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Black Sea Synergy: Approaches for a deeper cooperation



The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Ukraine organized the international conference "Black Sea Synergy" on October 21-23 in cooperation with the Polish-Ukrainian Cooperation Foundation (PAUCI), the Odessa City Council and the Center for US-Ukrainian Relations (CUSUR). On a ferry boat, going from Odessa (Ukraine) to Istanbul (Turkey), 100 conference guests from Ukraine and eight other countries discussed about the new Black Sea Synergy Concept of the European Commission (launched in April 2007) and tried to take a stock of the previous and possible future measures of cooperation of the Black Sea states. The event was supported by the International Renaissance Foundation, the German Robert Bosch Stiftung and the Delegation of the European Commission to Ukraine.

One of the primary aims of this event was to bring together experts and key decision-makers from the Black Sea countries as well as from the European Union, in order to discuss possible future joint projects promoting Black Sea cooperation.

The conference explored the opportunities and challenges of cooperation in the Black Sea following the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the European Union and ways of supporting Turkey's drive for EU accession. For the first time a group of experts accompanied by representatives of NGOs and local politicians from Ukraine made such a journey in search of synergies bringing Ukraine into the wider regional framework.

Trying to resume the outcomes of the conference there should be pointed out: The

participants agreed that the Black Sea region plays a more and more important role in European and world policy. But many "frozen conflicts" slow down the development of the region. These conflicts should be resolved by negotiations, including all local as well as external actors.

A great field of interest is – especially for the European Union – the energy sector. But not only: Economically the Black Sea region is substantially increasing its weight. The Black Sea Area with its 330 million people is already now a very big, constantly growing market. Furthermore issues like border conflicts, migration and environmental problems are very urgent and can only be tackled, if the Black Sea boarding countries have a common approach.



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The majority of the participants demanded more activity of the European Union in the wider Black Sea area. A clear message to the European Union was formulated by James Sherr: The EU should answer the question, if it wishes to be seen in the Black Sea region in principle as a magnet or as a barrier. To some extent the EU must be a barrier – to illegal migration, to human trafficking, to organized crime in all its aspects. But unless the EU is plainly a magnet, it will not provide the inducements that will enable the Black Sea countries to strive for democratic standards and the rule of law.

There will be external pressures in the Black Sea region in future or even external shocks. The challenge for all actors is to ensure that, when they arise, the ties of cooperation and interest are strong enough to absorb them.

Fabrizio Tassinari expressed the idea (supported especially by Andriy Veselovskyy, Ukrainian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs) that the Black Sea countries could develop and move in different speed. One should not bind necessarily Black Sea Synergy and the countries of the region into one pack. If some countries are more qualified or active in some areas, they should not be forced to wait for the others, but they should be seen as "light houses" for the whole region.

Finally it was stated that there is already a lot of intellectual effort and potential in Black Sea cooperation. The performance, presentation and coordination of the Black Sea countries, their think tanks and civil societies have to be improved – then Black Sea Synergy would have not just a future, but a measurable, concrete impact in developing regional cooperation in the Black Sea Area. Especially it was underlined, that it is very important to include Russia into the dialogue, as Russia is one of the big players in the Black Sea region. But also external actors like the USA, NATO and UN should be invited to the discussions.

Résumé: André Drewelowsky

*Compilation of the speakers' statements:
André Drewelowsky, Maik Matthes, Yuliya
Shelkovnikova*

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Ian Boag,
*Head of Delegation
of the European
Commission to
Ukraine:*



Ruprecht Polenz,
*Chairman of the
German
Bundestag's
Committee on
Foreign Affairs:*

"It was a very creative idea to organize this conference so soon after the commission produced its papers. The word 'synergy' is a rather curious one. What we are proposing in a 'synergy' – as the word implies – is to build on what already exists, trying to bring this in a coherent whole. Now the European Union by its nature supports regional groupings around the world. Any groups of countries that show a desire to get together and work together sooner or later get the support of the European Union. A previous president of the European Commission said that regional groups are the best way dealing with globalization."



**Andriy
Veselovskyy,**
*Deputy Minister of
Foreign Affairs of
Ukraine:*

"The potential of conflicts or misunderstandings is high in the region. One of the reasons is the fact of 'frozen conflicts'. The Black Sea is the point where the three mightiest empires once existed – Ottoman Empire, Austrian-Hungarian Empire and Russian Empire. Those empires are gone since 70 or 80 years, but the wounds cannot be healed quickly.

What do we citizens of Ukraine see in this conference and in this Black Sea Synergy Initiative? First of all the opportunity to present the Ukrainian interests to high level international experts and to show, that Ukraine is not only geographically situated in Europe, but that it also wants to be politically and economically integrated in Europe – as a full EU member. EU membership will give us new standards in all spheres of our life."

"The Black Sea is a key region for Europe in regard of energy supplies. Furthermore it is of strategic importance as a crossroad from East to West and North to South and possibly conflicts in the region could have impact on member states of the European Union. So the goals must be security and stability in the region. The EU-policy towards the Black Sea region is about developing economy, democracy, the rule of law and civil society. Moreover goals are to tackle the issue of organized crime and environmental issues. All parties have to act together, so that the impact is bigger, which means a common policy towards the region is necessary.

Border security and drug traffic are common interest with Russia, but on the issue of energy supply there are some interests which are not easy to bring to accordance, because Europe has a strong interest in diversifying its energy supply and Russia has a natural interest to be the only supplier of the European Union just for economical reasons and maybe for political ones. So here it is necessary to discuss and to decide. And there can't be a Russian veto if countries in this area decide to participate in pipeline-projects to provide access for European member states to oil and gas from Central Asia and maybe in the future from Iran.

The European Union tries to enhance the rule of law and human rights, as well as good governance all over the world and also in the Black Sea region. But at the moment the Russian development with regard to those issues is not very encouraging."

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Janos Herman,
*European
Commission, DG
External Relations
(RELEX), Principal
Adviser DGA2:*



**Volodymyr
Dubovsky,**
*Center for Interna-
tional Studies,
National Mechnikov
University, Odessa:*

"The Black Sea is one of the European internal seas with its own personality and history. The region is strategically significant through its importance on the field of transit. But we see a lack of coordination between the Black Sea countries. The most important obstacles are the frozen conflicts in the region.

There are three basic characteristics of the Black Sea Initiative of the European Commission: first of all the emphasis on practical, concrete cooperation projects at the regional level, secondly the cooperation between EU projects and projects developed by other players in the region, and thirdly the launch of a political and think tank level in the dialogue about regional priorities."



**Oleksandr
Prokopenko,**
*Odessa City Council,
Executive Secretary:*

"The Black Sea region plays a more and more important role in European and world policy. At last, all without exception, Black Sea countries have become members of the Council of Europe. It will not be an exaggeration to say that in the last 10-15 years the Black Sea region became not only the territory which is situated under the border of European space, but its sphere of interests. Today or tomorrow the Black Sea will be an internal sea of United Europe."

"Black Sea region's countries have already exerted efforts to solve a lot of problems which are crucial for all of them. But evidently these efforts of only Black Sea countries are deficiently to make real steps for solving all of the problems. That's why this region needs external players such as USA, NATO and of course EU."



James Sherr,
*Conflict Studies
Research Centre,
Defence Academy of
the United Kingdom:*

"Black Sea Synergy is a path breaking initiative on the part of EU. However like all of the most serious initiatives of the EU it is starting modestly. The question is: Is it going to end modestly or is it going to have a major impact? It will end modestly, but constructively, if we define synergy as simply a synergy between programs and networks that already exist in the region. That type of synergy can in time produce serious and visible changes here. But let's not forget the risk. The risk is, that such a synergy could in a short time mainly benefit the class of people, that are involved already in programs and networks, and not societies and ordinary people and the destiny of countries. The synergy will have a major impact, if that what we seek is a synergy between external imposes and internal changes, and particularly in those countries that must overcome the soviet legacy in order to realize the objectives and aspirations."

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Nico Lange,
*Head of the Ukrainian
Programme of the
Konrad-Adenauer-
Stiftung:*

"As far as I am informed, this is the first time when basically all of the key experts in the field of the Black Sea Cooperation and very important politicians from the region and from Ukraine as well as from Black Sea neighbours are together on a conference on this level to talk about the concept of the Black Sea Synergy as it was thought by the European Commission in April of this year."



Jan Piekło,
*Director of the
Polish-Ukrainian
Cooperation
Foundation (PAUCI):*

"The situation right now is different than it was in 2006, because now we have two new member countries of the European Union, I mean Bulgaria and Romania. That means that the border of EU is now a part of the Black Sea coast. This is a completely new situation, and we have to deal with it."



Fabrizio Tassinari,
*Assistant Professor of
Political Science at
Copenhagen University,
Associate Re-
search Fellow at the
Centre for European
Policy Studies (CEPS)
in Brussels:*

"My impression is that the EU policies concerning the accession of Turkey (EU enlargement), the neighbourhood policy and the strategic partnership with Russia face one and the same problem, connected with the meaning of the word 'conditionality', which is one of the passwords the EU likes and frequently uses. I mean the incentives that are attached to specific reforms in each of the countries concerned. I think that in

these three policies the EU is slowly and perhaps unwillingly losing the core meaning of 'conditionality'. Let's take the Turkish example: The problem is that the enlargement process is open-ended. The negotiating framework between Turkey and the EU is constructed in a way that we may not know how this will turn out in the end. This weakens the very strong message that the membership perspective is meant to send."



Rainer Lindner,
*Stiftung Wissenschaft
und Politik, Berlin:*

"What does Black Sea cooperation mean for Ukraine? I think first of all it means: energy and energy security. The Black Sea region becomes more and more important for Ukraine as well as for all transit countries. The second is: neighbourhood policy issues. The EU Black Sea Strategy shows that Ukraine now becomes more than only a neighbourhood country for the European Union. And the third is: relationship with Russia."



Traian Hristea,
*Ambassador of
Romania to Ukraine:*

"I hope for mutual support and cooperation of the Black Sea states in increasing efficiency of the existing formats and better capitalizing the complementarity of the regional structure, each component being judged based on its added value: implementing the follow-up projects within the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership; closer consultation among the BSEC member states; closer consultation and cooperation on the establishment of the BS Euro-Region. Further we should promote the development of an EU Black Sea Dimension. I am looking forward to the launch of the Synergy in 2008 in Ukraine."

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**Maria
Wągrowska,**
*Center for International Relations,
Warsaw:*



Valeriy Korol,
*Ukrainian Chamber of
Commerce and
Industry:*

"I am not jealous, but I say that we in Central Europe follow the new political and economic role of the Black Sea region. We see a huge interest in the dynamic development and cooperation. And it is really amazing that the region shows a new political and economic variety which will become a new potential in future."



Panayotis Gavras,
*Black Sea Trade & Development Bank,
Policy and Strategy
Department, Greece:*



André Mernier,
*Secretary General of
the Energy Charter
Secretariat, Brussels:*

"Trade among Black Sea Countries has grown slightly over 350% in value – likely inflated in dollar terms by factors such as increased energy prices and the decline in the value of the US dollar. As a share of GDP, and partly due to the overall economic growth, the increase has been more modest, as intra-Black Sea Region trade has risen from 6% of GDP to approximately 8.2% of GDP. Similarly, intra-Black Sea Region trade as a share of total trade turnover has increased moderately from 13 to 16%. Thus, while there is a trend of growing trade among Black Sea countries, it is gradual and more or less steady. It is evident from the economic data that the Black Sea region is substantially increasing its weight."

"Today the capabilities of small and medium enterprises in Ukraine are not used even on 20%. More than 300 million people live in the Black Sea region, so if we pay attention to this fact, it is obvious that there is a big potential of industrial power and a big part of the world market."



**Olexandr
Shevchenko,**
*Ukrtransnafta JSC,
Deputy Head of the
International Department:*

"Odessa-Brody project is potentially important to Russia because it provides new perspectives. It is also interesting for Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan because it opens new opportunities to penetrate EU market, and it is important for Turkey because it increases the relevance of Bosphorus transit."

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Yaşar Yakış,
Former Turkish Foreign Minister, Chairman of the European Union Harmonization Commission of the Turkish Parliament:



Eden Mamut, *Black Sea Universities Network – Center for Advanced Engineering Sciences, Romania:*

"If we draw a North/South line in the Eastern Black Sea, 70% of the world energy sources lie east of this line and the major consumer countries west of this line. In 2006 the European Union received from the Russian Federation 400 million metric tons of oil equivalent of hydrocarbon or almost 1/3 of the consumption of EU-25. Current trends indicate that the EU will import 70% of its energy in 2030, compared to 50% now.

The Black Sea basin is a region full of opportunities but full of challenges as well. The frozen conflicts constitute an obstacle for the full utilisation of these opportunities. The littoral countries are the first to benefit from these potentials.

After Bulgaria's and Romania's accession to NATO and EU, the Black Sea has become an area of direct interest for the West. However, any action that does not take into consideration regional balances and sensitivities is likely to fail."



Mihail Ionescu,
*Partnership for Peace
Greater Black Sea
Regional Working
Group, Institute for
Political Studies in Defense and Military
History, Bucharest:*

"The security environment in the Greater Black Sea region is complex, multileveled and heterogeneous. Neither Moldova nor Georgia or Azerbaijan managed to resolve their 'frozen conflicts' until now (the only exception being Adjaria). There are two explanations for the frozen conflicts: either they are real ethno-religious (identity) conflicts within a state, with a transnational dimension and a foreign support, or they are artificially created disputes by a foreign state. The best way to solve these conflicts is: negotiating. There should be a multilateral involvement of local and external actors."

"Usually when we talk about energy security we talk about the Black Sea region only as transit region for energy. In reality we do not emphasize enough, that the Black Sea region is a region with about 330 million people and they are consuming energy. So the energy subject for the Black Sea region is not only the transport aspect, which is a very important aspect, which has many connections and ties from politics to strategic and other aspects. But the energy subject is also a problem of development of sustainable energy for the Black Sea region. A concept should integrate existing resources and the future resources for a sustainable energy supply and consumption in the Black Sea region."



Ramaz Kvavadze,
*Executive Director of
the Georgian
Research and
Educational Net-
working Association
GRENA:*

"The European Commission puts a lot of effort to develop information technology for research and education. The main goal is to foster cooperation and to provide advanced techniques for the development of research and education, not only in European countries, but worldwide. There are two major activities in this field: The first is the well known development of Pan European Research Network (GÉANT), and all countries, which belong geographically to Europe, are connected with very high-speed fibre optic network. Another field of interests is the development of distributing computing infrastructure."

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Gayane Novikova,
*Director of the
Center for Strategic
Analysis, Yerevan:*

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"Only in the long-term perspective, in case if the states of the Wider Black Sea region overcome all or majority of their challenges, they will be able to change their marginal status in the Wider Europe to the status of a politically and economically self-efficient region. Otherwise, the states of the region will preserve their peripheral status with all consequences in the economical, social and cultural spheres."