

- 1-2 *A Return to Realpolitik? A Snapshot*, by Dimitrios Triantaphyllou
- 3-4 Sofia Joint Declaration on Strengthening the Co-operation in the Field of Transport in the BSEC Region
- 4-5 Declaration of the Ministers Responsible for Science and Technology of the BSEC Member States
- 5-6 Press Communique of the Co-Chairs of Geneva Discussions
 - 6 José Manuel Durão Barroso, President of the European Commission, Statement Following the Meeting with Prime Minister of Georgia Nika Gilauri
- 6-8 Commissioner Janez Potočnik, Speech, Launch of the Black Sea Synergy, Environment Partnership
- 8-9 ENP: Launch of the Environment Partnership of the Black Sea Synergy
- 9-10 European Commission, Black Sea Synergy, MEMO/10/78
 - 10 Council of the EU, Declaration by HR Ashton on behalf of the EU on the Georgian strategy on Abkhazia and South Ossetia
- 10-11 Council of the EU, International Relations in the Energy Field between Russia and Ukraine – Information from the Commission
- 11-12 Council of the EU, Black Sea Environmental Partnership – Information from the Romanian Delegation
- 12-13 Štefan Füle, European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, Strong Civil Society Pillar – Major Objective of the EU Eastern Partnership Policy, 4th Meeting of the PERC (Pan-European Regional Council)
- 13-15 Štefan Füle, European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, Eastern Partnership – New challenges for EU Businesses, Eastern Partnership Event at the Czech House in Brussels
- 15-16 Joint Statement of the Foreign Ministers of the Visegrad Group at their Meeting in Budapest
- 16-17 EU Foreign Affairs Council, Conclusions on the Republic of Moldova – Visa Ban on the Leadership of the Transnistrian Region
 - 17 Declaration by the HR, Catherine Ashton, on Behalf of the EU on the Ratification of Protocol 14 to the European Convention on Human Rights by the Russian Federation
- 17-18 Declaration of the Ministers of Energy of the BSEC Member States on the Establishment of an Integrated Black Sea Energy Market

A Return to Realpolitik? A Snapshot

By Dimitrios Triantaphyllou

In a recent analysis of [Barrack Obama's foreign policy](#) much was made of the fact that in contrast to his predecessor's value-laden approach, Obama seems to favour Realpolitik. In another recent [article](#) it is suggested that the "democracy narrative" was losing ground as all "colour" or "velvet" revolutions of recent years – the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003, its Orange counterpart in Ukraine in 2004, the Tulip or Pink Revolution in Kyrgyzstan in 2005 and even the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon in 2005 – have failed to produce much especially in terms of the long-term democratisation and liberalisation of the countries at hand. In fact, it may well be that the ideological underpinnings of the aforementioned revolutions pitting the so-called "good guys" versus the "bad guys" have found themselves lacking sponsors today given the current withdrawal of the neocons from the limelight.

The return to realpolitik is also symbolised, inter alia, by the "reset button" paradigm between the United States and Russia; the strategic arms talks and the signing of the new START Treaty between the two countries on 8 April in Prague; the limited access Georgia's leader, Mikhail Shaakashvili, has to the Obama administration; the tug of war between Israel's current government and the United States; and the reported deal between the new Ukrainian leadership and Russia regarding the stay of the

- 18 Press Release, Ninth Round of Geneva Discussion on Security and Stability in Transcaucasia
- 18-19 Olli Rehn, EU Commissioner for Enlargement, Speech on Democratisation in Turkey, EP Plenary
- 19-20 Answers to European Parliament Questionnaire for Commissioner-Designate Catherine Ashton
- 20-21 Answers to European Parliament Questionnaire for Commissioner-Designate Štefan Füle
- 21 Council of the EU, EU – Republic of Moldova Cooperation Council
- 22-23 Recent Publications by the ICBSS
- 24-25 Other Recent Publications on the Black Sea Region
- 26-27 News and Events
- 28 ICBSS Black Sea Monitor Index

Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol in exchange for lower gas prices. Even the new developing interest-based cooperation between Poland and Russia as a result of tragedy is evidence of steady change in international relations – changed marked by strategic imperatives among and between global and regional stakeholders that think in strategic terms.

The missing power in all this manifestations of global change is the European Union (EU) which lacks strategic punch although it has been slowly attempting to acquire it as first expressed almost a decade ago with its [European Security Strategy](#). Yet global change is rapid and the EU is slow in leaving its mark. Recently,

we have evidenced, and still are to a large extent witnessing, the failure of the EU to rise up to the challenges posed by financial governance in light of the economic crisis and the stability of its common currency – the euro – where national reflexes based on obtaining necessary domestic political consensus seem to take precedence over joint action (the current German reticence to putting into effect the EU/IMF bailout package for Greece due to domestic political and electoral considerations is a case in point). Similarly, the delayed coordination and the subsequent economic damage caused to air transport by the ash clouds coming from Iceland’s unpronounceable Eyjafjallajökull volcano is another example of slow reaction time. Other examples of slow coordination include the post-Lisbon tug-of-war among and between EU institutions and member states over the shape, form and content of the European External Action Service (EEAS) or even the failure to convince other stakeholders in the December 2009 Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change that a binding agreement is vital and necessary.

It stands to reason that in spite all aforementioned examples of EU failure to lead effectively, the demand for a greater EU role is actually increasing. The critique centres around the need for it to do more, not that it is insignificant. Nevertheless, although its consensual-driven approach is time consuming and difficult to achieve, the Union needs to overcome its growing pains and act faster and better to meet the many global challenges that arise.

In the Black Sea region context, the EU presence is more than imperative today. Given the evident great power politics at play, the Union better sharpen its reflexes and impact in order to avoid the further securitisation of the region which might seriously damage the forces of regionalism and regional cooperation that it has so carefully and nurtured in the last few years. The return to realpolitik might be more than a passing fad yet it needs to be harnessed within a twenty-first century context where the Union, its member states and its many proponents need to play a key role.

Athens, 25 April 2010

Sofia Joint Declaration on Strengthening the Co-operation in the Field of Transport in the BSEC Region

Sofia, 15 April 2010

Through enhanced BSEC regional transport co-operation towards a sustainable economic growth and prosperity

WE, the Ministers of Transport of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation Member States gathering in Sofia on 15 April 2010, under the Bulgarian Chairmanship-in-office of BSEC to discuss the ways and means of strengthening our co-operation in the field of transport,

Stating that peace, stability and sustainable development in the BSEC Region is of vital importance for the welfare of peoples of the Region,

Taking note on the necessity to implement the decisions adopted at the previous meetings of Ministers of Transport of the BSEC Member States which are reflected in Joint Declarations,

Considering that transport plays a crucial role in further developing regional and international trade and provides a significant boost to economic growth and creates more confidence in the economic future,

Recognizing that an enhanced BSEC regional transport cooperation will contribute to sustainable economic growth within the BSEC region as well as to enhancing trade relations between Europe and Asia,

Underlining the importance of developed transport infrastructure, and the measures for facilitating transport procedures aimed at intensifying multimodal transport flows, as well as of the significance of overcoming physical and non-physical barriers in the Region of BSEC,

Affirming our responsibility for building an integrated and sustainable transport system for the BSEC Region,

Welcoming the joint efforts work of the BSEC Member States in maritime and road infrastructure, facilitation of road transport of goods in the BSEC Region, within the relevant subsidiary and other organs,

Acknowledging that an integrated approach in maritime and inland waterways activities, including the development of competitive shipping as well as of ports infrastructure, is essential for providing sustainable multimodal transport and contributing to the development of Eurasian transport links,

Highlighting the importance of taking concrete steps for the development of other transport modes and multimodal transport connections in the Region,

Recognising the importance of integrating the environmental issues in transport policies in the Black Sea Region,

Acknowledging the significance of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 64/255 of 2 March 2010,

for the BSEC Region, proclaiming the period 2011-2020 as the Decade of Action for Road Safety with a goal to reduce the forecasted level of road fatalities world wide by increasing activities at the national, regional and global levels,

Bearing in mind the benefits of further development of close co-operation of BSEC with other international organizations and institutions, such as UNECE, UNESCAP, TRACECA, IRF, IRU, CEI as well as with BASPA, BINSABRASS, BSEC-URTA as transport related Sectoral Dialogue Partners in the development and facilitation of international transport in the BSEC Region,

Also bearing in mind the importance of close co-operation and coordination of activities between BSEC and the EU, as well as other international organizations and institutions such as the ECO, CIS and EurAsEC,

Have agreed to:

Intensify the co-operation in the transport sector which is essential in developing international trade among BSEC Member States and accelerating regional cooperation and integration,

Exert joint efforts for promoting the sustainable and efficient transport operations based on mutually acceptable transport policies in the BSEC Member States,

Focus on facilitated procedures for the use of the transport networks in the BSEC Member States, aiming at further reinforcement of trade flows among the BSEC Member States, as well as facilitating transit of goods between Europe and Asia,

Explore the opportunities to improve and develop road, maritime, aviation and railway infrastructure with a view to contributing to smooth flow of passengers and goods among the BSEC Member States,

Enhance cooperation on the implementation of the Memoranda of Understanding on the Coordinated Development of the Black Sea Ring Highway, Motorways of the Sea and Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods,

Take note of the commitment of the interested Member States to further develop the effectiveness and efficiency of the BSEC PERMIT Pilot Project within the framework of facilitating the road transport of goods in the BSEC Region,

Encourage the Member States to enhance the regional potential by focusing on the interconnectivity and interoperability of transport activities,

Consult with competent national authorities to consider the possibility of the elaboration of an Integrated Maritime Policy in the field of Maritime Transport, Ports, Shipbuilding and Shiprepairing in the Region as an important factor for sustainable economic growth,

Take into consideration the need for developing co-operation in the civil aviation sector and exploration of the possibilities for co-operation,

Encourage elaborating joint transport projects of regional

impact with various financial schemes, including BSEC mechanisms, Public-Private Partnership, and with the participation of other international organizations and financial institutions,

Make use of innovative transport solutions and intelligent transport systems (ITS) for enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the international transport in the region,

Reiterate the invitation to the BSEC Member States that have not yet done so to adhere to major UNECE International Agreements and Conventions in the field of transport and effectively implement them and encourage joint activities of BSEC and UNECE in addressing the related issues in the BSEC Region including road safety,

Encourage organizing regional conferences, trainings, seminars on best practices on specific transport subjects,

Present this Declaration to the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States for consideration,

The Ministers expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Transport, Information Technology and Communications of the Republic of Bulgaria for the hospitality extended to the delegations and the excellent organization of the Meeting in Sofia.

Declaration of the Ministers Responsible for Science and Technology of the BSEC Member States

Sofia, 9 April 2010

We, the Ministers responsible for Science and Technology of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Member States met in Sofia on 9 April 2010 to assess cooperation in the fields of scientific research and technological development at the end of duration of the BSEC Action Plan on Cooperation in Science and Technology (2005-2009) - *hereinafter referred to as the* 'first Action Plan' - and to chart the way forward by formulating a second BSEC Action Plan for the next four year period.

Guided by BSEC 15th Anniversary Summit Declaration (25 June 2007), which called upon the Member States to deepen cooperation in Science and Technology as one of the priority areas of common interest;

Recognising the significance of the *Athens Declaration* (28 September 2005) and the *Istanbul Statement* (31 October 2007) and following the provisions of the first *BSEC Action Plan (2005-2009)* as key policy documents for the enhancement of the competitive performance of every BSEC Member State and of the Organization as a whole in the fields of scientific research and technological development;

Recalling the Mid-Term Report on the implementation of the first BSEC Action Plan that was approved at our Meeting in Istanbul on 31 October 2007;

Taking into account the assessment of the first Action Plan that was prepared at the end of the four year period of its duration;

Confident that science and technology are major assets for sustainable social and economic development and the BSEC Member States, based on their rich and long-lasting tradition, are willing to devote particular attention for the further development and strengthening of that field, both at national level and in the Organization as a whole;

Desiring to renew the commitment of the BSEC Member States to cooperate in the development of science and technology and to reconfirm the policy orientations for such cooperation, taking into consideration the developments in the policy landscape in the BSEC region;

Reaffirming that science and technology is one of the priority areas for the development of mutually beneficial BSEC-EU interaction and increased EU initiatives aiming at regional cooperation in this field should be further encouraged;

Declare our commitment:

To further strengthen regional cooperation in the fields of scientific research and technological development as a major driving force of dynamic and sustainable economic growth and prosperity for the peoples of the region;

To invest all best efforts in the enhancement of the regional dimension of the cooperation among the BSEC Member States in the agreed areas of action and specific activities, i.e.: (i) human resources; (ii) capacity building; (iii) research infrastructure; and (iv) innovation,

To ensure that the cooperation within the BSEC through benchmarking activities, exchange of good practices, sharing experiences, etc. become instrumental and thus boost the development and implementation of national future-oriented Science and Technology policies.

To initiate joint actions directed toward better utilisation of the existing human and material resources, research infrastructure and administrative capacities through improved access to knowledge, training activities and research programmes, enhanced transnational mobility of scientists and regular exchanges of information and publications, bilateral and regional networking, fellowships and joint scientific events;

To seek innovative ways for combining allocated public expenditure on research and development with private investment, including public-private partnerships for funding specific projects involving transnational cooperation and for disseminating relevant information

about procedures for accessing other available financial resources (EU and UN programmes, IFIs, specialised foundations, etc);

To promote a dynamic dialogue among stakeholders in the science and technology community – research organisations, industry, user groups – in order to ensure their cost-effective and result-oriented interaction for the purpose of converting scientific discoveries into innovative, commercially viable products and processes;

To encourage the mobility of students, academic staff and researchers across the BSEC region within the framework of appropriate programmes.

To develop joint research and training programmes between Scientific Institutions and Universities of the BSEC Member States in compliance with their priorities.

To encourage national authorities of the BSEC Member States to provide information, training and other services for project preparation with a view to their submission for funding from international organization institutions (EU, UN, WB, etc);

To facilitate closer cooperation in the fields of science and technology with other partners and international organisations and to encourage co-funding schemes in order to formulate and implement regional research projects and to generate new synergies, in particular with the activities carried out under EU programmes and initiatives;

And therefore,

Approve the second *BSEC Action Plan on Cooperation in Science and Technology* (2010-2014) as a means of achieving the goals set forth in this Declaration and as a practical expression of our renewed commitment to regional cooperation in the fields of science and technology;

Agree to convene a mid-term meeting of the Ministers responsible for science and technology of the BSEC Member States to review progress in the implementation of the approved Action Plan and to chart the way forward;

Welcome all other initiatives directed towards strengthening cooperation among Member States and/or with other international organizations in the sphere of science, technology and innovation that are consistent with the broader BSEC objectives;

Commend the Working Group on Cooperation in Science and Technology, the BSEC PERMIS and the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) for their efficient work and dedication towards the implementation of the objectives and priorities set out in the first BSEC Action Plan;

Acknowledge the efforts of ICBSS for the preparation of

the initial draft of the second Action Plan and the efficient work of the Working Group on Cooperation in Science and Technology, the Country-Coordinator, the BSEC PERMIS and the ICBSS for the negotiation and finalization of the second Action Plan.

Express our appreciation and gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria, the BSEC Chairman-in-Office and the Country-Coordinator of the Working Group on Cooperation in Science and Technology for the successful organization of this Meeting and for their warm hospitality in Sofia.

Press Communique of the Co-Chairs of Geneva Discussions

Geneva, 30 March 2010 [Link](#)

The participants of Geneva Discussions have met for the 10th round, in two working groups, and have discussed, respectively, security and stability issues and humanitarian matters. They agreed to continue their discussions in the same format on 8 June 2010.

Working Group I reviewed the overall security situation since the last round of Geneva Discussions. Against the background of a relatively calm and stable general situation, it was noted that tensions continue to exist. It was highlighted that provocative actions and rhetorics are not helpful for the ongoing efforts to stabilize the situation on the ground and should therefore be avoided.

In this respect, the Co-Chairs emphasized the stabilizing role of Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms. All participants agreed that IPRMs are essential instruments to address issues pertaining to stability and security on the ground.

The Co-Chairs together with all participants will take concrete steps to ensure the full functioning of the two Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms.

The participants discussed the issue of missing persons, and welcomed the ongoing contribution by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Thomas Hammarberg. The participants also reviewed the issue of release of all detainees, and agreed that a solution leading to a release of all would be a further positive development.

The participants continued their discussion on different draft proposals related to the non-use of force and international security arrangements. All of these drafts are aiming at consolidation of security commitments. The Co-Chairs will pursue their work to facilitate exchanges on this central subject, including on the various additional proposals. They also agreed on the need to further advance on confidence-building measures, in particular on voluntary exchange of information on sensitive ac

tivities within IPRMs. The participants agreed to proceed with discussions on these subjects.

In Working Group II, participants made further progress in the negotiation on the items of the draft "Agreed Undertakings" tabled by the co-moderators, focusing this time on go-and-see visits of displaced persons and on human rights observation and promotion in affected areas. Participants took part in two information sessions covering the technical aspects of the registration, sampling and profiling of affected populations, as well as the organisation of go-and-see visits to the places of former habitual residence. The co-moderators will explore ways in which the lessons learned in other conflict areas, as shared in the information sessions, can be used to further the concrete objectives of Working Group II. Participants have agreed to nominate contact persons for further consideration of the possibility of go-and-see visits, including when and where they are considered possible. Information sessions on the other issues, including Human Rights observation and promotion, utilities and property rights, will be organised during the next sessions of Geneva Discussions.

José Manuel Durão Barroso, President of the European Commission, Statement Following the Meeting with Prime Minister of Georgia Nika Gilauri, Joint Press Point

Brussels, 17 March 2010 [Link](#)

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome Prime Minister of Georgia Nika Gilauri.

This was a very useful and very constructive meeting, the one that we just had. And it was an opportunity for me to reaffirm our strong commitment to stability and democracy in Georgia and our firm support for Georgia's territorial integrity and conflict resolution efforts.

Our relations with Georgia have gone into a higher gear.

Preparations for negotiations on the future Association Agreement are in their final phase and the negotiations could hopefully start soon. An important part of this Agreement will be the possibility to establish a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). This calls for Georgia to fully address key trade-related recommendations made by the Commission. And today the Prime Minister had several meetings in the Commission where we have expressed to him exactly what points we believe should be addressed.

Let me underline that on the energy front, we appreciate very much the constructive role Georgia has played in developing transit routes for energy supplies to the EU

and Western Europe and I look forward to our enhanced energy dialogue with the creation of the new Subcommittee on Energy, Environment and Transport.

I also welcome Georgia's recent adoption of the State Strategy on engagement with occupied territories. This testifies Georgia's efforts to ease tensions and solve the conflict through peaceful means and diplomacy. In this regard, the continuation of the Geneva talks is of key importance and all participants must deliver.

Our relations can be even more productive and rewarding if they are based on shared interests and shared values. And I want to underline the word "values".

Democratic reforms are crucial. Georgia has already made important achievements. I think of progress in eradicating corruption and reforming the justice sector, for example. We are hopeful that intensive work will proceed to consolidate democratic institutions, create an inclusive political culture and ensure full media freedom.

The upcoming local elections will be an opportunity for Georgia to demonstrate further its commitment to political pluralism and international standards for free and fair elections. I am confident Georgia will seize it.

And just after this meeting receiving the analysis of Prime Minister Gilauri I am even more confident and I really want to encourage him and the Georgian authorities on the path of consolidation of democratic reform in his country, so that we can even progress in a closer relationship between the EU and Georgia.

Commissioner Janez Potočnik, Speech, Launch of the Black Sea Synergy, Environment Partnership

Brussels, 15-16 March 2010 [Link](#)

Dear Ministers, dear Ambassadors,

Dear colleagues from the Black Sea region and from the European Union,

It is a real pleasure for me to welcome you today here, on behalf of Commissioner Füle, to this very special event.

I want to extend a very warm welcome to all our friends and colleagues from the wider Black Sea partner countries. We very much appreciate the commitment you show by being here. It is a pleasure to have you in Brussels today.

I also want to express our appreciation for the efforts of our Romanian friends and particularly for their help in pushing for the launch of this partnership. You have been very busy in Bucharest – I thank you for that.

As a result of the most recent EU enlargement, the Black Sea has become our easternmost frontier.

And since then, we have worked tirelessly with our Member States in the wider Black Sea region to ensure that it is properly included in this new dimension of EU policies. These efforts were supported at the highest political level. And the meeting today shows that we have succeeded. The EU is now part of the region, and it is committed to the region.

So this meeting is the result of these efforts, and of the realisation that what happens, or does not happen, in the Black Sea region, ultimately has implications for all of us.

The Black Sea belongs to all of us here around the table. It is shared by all its countries and neighbours, by all those who live in the region.

We share the Black Sea and its challenges; we must share the responsibility to meet them.

Dear colleagues,

We all have deep respect and admiration for the history, the cultures, which for thousands of years, have flourished around the shores of the Black Sea. They have seen many peoples come and go.

The relationship between the European Union and the Black Sea region has to reflect that. Indeed, the objective of the Black Sea Synergy is not to impose big schemes or pre-cooked policies from Brussels.

Our objective is to add the weight of the EU behind the goals that the Black Sea countries have set for themselves.

Actors and countries around the Black Sea know very well what the problems are, and in most cases, solutions have been identified.

It has been clear from the beginning of our work on the Black Sea Synergy that we did not want to duplicate what others are already doing, or to compete with existing initiatives that already work perfectly well.

I want to acknowledge Ambassador Leonidas Chrysanthopoulos, Secretary-General of the permanent secretariat of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organisation. Thank you for being with us today. Your organisation is active in a number of fields, including the environment, and even more in the transport sector as well as in other economic fields. We will have to work together very actively on these issues, and I believe that these complementarities can be turned into a real Black Sea synergy!

I also want to extend a particular welcome to Dr Ahmed Kideys, Executive Director of the Black Sea Commission on the protection of the Black Sea against pollution. Your organisation plays a pivotal role in the implementation of the objectives and commitments that Black Sea States have made towards the environment in the region in the context of the Bucharest Convention. Here again, we will need a very close relationship with your organisation in

order to ensure that these objectives are indeed met.

Dear colleagues,

If there is one set of problems that needs to be tackled jointly in the Black Sea area, it is the environment. One common piece of Brussels conventional wisdom says that 'States are too big for small problems and too small for big problems'.

Nowhere is this truer than in the environment, where challenges are shared across borders, particularly across maritime borders.

Nowhere is there a stronger legitimacy to act and work together.

There is already a good understanding of what needs to be done in the region to address environmental challenges on the ground. The objectives are clearly defined and strategic plans have been established to work towards meeting many of these objectives.

This is particularly true for those countries who are party to the Bucharest Convention.

But you are not all party to this Convention. We will work very closely with you in the coming weeks and months to ensure that our initiative can support your objectives as well. We will look together at what exists already, and if necessary, we will go further and help you, if necessary, identifying possible goals and activities to address specific environmental challenges and 'hotspots' in the broader Black Sea area.

If the objectives are largely known, we have to recognise that their implementation, the results in terms of addressing the problems on the ground, have been slow, to say the least.

We need to build on past experience.

We need to look together at what has worked and what has not.

The main obstacle is not always the lack of financial resources. Funding is available, in many cases.

But there are also many cases of competing priorities.

One key challenge for all of us will be therefore to help raise the profile of environment issues in the Black Sea region.

It is very important that these issues be brought to the attention of all decision-makers in governments.

Not just Environment Ministers, whose job it is anyway. But all of those who are in a position to influence what we want to achieve, starting with Foreign ministries.

To be effective, our collaboration in the context of the Black Sea Synergy has to focus on a limited number of key objectives. We must make them highly visible, thereby increasing the level of attention and political

priority being given to implementing solutions to the environment challenges in the Black Sea region.

What are the issues where we believe efforts must be intensified?

I suggest five possible areas for the Black Sea Synergy Environment Partnership:

First, it must contribute to addressing the so-called 'hot-spots', including, but not exclusively, those identified in the context of the Bucharest Convention.

Addressing environment problems in these sites as a priority will bring the quickest environment improvements, benefitting the entire region.

I said "not exclusively the Bucharest Convention" because we will need to expand the scope of this priority to include key projects outside the area covered by the Bucharest Convention.

Second, I would identify the implementation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management, which has huge potential to promote the long-term sustainable coexistence of important economic activities together with enhanced environment protection and can support efforts for adaptation to climate change. It is a real win-win issue.

Third, there is a need to accelerate work on biodiversity protection including in Marine Protected areas, - but also on habitats and species that are land-based. We need to ensure that these areas are properly designated, well managed and appropriately preserved, including in the face of climate change.

Fourth, I want to mention Eco-innovation, which can be an important driver for sustainable development in the region. It will promote the take-up of modern, more competitive and environmentally benign technologies, which in turn will create jobs and new opportunities for trade.

And finally, we all recognise that good data are key to targeting actions to improve the environment. More is needed to ensure effective monitoring and data collection in the Black Sea region.

This is an ambitious programme. And it is at this stage just an outline of what could be tackled.

We will need to discuss these ideas further, including with further interaction with the regional organisations and the NGOs, and we need, as I said, to work closely with those states which not directly border the Black sea to meet their specific challenges. Ultimately, our aim is to develop a work programme that will produce real results.

The Commission wants this Black Sea Synergy initiative on the Environment to be a real 'partnership', based on the consensus and involvement of the countries of the region. We welcome the involvement of all regional and international actors who can contribute to meeting the

agreed environmental objectives of the region. I think you will agree that the road ahead will have its fair share of challenges of all sorts. But it is also, you will agree, an exciting journey, with enormous potential.

Colleagues,

I want to wish you a successful day, with interesting contacts and good discussions.

You have to remember that this is only the beginning of a process.

From tomorrow our colleagues will start working on the more practical aspects of the partnership.

The first priority of the coming weeks and months will be to put in place the mechanisms that will allow us, together, to move from commitments to concrete projects. We will explore the modalities for organising the funding and report back as soon as possible.

May the process that we start today be to the fullest benefit of all the people of the Black Sea region!

Thank you.

European Neighbourhood Policy: Launch of the Environment Partnership of the Black Sea Synergy

Brussels, 15 March 2010 [Link](#)

Environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik has opened today the Conference launching the Environment Partnership of the Black Sea Synergy initiative. The Environment Partnership is established to support the efforts of the EU and its partners of the wider Black Sea region to find cooperative approaches to the common challenges that the Black Sea region faces. The Black Sea Synergy initiative is open to all countries of the wider Black Sea region. In his opening speech, Commissioner Potočnik said: 'The Black Sea is not an EU sea. But it is 'our' sea; it belongs to all of us, it is shared by all its countries and neighbours, by all those who live in the region. We share the Black Sea and its challenges; we must share the responsibility to meet them'.

The Black Sea Synergy initiative was proposed by the European Commission in 2007 and subsequently endorsed by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers, and supported at several occasions by the European Council.

The sector partnerships reflect the inclusive character of the Black Sea Synergy initiative. They will be open to all partner countries in the wider Black Sea region who want to participate. But it will also include institutions that are active in the region, like the BSEC and the Black Sea Commission.

The EU is a strong proponent of regional, cooperative approaches, for obvious reasons. It is not just what we do, it is what we are. Our initiatives put therefore a strong emphasis on the regional and multilateral objectives of the EU's external policies. The regional component of the ENP is implemented through several initiatives, among which the multilateral elements of the Eastern Partnership, and the Black Sea Synergy. The EU has specific policies and commitments in all sea regions bordering Europe, and the Black Sea is no exception. Seas and their basins are part of our immediate neighbourhood, where the EU and its member States have strong interests.

The EU wants to give reality to this initiative by establishing sector partnerships in three crucial sectors: environment, transport and energy. These sectors have been chosen because they are crucial to the region and improvements in these will have direct effect in the whole wider Black Sea region. Each sector partnership will be organised in a way that maximises its chances of leading to concrete projects. The resources will be used as seed-money, to help preparing the projects, and present them to those who are ready and willing to invest in infrastructure in the Black Sea region. This formula has been successful in other contexts; it will be successful in the Black Sea as well.

Black Sea Synergy, MEMO/10/78

Brussels, 15 March 2010 [Link](#)

The Black Sea Synergy initiative was proposed by the European Commission in a communication to the Parliament and the Council in 2007. The proposed approach was subsequently endorsed by the Council of Ministers, and supported at several occasions by the European Council. The Black Sea Synergy initiative was formally launched in Kiev in February 2008 by the Foreign Ministers of the Black Sea partners and of the EU.

Implementation is now well on track. Partner countries have been closely involved from the beginning in the designing of the implementation. We want this initiative to be recognised and owned jointly by the Black Sea countries and the EU.

The Black Sea Synergy complements the Eastern Partnership. Whilst the Eastern Partnership promotes the partner countries' rapprochement to the EU, the Black Sea Synergy aims at developing regional cooperation around the Black Sea.

[The Black Sea Synergy is part of the European Neighbourhood Policy](#)

The EU has specific policies and commitments in all sea

regions bordering Europe, and the Black Sea is no exception. Seas and their basins are part of our immediate neighbourhood, where the EU and its member States have strong interests. The Black Sea Synergy is therefore part of the ENP, just like the Euro-Mediterranean policy is.

The EU is a strong proponent of regional, cooperative approaches: It is not just what we do, it is what we are. Our programmes put therefore a strong emphasis on the regional and multilateral dimensions of the EU's external policies. The regional component of the ENP is implemented through several initiatives, notably the multilateral elements of the Eastern Partnership and the Black Sea Synergy.

The Eastern Partnership established between the EU and the six Eastern European and South Caucasus ENP partner countries in 2009 is a specific Eastern dimension to the ENP designed to foster the political association and economic integration of the partner countries with the EU. In exchange for undertaking political and economic reform, the EaP offers new contractual relations, deep and comprehensive free trade agreements, steps towards visa liberalisation and a multilateral framework in which to discuss these issues. In essence, the overall objective of the Eastern Partnership is to bring the partner countries closer to the EU. Its centre of gravity is Brussels.

The Black Sea Synergy is different. It is essentially a regional initiative, open to all Black Sea States. It has the very specific objective of identifying and supporting what the partners in the region want to do together. It is about projects and activities and its centre of gravity is in the Black Sea region. It is based as much as possible on initiatives taken in the region, and will support objectives that the Black Sea countries have already subscribed to. We want to connect and inter-act with existing schemes and organisations, like BSEC and the Black Sea Commission for the protection of the Black Sea.

Most importantly, the Black Sea Synergy also covers partners that are linked to the European Union through an accession policy (Turkey) or a Strategic Partnership (Russia), in addition to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.

Implementation

The Black Sea Synergy is the expression of the EU's commitment to the Black Sea region, and to the shared objective of bringing concrete improvements that can benefit the peoples in the region through cooperative approaches. The EU wants to give reality to this initiative by establishing **sector partnerships** in three crucial sectors: **environment, transport and energy**. These sectors have been chosen because it is hard to question their importance to the region. Improvements in these sectors will have direct effect in the whole wider Black Sea region.

Each sector partnership will be organised in a way that maximises its chances of leading to concrete projects. The EU cannot fund big investments directly; we don't have adequate resources for that. But we can use our grants as seed-money, to help preparing the projects, and present them in the best possible way to those institutions that are ready to invest in infrastructure in the Black Sea region. This formula has been successful in other contexts; it will be successful in the Black Sea as well.

As far as the EC is concerned, resources will come from the ENPI regional envelope and from the Neighbourhood Investment Fund (NIF), subject to the adoption of the specific decisions that will be needed. But we will not be the only financiers of these schemes. Contributions will have to come from other partners as well, as this initiative must be jointly owned by the Black Sea Partners. This is why, if partners show interest and the partnership can produce credible pipe-lines of projects, it is envisaged to establish dedicated funds for those partnerships where support to investments will be the key objective.

The sector partnerships reflect the inclusive character of the Black Sea Synergy initiative. They will be open to all partner countries who want to participate. But it will also include institutions that are active in the region, like the BSEC Organisation and the Black Sea Commission, as well as the EIB and the EBRD. Three member States in the Black Sea region are helping in the organisation of the partnerships. Romania will help the Environment Partnership, Greece the Transport Partnership, and Bulgaria the Energy Partnership.

The Environment Partnership will be the first to be formally launched, in Brussels on March 16th. This will be done in a one-day conference opened by Commissioner Potocnik. Participating partners will use the conference to express their commitment to the goals of the partnership and to agree on its basic rules.

Council of the European Union, Declaration by HE Ashton on behalf of the EU on the Georgian Strategy on Abkhazia and South Ossetia

Brussels, 10 March 2010 [Link](#)

The European Union takes note of Georgia's "State Strategy on Occupied Territories: Engagement through Cooperation", endorsed by the Georgian government on 27 January. The EU welcomes Georgia's commitment to solving the conflict only through peaceful means and diplomatic efforts. The EU welcomes the spirit of the initiative as a constructive step towards easing tensions,

building confidence and reaching out to the residents of the Abkhaz and South Ossetian regions.

We encourage the Georgian government to conduct consultations with all stakeholders regarding the preparation of an action plan on the implementation of the strategy. The EU welcomes Georgia's intention to elaborate a status-neutral framework for interaction with authorities in control of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and calls upon all parties to establish it as soon as possible. A key priority for Georgia will be to ensure that the relevant legislative and administrative framework, including the Law on Occupied Territories and its implementation, is being brought in line with the opinions presented by the Venice Commission on this matter.

Finally, the EU reiterates its firm support for the security and stability of Georgia, based on full respect for the principles of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity recognized by international law.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Azerbaijan align themselves with this declaration.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

Council of the European Union, International Relations in the Energy Field between Russia and Ukraine - Information from the Commission

Brussels, 10 March 2010 [Link](#)

In January 2009, after a considerable mediation effort by the EU that included a monitoring mission to relevant locations in Russia and Ukraine, Gazprom and Naftogaz signed new agreements concerning both the terms for transit of Russian gas to the EU as well as for gas supply to Ukraine for domestic use. This in effect ended the gas crisis and restored gas supplies to the EU that were completely cut between 7 and 20 January.

The new agreements brought both Ukrainian domestic gas prices and gradually transit fees to market values. The gas contracts stipulate that Naftogaz needs to pay for gas imported the previous month by the 6th of each month. If payment is not made, Gazprom is entitled to demand prepayments for deliveries. The new Ukrainian President, Mr Yanukovich, has now indicated that he

would like to address these contracts within the broader context of revising energy relations with Russia. Energy relations with Russia are nevertheless likely to improve and so far Naftogaz has been able to meet its gas payment obligations (latest payment was made on 4 March).

The main challenge for the new President will be to seek a solution to the structural and financial difficulties in the gas sector:

-Financial assistance: In the autumn of 2008 the Tymoshenko government negotiated a \$16.5 Standby Arrangement with the IMF. This was de-railed in late 2009 due to political infighting and the approach of presidential elections. During the summer 2009, efforts by the international community also focused on providing Ukraine with financial assistance to pay for gas in storage in order to ensure uninterrupted gas supplies to Europe. Ukraine however failed to implement the gas sector reform conditionalities agreed between the Commission, International Financial Institutions and Ukrainian authorities at the end of July. The new Ukrainian President will now need to take urgent steps to improve economic and financial stability by cooperating closely with the IMF to allow for the disbursement of the remaining IMF funds. This is also the pre-condition for the disbursement of EU budgetary support to Ukraine.

Support to gas market reforms: In October 2009, Ukraine and the European Commission concluded negotiations on the country's accession to the Energy Community Treaty. In December 2009 the Energy Community ministerial approved Ukraine's accession to this Community. Accession will be effective subject to the adoption of a new gas law complying with EU gas legislation and subsequent ratification. Energy reforms and Ukraine's accession to the Energy Community continues to be important EU priorities also under the new President.

-Industry solutions: The Commission has facilitated discussions with the EU gas industry on possible solutions to the problematic gas relations between Russian and Ukraine. Options discussed have included: 1) purchases of gas by the EU industry to be put in Ukrainian gas storages; 2) the establishment of a consortium to operate the Ukrainian gas transit system; And 3) physically separate the transit system from the rest of the Ukrainian domestic gas system. None of these options have so far attained sufficient support from all involved (EU and EU gas industry, Russia/Gazprom and Ukraine/Naftogaz).

The new President is however now advocating the establishment of a consortium between Ukraine, Russia and the EU for the operation of the Ukrainian gas transportation system.

-Rehabilitation and modernisation of Ukraine's main gas transit infrastructure: An investment conference on the

modernization of the Ukrainian transmission system was held on 23 March 2009 in Brussels. On this occasion, the World Bank, the EBRD and the EIB committed to provide Ukraine/Naftogaz with funds to implement a rehabilitation and modernization plan in exchange for gas market reforms. A Technical Coordination Unit has been established to oversee the implementation of the relevant projects.

Council of the EU, Black Sea Environmental Partnership - Information from the Romanian Delegation

Brussels, 8 March 2010 [Link](#)

Black Sea Environmental Partnership

Background

As part of the Black Sea Synergy programme, the concept of the Black Sea Environmental Partnership project was developed by Romania and amplified in close cooperation with the European Commission during 2009. It is based on the suggestions made by the Commission, in its report about the implementation of the Black Sea Synergy programme (2008), concerning the potential of sectoral partnerships to be developed with the support of leading states for the purpose of advancing the implementation of the Synergy.

Romania's efforts have been motivated by the reality that in spite of the existing environmental cooperation around the Black Sea, there is still room for improvement, taking into account the region's environmental opportunities, in terms of an exceptional biodiversity value. At the same time, the Black Sea countries lack the necessary resources and institutional capacity to address individually the heavy legacy of environmental damage and to properly tackle environmental issues. In this context, the Partnership is a very timely and promising initiative both for the EU and for the region.

By supporting this initiative, Romania stresses the need to generate new momentum in protecting the environment in the wider Black Sea region, making better use of the existing mechanisms and formats of cooperation, and engaging all the stakeholders.

Aim

Taking into consideration the complexity of environmental issues affecting the Black Sea and inspired by a similar initiative under the Northern Dimension, the Black Sea Environmental Partnership aims at creating a framework for the promotion and implementation of environmental regional cooperation between the EU Member States which are interested, and the wider Black Sea region. This instrument would enhance the positive potential for environmental cooperation existing in the

wider Black Sea area, and would address matters of common concern such as water, soil and air pollution, integrated river basin management, protection of ecosystems and biodiversity, etc.

In order to facilitate environmental progress, the Partnership is to provide financial resources for regional co-operation, serving shared environmental values and objectives supported by the EU and the Black Sea States. Strong encouragement will be given to pragmatic and viable projects that make a difference in the current situation.

Acknowledging the specificities of the EU's relations with Black Sea countries, the Black Sea Environmental Partnership would further strengthen these relations and focus them on positive-sum games.

Progress and way forward

The formal launch of the Black Sea Environmental Partnership will take place on the 16th of March in Brussels, with the participation of EU and Black Sea Synergy States' environment ministers. By way of preparation, the European Commission and Romania organized a brainstorming seminar to facilitate wider regional ownership and generate input into the process. The seminar took place in Brussels on 25 February.

The active involvement of the European Commission and of the EU Member States is essential for developing the Environmental Partnership in this region as an effective instrument for contributing to a green and stable wider Black Sea area.

Štefan Füle, European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, Strong Civil Society Pillar – Major Objective of the EU Eastern Partnership Policy, 4th Meeting of the PERC (Pan-European Regional Council) Executive Committee, Brussels, European Economic and Social Committee

Brussels, 8 March 2010 [Link](#)

Thank you for the invitation to meet with you today. I am glad to be addressing this distinguished audience of trade unionists today just a few days after the Commission has issued its Europe 2020 strategy. The objective we have proposed is a Europe of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth to create new jobs and a sense of direction to our societies. The strategy also makes clear that to create prosperity at home we need to engage with our neighbours to help create prosperity and stability there as well. Both inside the EU and in our relations with our neighbours we will need a strong dialogue with all of

civil society and especially with trade unions and employer organizations.

An active involvement of civil society in the European Neighbourhood Policy has in fact been sought from the outset of this policy– perhaps more than in any other foreign policy area. The European Commission has been in touch with civil society when preparing the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plans and has liaised with civil society when drafting the country progress reports on their implementation. Regular contacts are also established as part of the Mid-Term Review of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. The aim is to consult Civil Society Organisations more systematically and seek ways to further involve them in the implementation process.

After five years of cooperation in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy the time has come to deepen and intensify our relations with countries in the Eastern flank of the EU. **By launching the Eastern Partnership (the EaP) we seek to support democratic and market-oriented reforms in partner countries, consolidate their statehood and bring them closer to the EU.** We have offered partners political association and gradual integration in the EU economy. We will achieve these goals by forging new contractual relations – Association Agreements, which will embrace also establishing a deep and comprehensive free trade area with each of the partner countries. We support our partners in their reforms by Comprehensive Institution Building Programmes, which aim at improving administrative capacity in all relevant sectors of cooperation. In order to assist the Eastern countries' efforts to approximate to EU standards and to foster exchanges of experience and best practice, we have established multilateral platforms.

In all these activities we need a strong support of civil society. Civil Society Organizations can play a pivotal role in promoting and implementing reforms. Without the full commitment of all actors involved, including civil society, we will not succeed in delivering all ambitious goals of the EaP. That is why we put forward, in the Communication on the Eastern Partnership, a proposal to set up **the Civil Society Forum (the CSF)**. The idea was **endorsed by the Prague Summit** where the EaP initiative was launched. The main objective of the CSF is to promote civil society involvement within the EaP and strengthen Civil Society Organisations in the partner countries. **The Commission made a first step by organising, in cooperation with the European Economic and Social Committee and the Swedish Presidency, the initial meeting of the Forum in November 2009.** The meeting revealed great potential for stronger involvement of Civil Society Organisations within the Eastern Partnership. Around 200 Civil Society Organisations took part, of these more than 140 were from the EaP countries. We invited a wide range of various Civil Society Organisa-

tions: NGOs, trade unions and employer organisations as well as think tanks. **The presence of trade unions and employers organisations within the ranks of the CSF provides an opportunity to include on the agenda issues relating to economic sustainability seen from both perspectives: employees' and employers'.** This is of paramount importance as the EaP is not only about political association; it is also about economic integration. One of the important items to be covered by the economic dimension of the EaP is improved market access and the promotion of free trade areas. To achieve these goals **we need robust economies in the Eastern flank of the EU. And robust economies mean economies based on social values and rights of workers.** In this context we see a great role for the trade unions, which historical role has been to improve the conditions of work and life of workers and their families. **I am glad to see that your voice is heard and recommendations worked out by the participants to the first meeting of the Forum have made it clear that promotion of social dialogue and core labour standards, including right to collective bargaining, should be included on the economic and social agenda of the EaP.**

I think that the CSF will enable you to give your input into the further work. The Forum itself has a working group dealing with economic integration and convergence with EU policies corresponding to one of the EaP multilateral platforms. This will allow for closer cooperation between the Forum and the platform in the future. A Steering Committee will now take forward how the Forum can best contribute within the framework of the EaP.

The Commission attaches great importance to the Forum and will continue to facilitate its activities. We would like to see the CSF as a strong partner being able to provide other EaP stakeholders with its recommendations regarding the EaP implementation. It should serve as a cooperation platform for Civil Society Organisations from EU Member States and EaP countries. Civil Society Organisations involved in the Forum's activities could promote the EaP and the European model of development in their respective countries.

I look forward to working closely with you and further strengthening the civil society pillar within the EaP.

Štefan Füle, European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, Eastern Partnership - New Challenges for EU Businesses, Eastern Partnership Event at the Czech House in Brussels

Brussels, 4 March 2010 [Link](#)

Thank you for your invitation to attend today's meeting. I am pleased to be here and to contribute to advancing an issue of common interest: i.e. to open up business opportunities in the six countries covered by the Eastern Partnership.

Let me put my remarks in the context of our efforts to create growth in the EU. Yesterday, the Commission adopted the Europe 2020 strategy.

In this document, we have for the first time a real external dimension to our growth and jobs strategy.

As Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy I believe we should capitalise on the attractiveness of our regulatory environment and expand the area where EU rules are applied. We have policies and instruments at our disposal to do so.

Over the last 5 years, we have seen a steady increase in our trade with both the enlargement and the neighbourhood countries – in absolute terms, but also as a proportion of the EU's world trade. The EU's trade with the ENP region has progressed positively during the 5 year period 2004 – 2008, with EU exports rising by 63% and imports by 91%. Even when energy products are excluded imports from the ENP region grew by 31%. **Many of these countries have a largely untapped potential for growth and as their principal and – due to geographic proximity – obvious trading partner, the EU has a direct interest in supporting their economic development.**

This is also a real opportunity for the Neighbourhood countries as it will help them to better anchor their own reform efforts: it opens a clear path to further extend the reach of our Single Market rules for instance through deeper and more comprehensive free trade agreements.

This needs to be to our mutual benefit. One of the key messages of the neighbourhood policy package (ENP) - which I will present in April - ought to be very clear and unambiguous: The higher degree of co-operation with our partners that we are offering should be accompanied with stronger commitments to the rule of law and fundamental freedoms on their side as this is a pre-requisite for economic growth and prosperity.

This is also at the heart of what the EU and the 6 partner countries of the Eastern Partnership agreed in the Prague declaration of last May: the further partners can go with their political and economic reform the further the EU

will respond through enhanced political association and further economic integration. In a nutshell we are prepared to offer the partners: new contractual arrangements through the negotiation of Association Agreements, deep and comprehensive free trade agreements when conditions are right, and steps towards the long-term goal of visa free regime. In addition, we have established a multilateral framework for discussing issues common to all partners wishing to move closer to the EU. Four thematic Platforms have already got down to work and five flagship initiatives are being launched.

Let me briefly describe where we have got to and start off with Ukraine.

The election of a new Ukrainian President in February and the likely formation of a new administration provide both an opportunity and a challenge to the EU to exploit the tools at our disposal through the Eastern Partnership. First of all we need to convey a strong sense to the new leadership that the EU is committed to strengthening its relationship with Ukraine. We need to underline that reform is essential to Ukraine's future stability and prosperity.

I would single out two main challenges for Ukraine: political stability and the economic recovery. To address the first issue the new President must be ready to work with a wide political constituency, including the opposition. Ultimately a sustainable response will depend upon a constitutional reform.

As regards the economic situation in Ukraine, the new administration must implement a raft of reforms. First and foremost Ukraine must get back on track with the IMF programme. It must implement the reforms in the gas sector, adopt a budget for 2010 and continue the work of recapitalising the banking sector. It must make serious efforts to combat corruption.

At the same time we must offer concrete and tangible support to Ukraine in its reform efforts for example by providing macro-financial assistance, continuing support to the reform and modernisation of the gas sector and targeted financial and technical cooperation. On the issue of mobility, I believe we should be ready to discuss further a roadmap approach towards the long-term goal of visa free regime.

The first stage of our engagement has been very fruitful and has evoked positive responses on both sides. During the recent visit of President Yanukovich to Brussels this week, the EU and Ukraine have recommitted themselves to work towards concluding the negotiations on the Association Agreement and the deep and comprehensive free trade agreement. Our research shows that the DCFTA will bring substantial economic gains to both Ukraine and the EU: Ukraine will double the exports to the EU and gain access to a market of 500 million consumers.

Turning briefly to our other partners. How far Belarus' relationship with the EU develops will depend on its readiness to embark on fundamental democratic and economic reforms.

Negotiations on an Association Agreement with the Republic of Moldova have just started and we are assisting Moldova in preparing itself for possible future DCFTA negotiations. At the same time, the current trade regime based on the Autonomous Trade Preferences is generous and offers a lot of potential for businesses.

The Commission has presented draft negotiating directives for Association Agreements with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia which are now being discussed in the Council and which provide for the establishment of the objective of establishing DCFTAs.

You have asked me to address two specific questions. The first is: How can EU business organisations be helpful in capacity building?

From my point of view, there is a need to see partner countries' business organisations streamlined, as was the case for many of the Member States when they joined the EU.

We have to promote the development of independent business to become a strong interlocutor for the Government and the EU. I am convinced European business organisations can help by sharing their own experiences.

In addition, the improvement of the business climate is one of the key issues of the Eastern Partnership process. And there EU business organisations can also make an important contribution.

Business has already played a valuable role in informing the Commission's messages on economic reform. It is now our intention to invite Business Europe to the next Platform meeting on "Economic Integration and Convergence with EU Policies" which will have a comprehensive discussion on SME policy issues.

Turning to your second question, whether a strengthened dialogue with the Eastern Partnership is an opportunity for EU businesses?

The answer is clearly yes as my remarks on Europe2020 have already suggested.

Open markets and economic integration are central to the Eastern Partnership since they are key for the modernisation of the partner Countries' economies in line with international and EU standards.

At the same time however, EU companies will also be able to take advantage of improved access to the markets of the partner countries. Market liberalisation will increase their export potential and their options for future investments.

We have established a Trade Panel within the Eastern Partnership multilateral platforms to exchange information and experiences. It will promote approximation to the trade and investment related EU *acquis* and will promote consistency of measures taken by Eastern Partner countries at national, bilateral and regional level.

Thank you for your attention and I hope you agree that achieving sustainable growth in the EU requires us to work for stability and prosperity in our neighbourhood. The Eastern Partnership represents a “double win-win” prospect – increased stability and prosperity for both the EU and partner countries; and increased business opportunities for companies.

Joint Statement of the Foreign Ministers of the Visegrad Group at their Meeting in Budapest

Budapest, 2 March 2010 [Link](#)

1. The foreign ministers of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia met in Budapest at a special meeting dedicated to the Eastern Partnership. The Visegrad ministers' meeting was followed by a conference with the participation of the European Commission, the Baltic States, Spain, Belgium, Sweden and the Eastern partners, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

2. With regard to common historical experience with the partner countries and geographic proximity, Eastern Partnership has a specific importance for the Visegrad countries. The Ministers reconfirmed their commitment to the Eastern Partnership Declaration, adopted at the Summit on 7 May 2009 in Prague and expressed a strong interest in a dynamic development of the initiative. In particular, they stressed that the Partnership is based on commitments to the principles of international law and to fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as to market economy, sustainable development and good governance. They also highlighted the importance of the principles of inclusiveness, differentiation and conditionality, as well as joint ownership.

3. The Ministers welcomed the progress in the implementation achieved so far, both in the bilateral and multilateral dimensions of the Eastern Partnership. The Ministers also welcomed the progress achieved by the Civil Society

Forum and in the parliamentary dimension.

4. The Visegrad Group promotes stability, good governance and economic development in the six countries of the Eastern Partnership (hereinafter the partner countries). The V4 therefore agreed to develop an increasingly

close relationship with the Eastern partners.

5. The Visegrad Group will support thorough involvement of the European Commission in the implementation of the Eastern Partnership and will assist the Commission to take any steps which would contribute to reach the objectives of the Eastern Partnership.

6. In order to achieve the Partnership goals V4 Ministers will support political and socio-economic reforms, facilitating approximation and convergence towards the European Union within the Partnership framework. The Visegrad countries offer their help, expertise and experience in reforms reinforcing democratization, the rule of law and market economy, including through effective utilisation of the possibilities provided by the Eastern Partnership. They will support the implementation of, and strive for involvement in, the Comprehensive Institution Building Programmes, with the respective countries. The ministers also highlighted the importance of connecting the region into European energy and transport infrastructure networks.

7. Ministers highlighted the need to make further progress in bilateral cooperation in line with the goals of the Eastern Partnership. The Visegrad countries will look for ways to enhance the availability of funding from EIB, EBRD, the World Bank and other international financial institutions to Eastern Partnership projects and initiatives.

8. The Ministers emphasised the need to take gradual steps towards visa regime liberalisation for individual partner countries and on a case by case basis provided that conditions for well-managed and secure mobility are in place. The Ministers stressed the need to strengthen the energy security cooperation of all participants with regard to long-term energy supply and transit, including through better regulation and energy efficiency.

9. The Ministers agreed that launching of the informal "Group of Friends" of the Eastern Partnership, consisting of non-EU countries willing to support or participate in the implementation of the Partnership, would bring added value for the cooperation with the Eastern partners.

10. The Visegrad Group supported the idea of holding an informal meeting of Eastern Partnership foreign ministers in Poland in May of this year and expressed their hope that the meeting will allow for maintaining the momentum of the initiative and giving it a strong political impetus after the first year of its operation.

11. With the objective of carrying the Eastern Partnership forward and guaranteeing an appropriate attention to and engagement of EU Member States as well as partner countries within it, the Ministers agreed to continue the implementation of the initiative during the period of the Hungarian and the Polish EU Presidency with sus-

tained dynamism.

EU Foreign Affairs Council, Conclusions on Republic of Moldova -Visa Ban on the Leadership of the Transnistrian Region

Brussels, 22 February 2010 [Link](#)

[...]

The Council adopted a decision (5934/10) extending restrictive measures against the leadership of the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova by twelve months until 27 February 2011. The decision, however, provides for the suspension of the visa ban until 30 September 2010 in order to encourage progress towards a political settlement to the Transnistrian conflict, to address remaining problems in Latin-script schools and to restore the free movement of persons; at the end of the suspension period, the Council will review the visa ban in the light of developments.

The decision includes also an amendment of the list of persons to whom the visa ban applies.

The Council also adopted the following conclusions (6329/10):

“1. The Council welcomes the cautious positive developments in the Transnistrian settlement process in recent months. It notes in particular an increased openness of the new government of the Republic of Moldova and the *de facto* Transnistrian leadership to engage in dialogue. The Council also welcomes the Moldovan government’s efforts to address the Transnistrian issue, its expression of a firm commitment to the 5+2 process and its support of confidence-building measures.

2. At the same time, the Council regrets the fact that no substantial progress has been made towards a political settlement of the Transnistrian conflict; that the situation of some Latin-script Moldovan schools in the Transnistrian region remains problematic and that the *de facto* Transnistrian authorities continue to place obstacles on the free movement of persons.

3. The Council has therefore decided to extend the restrictive measures (provided for by Common Position 2008/160/CFSP and extended by Common Position 2009/139/CFSP) against certain members of the *de facto* Transnistrian authorities for a further period of 12 months. However, in order to encourage progress, the Council has decided at the same time to suspend the implementation of the restrictive measures until the end of September 2010. The Council has also decided that it is appropriate to delete 3 names from the list of targeted persons.

The Council calls on the *de facto* Transnistrian authori-

ties strongly to engage in constructive efforts to reach a political settlement to the Transnistrian conflict, to address the remaining problems of the Latin-script schools, and to restore free movement of persons. By the end of September 2010, the Council will review the suspension of the restrictive measures and the visa ban list in the light of the developments, notably in the areas mentioned above. The Council may decide to re-apply or lift the travel restrictions at any time.

4. The Council reaffirms the commitment of the European Union to the Transnistrian settlement efforts, notably by participation in the 5+2 process and by supporting confidence-building measures. The Council recalls the importance of resuming the 5+2 talks as soon as possible in order to achieve a sustainable settlement to the Transnistrian conflict, in full respect of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova.

5. The Council reaffirms its firm commitment to continue strengthening the political association and economic integration of the Republic of Moldova with the EU. In this context, the Council recalls the joint statement of the Cooperation Council between the EU and the Republic of Moldova on 21 December 2009, and welcomes the start of negotiations on an Association Agreement on 12 January 2010.”

EU special representatives - Extension of mandates

The Council adopted decisions extending the mandates of EU special representatives (EUSRs).

Their mandates will be extended from 1 March to 31 August 2010, or until the entry into force of the decision establishing the European External Action Service, whichever is sooner. The decisions follow proposals by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

The mandates of the EUSRs extended are:

for the South Caucasus, Mr Peter Semneby (6107/10)

for Republic of Moldova, Mr Kálmán Mizsei (6084/10)

for the Middle East peace process, Mr Marc Otte (6083/10)

for the crisis in Georgia, Mr Pierre Morel (6080/10)

for the African Great Lakes region, Mr Roeland van de Geer (6189/10)

for Central Asia, Mr Pierre Morel (6159/10)

for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr Valentin Inzko (6121/10)

for Sudan, Mr Torben Brylle (6109/10)

[...]

Declaration by the High Representative, Catherine Ashton, on behalf of the European Union on the Ratification of Protocol 14 to the European Convention on Human Rights by the Russian Federation

Brussels, 4 February 2010 [Link](#)

The EU welcomes the ratification of Protocol 14 to the European Convention on Human Rights by the Russian Federation, which allows its entry into force.

The application of Protocol 14 will reinforce the Convention and make the European Court of Human Rights more effective and efficient, thereby strengthening its crucial role in the protection of human rights in Europe.

The EU considers the entry into force of Protocol 14 an essential and integral part of the current overall reform process of the European system of human rights protection and is therefore looking forward to cooperating constructively on furthering these reforms at the ministerial conference in Interlaken.

Protocol 14 also provides an enabling clause for accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

•Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

Declaration of the Ministers of Energy of the BSEC Member States on the Establishment of an Integrated Black Sea Energy Market

Sofia, 28 January 2010

We, the Ministers of Energy of the BSEC Member States, having gathered in Sofia on 28 of January 2010, to identify the steps to be taken towards the gradual establishment of an integrated Black Sea energy market:

Reaffirming our commitment to the provisions of the BSEC Declarations on cooperation in energy adopted in Baku (19 September 2003), Alexandroupolis (4 March 2005) and the Joint Statement adopted in Sochi (27 September 2006), the

Declaration on the occasion of the 15th Anniversary Summit of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation adopted in Istanbul (25 June 2007), the Declaration on Cooperation between BSEC and the EU adopted in Kiev (9 April 2008) and the Yerevan Declaration (20 March 2009), and emphasizing the need for their expeditious practical implementation;

Taking note of the Declaration of the Energy Summit “Natural Gas for Europe: “Security and Partnership” in Sofia, 25 April 2009;

Recognizing that the issue of establishing an energy market in the Black Sea region is one of the main priorities for the BSEC Member States;

Acknowledging the importance of diversification of routes and sources of energy supply for the BSEC Member States;

Cognizant of the growing interdependence of BSEC Member States on the supply and consumption of primary energy resources;

Acknowledging, in this regard, the necessity to further the cooperation among the BSEC Member States to the end of establishing a stable and integrated regional energy market;

Cognizant of the increasing importance of the Black Sea region in global and European energy aspects as an important transit route for new alternative sources of energy supplies;

Stressing the importance of the climate change issue in the promotion of energy cooperation among the BSEC Member States;

Recognizing that growing interdependence between producing, consuming and transit countries requires equally shared responsibility and strengthened partnership in the region;

Emphasizing the role of the BSEC Related Bodies as additional important mechanisms for further promoting the energy cooperation within the BSEC Organization;

Acknowledging the significant role of the private sector as well as possible Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) in the establishment and operation of the regional energy market:

Have agreed to:

Cooperate to the end of establishing an efficiently operating energy market in the Black Sea region;

Study the possibility of approximation of the national legislations of the BSEC Member States in the energy sector;

Identify the necessary measures for creation of a specific regulatory framework allowing the efficient establishment of the Black Sea integrated energy market;

Enhance cooperation with the EU and other relevant international institutions in order to develop the energy infrastructure in the Black Sea region;

Support projects promoting sustainable energy develop-

ment;

Support all activities aimed at improving energy security in the Black Sea region including energy efficiency and renewables;

Ensure the exchange of information, expertise and best practices, develop training programs among the BSEC Member States.

The Participants expressed their gratitude to the Authorities of Bulgaria for their warm hospitality and excellent organization of the meeting.

Press Release, Ninth Round of Geneva Discussion on Security and Stability in Transcaucasia

Geneva, 28 January 2010 [Link](#)

The ninth meeting within the framework of international discussions on security and stability in Transcaucasia took place in Geneva on January 28. It was attended by delegations from the Republic of Abkhazia, Georgia, the Russian Federation, the United States, and the Republic of South Ossetia, and EU, UN and OSCE representatives. Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs/State Secretary Grigory Karasin headed the Russian delegation.

The main focus of attention in the group on security issues was the need to develop firm security guarantees for Abkhazia and South Ossetia in line with the Medvedev-Sarkozy agreements. Different variants of the conclusion of agreements on the nonuse of force between Georgia, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia were examined in this context. In discussing the current situation in the Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-South Ossetian border areas, a positive assessment was given to the role of the joint incident prevention mechanisms. Concrete ways for an acceptable solution for all parties to the problem of detainees and missing persons were outlined.

Participants in the group on humanitarian issues continued discussing the problem of refugees and displaced persons. They noted the priority importance of following in these matters the principles of voluntary return in safety and dignity.

The next meeting in Geneva is scheduled for March 30, 2010.

Olli Rehn, EU Commissioner for Enlargement, Speech on Democratisation in Turkey, EP Plenary

Strasbourg, 20 January 2010 [Link](#)

The Turkish accession process remains of strategic impor-

tance for the European Union.

- Democratic reforms and transformation of Turkey reinforce stability and security in Turkey and in the wider neighbourhood of the EU and Turkey. Progress in Turkey, in turn, inspires reformers and acts as a catalyst for democracy and human rights in the whole region.

- Obviously, progress is not always straightforward. With positive developments we see also developments that give reason to be concerned. When that is the case, we raise these issues with the Turkish authorities.

- When a society is experiencing fundamental political changes, it rarely is the case that there is all the time full clarity of the direction in the middle of events.

- The democratic opening is an example of such a development. In summer 2009, the Turkish government launched the democratic opening, aiming at raising democratic and living standards for all Turkish citizens.

- This important initiative addresses the Kurdish issue through dialogue and within the framework of Turkey's democratic institutions.

- A number of landmark reforms have been carried out to this day. Some of them were next to impossible only a few years ago. Kurdish language TV programmes by private and public broadcasters are a telling example of such welcome changes.

- But the recent setbacks in the democratic opening are indeed reason for serious concern. We regret the decision of the Constitutional Court in December to close the Democratic Society Party – DTP.

- Following the DTP closure, several party members, including mayors, were arrested, in the context of an anti-terror investigation.

- Simultaneously, PKK terrorist attacks continue unabated in the Southeast and put the life of Turkish soldiers at risk.

- The tense political climate has also been fuelled by celebrations in the wake of the return of PKK members and sympathisers coming from Northern Iraq. Nationalist circles have grabbed this opportunity to attack the government on its policies.

- Following this backlash against the democratic opening, I welcome last week's announcement by the Turkish government to carry the democratic opening further.

- The democratic transformation of Turkey is a forceful testimony of the continued soft power of the EU accession perspective, when used firmly and fairly, and with rigour.

- It is not an easy process, but one in which the journey is as important as the destination. Let's keep it alive and make it work for the joint benefit of the EU and Turkey.

Answers to European Parliament Questionnaire for Commissioner-Designate Catherine Ashton (High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission)

Brussels, 6 January 2010 [Link](#)

[...]

Policy-related questions

4. What are the three main priorities you intend to pursue as part of your proposed portfolio, taking into account, where relevant, the financial, economic and social crisis and concerns related to sustainable development?

The European Union should be a responsible and reliable international partner in a fast changing world. The last year has shown us that we must cooperate and communicate with our partners in order to overcome economic and social difficulties. EU citizens want to see Europe be more active on the international scene. The Lisbon Treaty gives us the opportunity to make our voice stronger and more unified. My major goal in the coming years will be to strengthen the European Union's role as a coherent, capable and strategic global actor. In order to ensure this, I will work closely with the other Commissioners dealing with external relations.

My first priority will be to build the European External Action Service as an efficient and coherent service that will be the pride of the Union and the envy of the rest of the world. I will draw on the talent that already exists in the European Commission and the Council Secretariat, and welcome new colleagues from our 27 Member States to join as well. We need a balanced service that adds value for all of the citizens of the European Union, and that can represent them to the outside world.

Second, the European Union must pull its weight in areas of crisis and conflict, including in the Middle East, the Balkans, Iran, Afghanistan and Africa. I intend to look closely at all our operations and to make sure we are efficient and effective in our use of resources, and that we

are joined-up in our approach. My objective is to enhance efficient cooperation and use of the different EU's crisis management tools. We are already playing an important role in the Southern Caucasus. We can act jointly with the US in the Middle East, building on the Quartet activity. In Africa, the Union is already involved in many actions. For example, the Atalanta operation is perceived as a success story on which we can build a more comprehensive policy. The Afghan conflict has to be solved and the Union is committed, both with its military force but also by training police and building health and agricultural infrastructure.

Third, I will seek to reinforce our strong cooperation with strategic partners such as the United States, China, Russia, India, Brazil and Japan. Of course, we may have differences with these countries, but we can also increase our cooperation in order to solve the many challenges we all face. We would also continue to build on the neighbourhood policy which we developed with our close southern and eastern partners. This approach does not mean that we are forgetting other partners in Latin America, Asia or

Africa - the European Union has already developed a network of bilateral relations and agreements with countries across the world. We can use this network and our involvement in the multilateral system to promote our values and interests.

5. What are the specific legislative and non-legislative initiatives you intend to put forward, and according to what timetable? What specific commitments can you make regarding in particular the committees' priorities and requests attached hereto which would fall within your portfolio? How would you personally ensure the good quality of legislative proposals?

I would prepare detailed proposals for the establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS), so that the Council can take a decision by the end of April. In close cooperation with the competent Commissioners, I intend to produce a package that will

include not only a draft Decision on the establishment of the EEAS but also the required amendments to the Financial Regulation and the Staff Regulations, as well as a draft amending budget for 2010, including amendments related to the setting up of the EEAS.

I would involve the European Parliament closely in this process, including in the course of the preparation of the proposals and look forward to consultation with the Parliament on the draft decision.

As a Vice-President of the Commission, I will contribute to the preparation of the new Financial Framework. As part of this exercise, I will draw the lessons from the recent midterm review of the financing instruments for external relations, as the current instruments expire in 2013.

The Union is engaged in a number of bilateral and multi-lateral negotiations with countries such as Ukraine, Russia, China, Thailand that I hope can be concluded as soon as possible. In Latin America, my objective is to sign at sub-regional level. I would also engage in a dialogue with the European Parliament on potential future initiatives with partners and the development of relations with strategic partners.

My approach would not only be geographical but I would also address key "horizontal" issues. As the Lisbon Treaty reinforces the commitments of the European Union to

human rights, my objective is to build on our basic values of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights. I also want to strengthen the early warning and crisis prevention capacities of the European Union by drawing on the expertise of NGOs, and use all the instruments available to strengthen the engagement of the European Union in countering chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear proliferation. I intend to launch a review of external policy and of external action instruments in key areas. I intend to use such review to identify additional specific legislative and non legislative initiatives which will be required for the Union to achieve its objectives.

Answers to European Parliament Questionnaire for Commissioner-Designate Štefan Füle (Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy)

Brussels, 6 January 2010 [Link](#)

[...]

Policy-related questions

4. What are the three main priorities you intend to pursue as part of your proposed

portfolio, taking into account, where relevant, the financial, economic and social crisis and concerns related to sustainable development?

The perspective of joining the EU is a powerful means to encourage political and economic reform in all candidate countries. The enlargement process serves the interests of the European Union by providing an anchor of stability especially during difficult times in regions of strategic importance to the EU. It is vital that we work together with the countries and peoples involved to alleviate the impact of the financial and economic crisis and to ensure that future growth is sustainable, as well as building stable societies based firmly on democracy and the rule of law.

My main task will be to ensure that any future accessions are solidly prepared and strengthen the Union's further development. We need to pursue an enlargement process based on the commitments we have made and the conditionalities that have been set, as stated in the renewed commitment for Enlargement.

From 19 December, young people and other citizens from three partner countries (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro) can travel to the EU without the EU and facilitate contacts with their counterparts in the EU. Preparations for visa liberalisation can lead to decisive progress in areas like border management and the fight against organised crime and corruption.

Turning to my future work with particular partner countries, Croatia should be able to fulfil its goal of concluding the accession negotiations next year, provided it fulfils all the required conditions. Some of the most challenging conditions are in the fields of judicial reform and fundamental rights.

I am also committed to taking forward the accession negotiations with Turkey, in line with the Negotiating Framework. Further progress in the negotiations will require Turkey to step up efforts to meet established conditions including full non-discriminatory implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Association Agreement. It is particularly important that Turkey gives concrete support to the negotiations under the auspices of the UN aimed at a fair, comprehensive and viable settlement of the Cyprus problem. I will mobilise all means available to the Commission to support these negotiations. I hope that the Member States will soon be in a position to open accession negotiations with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in line with the Commission's recommendation. Sustained efforts are however needed in order to resolve the name issue with Greece. Regarding Iceland, I will submit a comprehensive, objective and rigorous Opinion to the College in early 2010.

My priority for the potential candidates of the Western Balkans will be to further promote reform and good neighbourly relations, complete the network of Stabilisation and Association Agreements and pursue the path towards visa liberalisation (together with my colleague in charge of home affairs). I will also undertake the necessary groundwork to prepare comprehensive, objective and rigorous opinions on the applications for membership from Montenegro and Albania and respond similarly to any future request from the Council to prepare such opinions for other applicants. I am committed to using all available EU instruments to support Kosovo's progress, without prejudice to the question of its status.

Finally, given the recent progress regarding the Interim Trade Agreement with Serbia, I hope that the necessary pre-conditions will be met to allow for the start of the ratification process of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement already in summer 2010 thus allowing our relations with Serbia to enter a new era.

While each country will be judged on its individual merits, it is also clear that particular consideration needs to be given to the regional aspect of our work and regional cooperation can further both political stabilisation and economic development.

Under the new Lisbon Treaty, the EU has specifically committed itself to building a special relationship with its neighbours. My aim is to enhance the effectiveness and visibility of the European Neighbourhood Policy, and step up efforts to bring stability and prosperity to the neighbourhood where I will of course wish to work par-

ticularly closely with the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the European Commission and the European External

Council of the European Union, EU-Republic of Moldova Cooperation Council

Brussels, 21 December 2009 [Link](#)

The parties agreed to continue their efforts to bring the Republic of Moldova (hereafter referred to as Moldova) closer to the EU, acknowledging Moldova's European aspirations. They discussed the internal developments in Moldova and agreed on the importance of the ambitious reform-oriented agenda and of a stable political, social and economic situation in the country. They welcomed the staff-level agreement between the Moldovan Government and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), noted the commitment of Moldova to fully cooperate with the international financial institutions and the EU to ensure economic recovery and looked forward to the signing of the agreement with the IMF.

The sides agreed on the need to uphold human rights standards, democratic principles and the rule of law in Moldova, stressing the role of civil society in this context. They welcomed recent positive steps in this direction and the commitment of the Moldovan authorities to address outstanding human rights issues and ODIHR recommendations for future elections. They agreed that further progress by Moldova to consolidate respect for these principles will reinforce their mutual ties. The EU side welcomed Moldova's readiness to set up a regular dialogue on Human Rights.

The EU and Moldova took stock of concrete achievements in sectoral cooperation. They welcomed in particular the decision at the Energy Community Treaty Ministerial Council in Zagreb on 18 December concerning the accession of Moldova to the Energy Community and agreed on the importance of Moldova's implementation of the related commitments. They also agreed on the value of the annual Action Plan Implementation Tools, as instruments to strengthen the domestic reform process in Moldova as well as EU-Moldova relations.

The sides emphasized the many opportunities provided by the Eastern Partnership, as a specific Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy, to strengthen the relationship between the EU and Moldova as well as among the Partner countries. They expressed their joint commitment to continuing the implementation of the Eastern Partnership, in both its bilateral and multilateral track.

The parties noted the need to strengthen administrative capacity at all levels in Moldova in order to further advance relations. In this context, they agreed to cooperate

closely in defining and implementing a Comprehensive Institution-Building programme, within the framework of the Eastern Partnership.

The sides agreed to promote further reforms and continued EU approximation in Moldova. They confirmed that negotiations on an EU-Moldova Association Agreement will be launched in Chisinau on 12 January 2010. They reiterated their vision of the new agreement as an innovative and ambitious document going beyond the established framework of cooperation and opening a new stage in their relations, notably by enhancing political dialogue and deepening sectoral cooperation.

Recognising that Moldova has exempted all EU citizens from the visa obligation, the parties underscored the need for full and effective implementation of the visa facilitation and readmission agreements by the authorities of EU Member States and Moldova. They welcomed the implementation of the Mobility Partnership. At the same time, they agreed to strive to set up in 2010 a dialogue examining the conditions for visa-free travel of Moldovan citizens to the EU as a long-term goal, taking into account the EU Global Approach to Migration and keeping in mind that gradual steps towards full visa liberalisation would be taken provided that conditions for well-managed and secure mobility were in place.

The parties reaffirmed their shared objective to establish a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), when the relevant conditions are met and expressed their commitment to make progress in line with the agreed set of steps towards that objective. They agreed on the importance for Moldova to pursue reforms in line with the EU-Moldova Action Plan in general, and in particular in all areas relevant for a DCFTA.

The parties discussed ways to increase the efficiency and impact of EU assistance to Moldova. They praised the work of the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) as an example of successful and beneficial cooperation, and welcomed the extension of the Mission's mandate starting from December 2009. The sides agreed on the importance of finalising the border demarcation process between Ukraine and Moldova, and acknowledged the possibility of using EUBAM's technical expertise to facilitate such a process.

The parties acknowledged the increased engagement of the EU in the Transnistria settlement efforts, including through the EUSR and by supporting confidence-building measures. They reiterated their commitment to constructive co-operation with all sides in the "5+2" settlement negotiations, with the aim to resume the "5+2" talks so as to achieve a sustainable settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, in full respect of territorial integrity and sovereignty of Moldova.

Recent Publications by the ICBSS

Third Policy Report of the Commission on the Black Sea



Manoli, Panagiota. *Reinvigorating Black Sea Cooperation: A Policy Discussion. Policy Report III*. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, March 2010.

This is the third policy report of the Commission on the Black Sea (a joint project of the GMFUS BST, the Bertelsmann Stiftung, TEPAV and the

ICBSS).

Black Sea regional identity is difficult to define with precision, and is a relatively new concept says Panagiota Manoli. Manoli who is lecturer at the Department of Mediterranean Studies of the University of the Aegean (Rhodes) and Senior Research Fellow at the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) is the author of the third Policy Report of the Commission on the Black Sea.

Relationships between states are fragile and sometimes conflict-prone, and external relationships vary widely states Manoli. A first wave of regionalist activity in the early 1990s focused on asserting the area's post-Cold War international standing, while a second wave early in this decade has been driven more by sectoral issues and external engagement. As regional identity coalesces, tension between EU and Russian influence is difficult to avoid, but the EU's eastern expansion and growing role as trade partner has given it increasing gravitational pull.

Black Sea regional cooperation has been expressed in numerous locally conceived organizations, as well as by multilateral, often sectoral projects driven by the EU or other international groups. Regional rivalries and weak institutional capacities have undermined local organizations' success. Among other criticisms, tangible projects have been slow to manifest, and societal participation has proved shallow; however, the groups have served as useful forums for foreign-policy dialogue, and signs of progress have recently emerged. Informal networks implying regional interdependencies also exist, but are not well understood.

Challenges to regional cooperation efforts include the persistence of unresolved conflicts, the need to generate trust and political commitment among leaders, a lack of financial and institutional resources, the need to engage the private sector and civil society, and the currently

fragmented nature of regional organizations. Policies need to be focused on clear developmental goals with realistic financing assessments, and would best be constructed along sectoral lines.

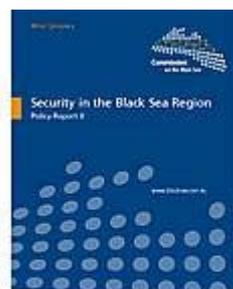
Recommendations to policymakers fall into several categories. Regional cooperation should be treated as a realistic, beneficial set of specific policies, rather than as an abstract goal. Existing regional institutions should be rationalized or replaced, and their work supported by additional technical and financial resources. Areas of cooperation should be chosen carefully, with a sectoral-level focus on regional public goods and network-building.

Local stakeholders should make clear commitments to regional projects with demonstrable impact, and avoid identifying cooperation as an objective if political will and policy support is lacking. The EU and other multilateral actors should similarly focus on projects with tangible, measurable interim objectives, should stress regional issues within bilateral relationships, and ensure that local actors retain substantial ownership of policy processes.

A wider use of feasibility studies, cost/benefit analyses and best practices would help spur interest in policy proposals, and make regional institutions' activity more efficient.

The Commission on the Black Sea is a civil society initiative, jointly developed and launched in 2009 by the German Bertelsmann Stiftung, Gütersloh; the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation (BST - GMFUS), Bucharest; the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV), Ankara; and the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS), Athens. Among members of the Commission on the Black Sea are a former vice prime minister, former ministers, current and former parliamentarians, public intellectuals and scholars from the whole Black Sea region, the European Union and the United States

Second Policy Report of the Commission on the Black Sea



Çelikpala, Mitat. *Security in the Black Sea Region. Policy Report II*. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, February 2010.

Regional tensions, natural resources and geopolitical rivalries make the Black Sea region a strategic but sensitive area. In the absence of cooperative structures able to contain conflict, security threats ranging from interstate conflicts to illegal trafficking have emerged.

Mitat Çelikpala, Associate Professor of International Relations at TOBB Economy and Technology University in Ankara, is the author of the second of a series of four policy reports presented by the Commission on the Black Sea. Following Çelikpala, the region is politically, historically and geographically divided.

Threats to regional security are diverse, including ongoing and potential military conflicts between states, frozen conflicts, displaced populations and terrorism. Some weaker states are at risk of failing. Military expenditures are rising, and issues of energy dependency and supply diversity are vital. The lack of cooperation has created a “security vacuum” exacerbating global and regional rivalries.

Çelikpala shows how three principal actors influence security policy options in the region. Russia seeks to maintain its role as the key regional actor, and to block externally driven energy projects or military alliances. US policymakers have focused on promoting democracy and market economy, and have prioritised energy issues and free trade expansion. Local states’ bilateral US ties and the prospect of NATO expansion have aggravated tensions with Russia. However, the Russia-Georgia war severely damaged US credibility in the region. Eastern enlargement has increased EU interest and activity in the region. The EU has sought various policy and economic reforms, and has served a conflict mediation role, but its regional security impact is limited.

Black Sea countries themselves have diverse approaches to security. The tension driven by non-regional actors is a serious concern, and produces a variety of responses. For instance, Turkey has pushed for a region-wide security initiative, possibly setting the stage for normalisation of Russia’s role.

This environment demands a dramatically more cooperative approach. Policies and institutions emphasizing competition should be discarded, while international organisations should promote regional trust. Conflict resolution processes must include all involved parties, and monitoring of military expenditures and conflict zones should be intensified.

Energy should be treated as a cooperative rather than competitive venture. EU programs should be more inclusive, and Russia in particular should be drawn into a broader network of security cooperation says Mitat Çelikpala.

ICBSS Policy Briefs



Japaridze, Tedo, Panagiota Manoli, Dimitrios Triantaphyllou, and Yannis Tsantoulis. “The EU’s Ambivalent Relationship with BSEC: Reflecting on the Past, Mapping out the Future.” *ICBSS Policy Brief*, no. 20. Athens: ICBSS, January 2010.

The relationship between the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the European Union (EU) has been characterized by many as limited and rather ambivalent. Since 2008, with the launching of the Black Sea Synergy (BSS), it seems to have gained a new momentum. However, many issues remain open as the almost parallel initiation of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) that overlooks and bypasses the BSEC’s (potential) role, appears to have posed somehow a significant challenge to the existing regional equations, thus questioning the future development of the interaction between the BSEC and the EU. Overall, although the emergence of both the BSS and the EaP is a positive development in many regards there are still some open issues and a clear scepticism in regard to both initiatives.

To assess this rather complicated situation and to clarify some of the pending issues, this paper undertakes a “reality check” by analysing the key features of both the BSS and the EaP while reflecting on the probability of a future upgraded relationship between the BSEC and the EU especially with the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. In this regard, the purpose of this paper is to reflect on the relatively recent past of this relationship, assess the current situation and table some proposals for the evolution of the relationship, thus considering the impact of these two policy approaches (BSS and EaP) and the BSEC’s potential role for the region as a whole and beyond it.

Other Recent Publications on the Black Sea Region

The following are selected recent publications pertinent to the Black Sea region

April 2010

- Grigoriadis, Ioannis N. "The Davutoğlu Doctrine and Turkish Foreign Policy." *Working Paper*, no. 8. Athens: ELIAMEP, April 2010. [Link](#)
- Linke, Krisitn and Marcel Viëtor, eds. *Prospects of a Triangular Relationship? Energy Relations between the EU, Russia and Turkey*. Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, April 2010. [Link](#)
- Goldthau, Andreas and Jan Martin Witte. *Global Energy Governance: The New Rules of the Game*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2010.
- Punsman, Burcu Gültekin. "Building Bridge of Trust and Confidence between Turks and Armenians in Support of the Normalization and Reconciliation Process." *TEPAV Policy Note*. Ankara: TEPAV, April 2010. [Link](#)
- De Waal, Thomas. "Armenia and Turkey: Bridging the Gap." *Policy Brief*, no. 87. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 2010. [Link](#)

March 2010

- Minchev, Ognyan. "The Black Sea Region: Strategic Balance and Policy Agenda." Sofia: Institute for Regional and International Studies, 11 March 2010. [Link](#)
- Jackson, P. Bruce. "Ukraine After Presidential Elections: How the West Should Respond: Why We Need a Reset." *On Wider Europe*. Washington, D.C.: GMF of the US, 19 March 2010. [Link](#)
- Dimitrovova, Bohdana. "Remaking Europe's Borders through the European Neighbourhood Policy." *CEPS Working Document*, no. 327. Brussels: CEPS, March 2010. [Link](#)
- Devrim, Deniz and Eduard Soler. "Turkey's Bold New Visa Diplomacy." *Notes Internacionals*. Barcelona: CIDOB, 12 March 2010. [Link](#)
- Fotiou, Eleni and Dimitrios Triantaphyllou. "Assessing Turkey's 'Soft Power' Role: Rhetoric versus Practice." *The International Spectator* 45, no.1 (March 2010): 99-113.

February 2010

- International Crisis Group. "Abkhazia: Deepening Dependence." *Europe Report*, no. 202. Sukhumi/Tbilisi/Istanbul/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 26 February 2010. [Link](#)
- Kramer, David J. "Ukraine's Post-Election 'To-Do' List." *Focus on Ukraine*. Washington, D.C.: GMF of the US, 11 February 2010. [Link](#)
- Jones, Peter. "The EU-Central Asia Education Initiative." *EUCAM Working Paper*, no. 9. Brussels: CEPS, 8 February 2010. [Link](#)
- Emerson, Michael, and Jos Boonstra, rapp. *Into EurAsia: Monitoring the EU's Central Asia Strategy*. Brussels/Madrid: CEPS/FRIDE, February 2010. [Link](#)
- Alessandri, Emiliano. "The New Turkish Foreign Policy and the Future of Turkey-EU Relations." Roma: IAI, February 2010. [Link](#)
- Eralp, Nilgün Arısan. "Turkey's Visa Policy: Has Turkey given up its demand of free movement in the EU?" *TEPAV Evaluation Note*. Ankara: TEPAV, February 2010. [Link](#)
- Eralp, Atila. "The Last Chance in Cyprus Negotiations and the Turkey-EU Relationship." *ELIAMEP Thesis 1/2010*. Athens: ELIAMEP, February 2010. [Link](#)
- Renz, Bettina. "Russian Military Reform: Prospects and Reforms." *RUSI Journal* 155, no. 1 (February 2010). [Link](#)
- Rosner, Kevin. "Russian Coal: Europe's New Energy Challenge." *Climate & Energy Paper Series*. Washington, D.C.: GMF of the US, February 2010. [Link](#)
- Triantaphyllou, Dimitrios, ed. *The Security Context in the Black Sea Region*. London: Routledge, February 2010.

January 2010

- Asmus, Ronald D. *A Little War that Shook the World Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, January

- 2010.
- Paszyc, Ewa. “Nord and South Stream won't save Gazprom.” *OSW Commentary*, no. 35. Warsaw: OSW, 28 January 2010. [Link](#)
 - Wood, Joseph. “Security Choices After the Election: New Direction for Ukraine?” *Focus on Ukraine*. Washington, D.C.: GMF of the US, 13 January 2010. [Link](#)
 - Nanivska, Vira. “EU standards of democratic governing—The only way to desovietize public administration in Ukraine.” *European Focus*, no. 4. Kyiv: ICPS, 12 January 2010. [Link](#)
 - Inayeh, Alina. “Ukraine and the EU: A Family Portrait.” *Focus on Ukraine*. Washington, D.C.: GMF of the US, 27 January 2010. [Link](#)
 - Göksel, Diba Nigar. “Turkey and the EU: Looking Back on 2009.” *On Turkey*. Washington, D.C.: GMF of the US, 26 January, 2010. [Link](#)
 - Górecki, Wojciech. “An ambivalent ‘independence’: Abkhazia, an unrecognised democracy under Russian protection.” *OSW Commentary*, no. 34. Warsaw: OSW, 20 January 2010. [Link](#)
 - Weitz, Richard. “Turkey and Russia Deepen Energy Partnership.” *The Turkey Analyst* 3, no. 1. Washington ,D.C./Stockholm/Sweden: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Joint Center, 18 January 2010. [Link](#)
 - Gallina, Nicole. “Puzzles of State Transformation: The Case of Armenia and Georgia.” *Caucasian Review of International Affairs* 4, no. 1 (Winter 2010). [Link](#)
 - Dreyer, Iana, Fredrik Erixon, and Robin Winkler. “The Quest for Gas Market Competition: Fighting Europe’s Dependency on Russian Gas more Effectively.” *ECIPE Occasional Paper*, no. 1/2010. Brussels: ECIPE, January 2010. [Link](#)
 - Galeotti, Mark, ed. *The Politics of Security in Modern Russia*. London: Ashgate, January 2010.
 - Sargsian, Manvel. *Mountainous Karabagh: The International Conditions Relating to the Conflict Zone are Changing (in Russian)*. Yerevan: The Armenian Center for National and International Studies (ACNIS), January 2010. [Link](#)
 - Shevtsova, Lilia. *The Lonely Power. Why Russia Has Not Become the West and Why the West Is Difficult for Russia* (in Russian). Moscow: Carnegie Moscow Center/ ROSSPEN Publishing House, January 2010.
 - Sportel, Erik and Sami Faltas, ed. *SSR in the Republic of Moldova: Strengthening Oversight of the Security Sector*. Harmonie Paper 24. Groningen: CESS, January 2010. [Link](#)
 - Punsmann, Burcu Gültekin. “Thinking about the Caucasus as a Land Bridge between Turkey and Russia.” *TEPAV Evaluation Note*. Ankara: TEPAV, January 2010. [Link](#)
 - Whitman, Richard and Stefan Wolff. “The EU as a Conflict Manager? The Case of Georgia and its Implications.” *International Affairs* 86, no. 1 (January 2010).
- December 2009**
- Krickus, Richard J. “Medvedev’s Plan: Giving Russia a Voice but not a Veto in a New European Security System.” Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute (SSI), U.S. Army War College, December 2009. [Link](#)

News and Events

The 3rd International Black Sea Symposium

The International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) will host the 3rd International Black Sea Symposium on “The Black Sea Region in Flux” on the island of Aegina, from 29 June – 4 July 2010.



The Symposium targets young professionals (aged 22-35) such as policy-makers, academics, journalists, diplomats, Members of Parliament, entrepreneurs, civil society leaders and researchers primarily from the countries of the Black Sea, EU member states, the United States and Central

Asia. The event’s working language is English.

During the 4-day intensive course, up to 40 participants will explore issues of importance for the Black Sea region in interactive sessions led by prominent speakers. Confirmed speakers to date include F. Stephen Larrabee of RAND Corporation, Washington D.C. and former Foreign Minister of Georgia, Amb. Tedo Japaridze, Athens. Sessions will cover topics such as security concerns, the role of key stakeholders like NATO and Russia, relations with the EU, and democratic institutions and good governance. Prof. Benjamin Broome of Arizona State University will guide workshops on conflict resolution.

The application process for the 3rd International Black Sea Symposium is now closed. A total of 129 applications were received from nationals of 29 countries worldwide.

This demonstrates the continuing high interest of the target group in this unique event. In fact, the number of applications received increased slightly in comparison to 2009, whilst the group of applicants is also more diverse this year. The majority of applications was received from the countries of the wider Black Sea region, while there was also an increase in applications from the USA, Central Asia and the Middle East. Moreover, for the first time young professionals from Africa and Australia applied.

The 3rd IBSS enjoys the support of the following *partners and sponsors*: Bertelsmann Stiftung; Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV); EU - Russia Centre; Harvard Black Sea Security Program; The Hellenic Observatory, London School of Economics; Institute for Regional and International Studies, Sofia; International Relations Council of Turkey; Kadir Has University; Open Ukraine Foundation; Postgraduate Programme on “Political, Economic and International Relations in the Mediterranean”, Department of Mediterranean Studies, University of the Aegean and the U.S. Embassy in Athens.

About the project: the International Black Sea Symposium project was launched in 2008 with the aim of contributing to dialogue, cooperation and understanding in the Black Sea region and beyond. It does so by providing a forum for study and networking in a multicultural and interdisciplinary environment to young professionals and international experts.

For further information: to find out more about the draft programme and the list of speakers please visit www.icbss.org.

Faces from the Mediterranean

A Photo Exhibition



The Anna Lindh Foundation’s National Networks of Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Lebanon and Montenegro co-organise a 2-week photo exhibition to be held simultaneously in Athens, Beirut, Belogradchik, Nicosia, Podgorica and Zagreb. From 24 April – 9 May 2010, the work of the respective artists from the participating countries will exhibit faces, places, scenes from everyday life, monuments and traditions common to

all Mediterranean countries and their heritage. The aim of the exhibition is to introduce these places and their culture and heritage highlighting commonalities of the ‘other’ by provoking their audience to stop and reflect on the message of the photo and, in the deliberate absence of tags, to wonder about their origin.

In the spirit of the Anna Lindh’s vision, this common project of six of its Mediterranean member states, aspires to improve perceptions, celebrate cultures and deconstruct stereotypes of the Mediterranean South and of South East Europe, as a way to promote social cohesion. Yet, this is not a passive effort, as it seeks to accomplish its aims through a simple interactive process, where visitors will be asked to write their impression on

note books and blackboards, over their feelings, thoughts or ideas of the location of each respective photo.

We start from the generally accepted reality that there is an overall lack of cultural knowledge and understanding among the Mediterranean peoples about their neighbours and especially of the immigrants from the Euro-Med area. Ignorance leads to misperceptions which foster prejudices and stereotypes, often leading to tragic events including violent reactions against immigrants. As a reaction to that, the project will bring to the respective people the *face* of their neighbours, by providing them with the opportunity to visualise, to wonder and to learn about the 'other'. Targeting particularly the youth, it seeks to trigger their response and encourage them to actively participate in a creative dialogue with the youngsters from the *other side of the fence*, whether this is within their country, or elsewhere.

The exhibition in Athens is organised in collaboration with the Hellenic Foundation for Culture and the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS).

Location: To Palio Sholeio
13 Vryssakiou str., Stoa Attalou, Plaka
Athens
Tel.: +30 210 897 5056

Exhibition opening hours: Monday-Friday:
5 p.m. - 9 p.m.
Saturday-Sunday:
11 a.m. - 8 p.m.

For more information see
www.euromedalex.org
www.hfc.gr
www.icbss.org

Issue no. 14—January 2010

- “The Path toward Collective Action,” by Dimitrios Triantaphyllou
- Council of the EU, Declaration on “Presidential Elections” in Abkhazia, Georgia, 12 December 2009
- European Council, Presidency Conclusions
- Council of the EU, Conclusions on Enlargement/SAP
- Presidency of the EU, First Foreign Ministers’ Meeting within the Framework of the Eastern Partnership
- Council of the EU, Conclusions on the South Caucasus
- Russian MFA, Joint Statement in Connection with the Expiration of the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms
- Council of the EU, EU-Ukraine Summit, Joint Statement
- OSCE Seventeenth Meeting, Ministerial Declaration
- OSCE, Joint Statement of the Minsk Group Co-Chair Countries and the Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia
- President of Russia, Draft European Security Treaty
- Gazprom and French EDF Memorandum on Joint Participation in South Stream
- Council of the EU, Joint Declaration on Mobility Partnership between the EU and Georgia
- Council of the EU, Conclusions on Fishing Opportunities in the Black Sea for 2010
- ENP in Action: Launch of Cross-border Cooperation Programmes with Russia
- EU External Relations Council, Conclusions on the ESDP
- Memorandum on an Early Warning Mechanism in the Energy Sector, EU-Russia Energy Dialogue
- EU General Affairs Council, Conclusions on Enlargement
- Council of the EU, Declaration on Georgia
- Presidency of the EU, Statement on Azerbaijan
- Declaration of the Ministers of Information

and Communication Technologies of the BSEC Member States

- Priorities of the Bulgarian Chairmanship of the BSEC
- 29th Quadripartite Meeting between the Council of Europe and the EU
- EU External Relations Council, Conclusions on Moldova
- EU-Armenia Cooperation Council, Tenth Meeting
- EU-Azerbaijan Cooperation Council, Tenth Meeting
- EU-Georgia Cooperation Council, Tenth Meeting
- European Commission, Communication on Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2009-2010
- Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Armenia and Turkey
- Presidency of the EU, Declaration on Armenia and Turkey
- Russian MFA, Comments on the Tagliavini Report
- Council of the EU, Presentation of the Report on the Conflict in Georgia

Issue no. 13—September 2009

Issue no. 12—July 2009

Issue no. 11—May 2009

Issue no. 10—January 2009

Issue no. 9—November 2008

Issue no. 8—September 2008

Issue no. 7—April 2008

Issue no. 6—December 2007

Issue no. 5—July 2007

Issue no. 4—June 2007

Issue no. 3—March 2007

Issue no. 2—November 2006

Issue no. 1—July 2006



International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS)
4 Xenophontos Str.
10557 Athens, Greece
Tel: +30 210 324 2321
Fax: +30 210 324 2244
Email: icbss@icbss.org
Website: www.icbss.org

Editorial team:
Dimitrios Triantaphyllou and Olga Borou

ISSN 1791-664X
© International Centre for Black Sea Studies 2010

THE BLACK SEA MONITOR

The ICBSS has identified the need for a special circular on developments in and around the Black Sea region that goes beyond the mere news brief format. Therefore, the Centre has set up an electronic review focused particularly on the Black Sea region, aiming to provide stakeholders and other interested parties around the globe with an exclusive information service. The Monitor offers brief commentaries and refers key documents, publications and events of interest that impact on the wider Black Sea region.