



## *“EU and Black Sea Interregional Cooperation for Business and Economic Cohesion”*

*Athens, 12 May 2014*

*Subject:* Research, Innovation and Knowledge could be considered as a key priority in enhancing regional cooperation in the wider Black Sea area and cooperation between the European Union and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC). A better understanding of the existing expectations and the national institutional frameworks in the BSEC countries, as well as of their economic interaction with the EU in terms of people, capital, trade, knowledge, innovation, science and technology, will facilitate the implementation of the European initiatives in the area, e.g. the Eastern Partnership and the Black Sea Synergy initiatives, and will strengthen BSEC-EU Interaction.

Since 2011, the ICBSS participates in the implementation of the FP7 Project **SEARCH - Sharing Knowledge Assets: Interregionally Cohesive Neighbourhoods**, as partner to a Consortium of 17 partners. The main objective of the SEARCH Project is to strengthen the integration process between the EU and the Neighbourhood Countries (NCs) by focusing on the European Research Neighbourhood (ERN), improving at the same time the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), taking into account that "one size fits all" policy recommendations will not be appropriate due to the bilateral nature of the EU-ENP countries agreements. Among its main priorities, SEARCH focuses on the patterns of economic interaction between the EU and the ENP countries, aiming at projecting future trends and indentifying the effects of higher levels of economic integration to the growth, competitiveness and cohesion prospects of the two areas.

Within this framework, and acknowledging the need for improving the current business environment in the Black Sea region, the ICBSS is organising a Round Table Discussion on *“EU and Black Sea Interregional Cooperation for Business and Economic Cohesion”* under the SEARCH Project. The main objective of the event is to identify current challenges and perspectives and to elaborate relevant and valuable policy recommendations, in terms of improving economic cohesion between the EU and the Black Sea countries, with special emphasis on the role of businesses for achieving sustainable growth and competitiveness for the Black Sea countries and its peoples.

**Proposed thematic sessions:**

### **Session I**

- Identification of challenges and constraints for the business communities of the Black Sea countries (in terms of trade, mobility, networking with other businesses and expansion to internal and external markets)

- The role of institutions, organizations and governments (EU and relative policies and initiatives, the support from the BSEC Organization and its related bodies, Black Sea countries' policies)

## **Session II**

- Policy recommendations for enhancing EU - Black Sea integration (especially in the fields of economic cohesion promotion, achievement of higher levels of trade and investment interaction, firms' investment on technological advancements and human capital etc.)
- Promotion of good practices and case studies

### **Target audience:**

- Policy makers at European, NC, regional and national level
- Businesses and economic stakeholders
- Scientific community, academia, researchers