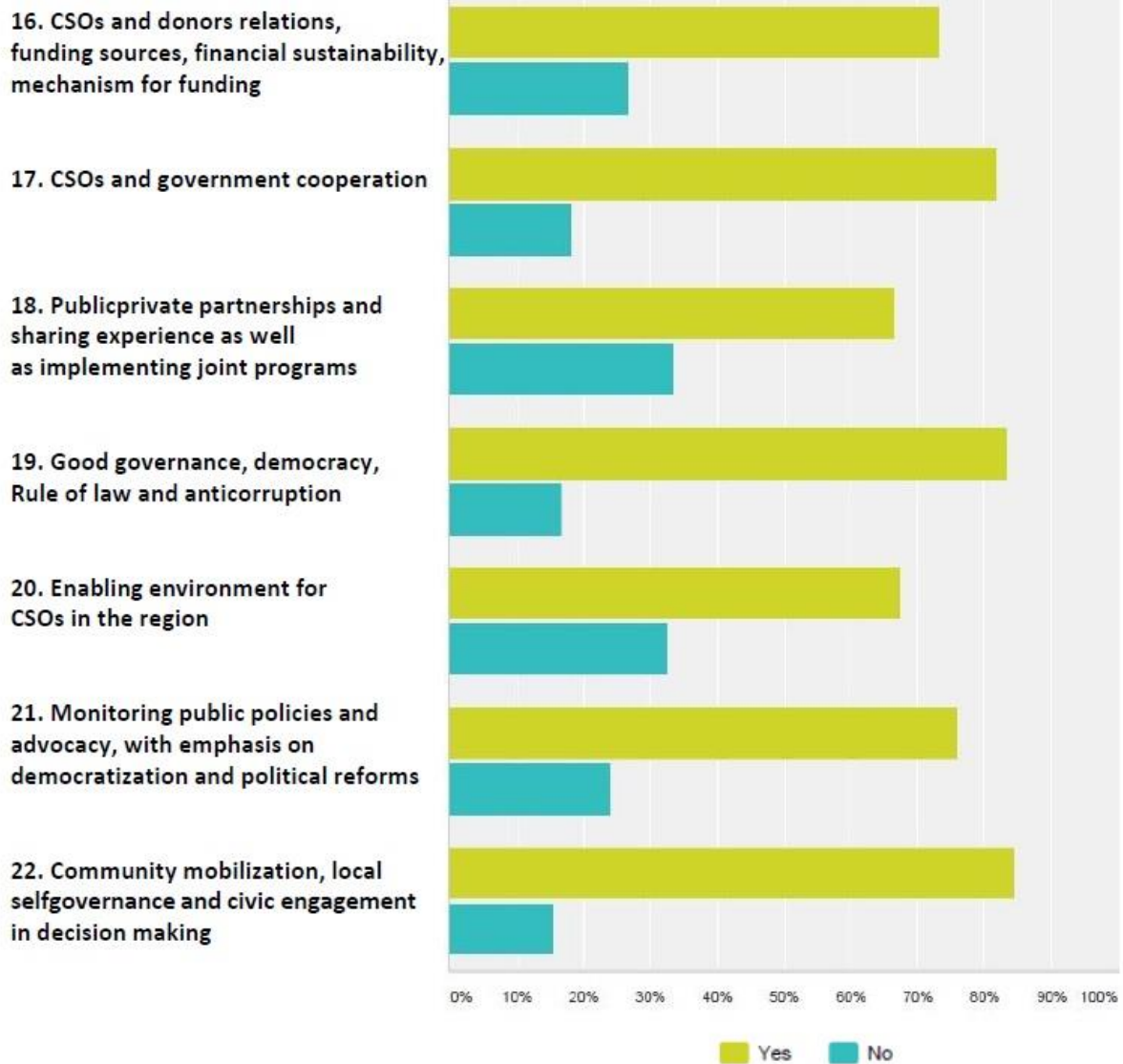
WHAT ARE THE GREATEST BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING REGIONAL COOPERATION AMONG CSOs

	Most serious	Serious	Moderate	Minimal	Total
Government Support	20.00% 13	36.92% 24	30.77% 20	12.31% 8	65
Donor Support	33.85% 22	38.46% 25	24.62% 16	3.08% 2	65
Public Trust	14.06% 9	32.81% 21	35.94% 23	17.19% 11	64
Tradition of Civil Society	19.05% 12	38.10% 24	31.75% 20	11.11% 7	63
Our Collective Program Results	7.94% 5	20.63% 13	52.38% 33	19.05% 12	63
Our Ability and Commitment to Work Together	20.31% 13	28.13% 18	39.06% 25	12.50% 8	64
Support from our Board	8.33% 5	15.00% 9	45.00% 27	31.67% 19	60
Other (please specify)	25.00% 4	6.25% 1	6.25% 1	62.50% 10	16

WHAT INITIATIVES DO YOU COMMIT TO SUPPORT?

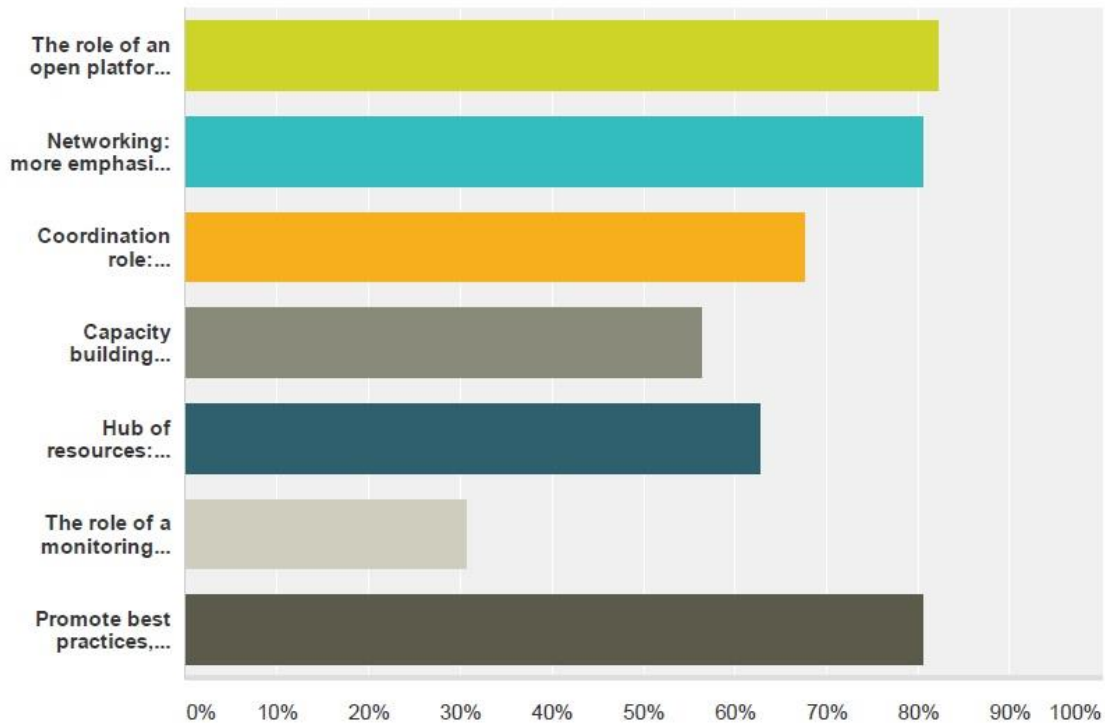






Networking and collaboration among CSOs in the region 92%	Human rights and fundamental freedoms 71%
Education and awareness raising 89%	Culture and cultural cooperation 68%
CSOs capacity building and sharing of best practices and knowledge 89%	Enabling environment for CSOs in the region 67%
Community mobilization and civic engagement in decision making 85%	Public-private partnerships and sharing experience 67%
Developing regional joint/ multi-stakeholders projects/initiatives 84%	Women rights, women empowerment 65%
Youth participation 84%	Conflict resolution and prevention, conflict transformation and peace building 62%
Good governance, democracy, rule of law and anti-corruption 83%	Economic development 56%
CSOs and government cooperation 82%	Migration and integration, refugees 55%
Monitoring public policies and advocacy, with emphasis on democratization and political reforms 76%	Sustainable development and environment protection 50%
CSOs and donors relations, funding sources, financial sustainability, mechanism for funding 73%	Child Protection 44%

What do you want to see from the Black Sea NGO Forum?



Answer Choices	Responses
▼ The role of an open platform for discussions, brainstorming, sharing know-how, experience, good practices and facilitated cooperation	82.26%
▼ Networking: more emphasis on cross-border and thematic-focused networking among and between CSOs in the region; facilitate dialogue between CSOs and government, donors other stake-holders	80.65%
▼ Coordination role: facilitate the cooperation process and support the creation of regional thematic working groups, coalitions, partnerships	67.74%
▼ Capacity building support, especially for small organizations, to be actively engaged in advocacy efforts and policy making at national and regional level	56.45%
▼ Hub of resources: collect and share the best approaches and experiences in the region; search and share information regarding financial opportunities in the region; lead research activities; provide consultancy and trainings	62.90%
▼ The role of a monitoring body: ensure a better implementation of the Istanbul Principles as well as for achieving the needed goals toward the development effectiveness or encourage the creation of "watch dog" regional centers, instruments or tools	30.65%
▼ Promote best practices, projects, raise awareness on the pressing problems in the region and offer visibility for CSOs in the region	80.65%