

# **The Black Sea Research Programme**

## ***Foreword***

*The development of a “Black Sea Research Programme” constitutes a task and a deliverable of the BS-ERANET project. To implement this task a Task Force has been set-up that discussed the issue at a meeting in Istanbul (3/11/2010) and agreed to prepare a draft that, after consultation and consolidation by the Task Force members, will be presented to the BS-ERANET Steering Board for further improvement and approval. As a next step, the BSRP will be presented to potential stakeholders in order to seek their opinion and possible involvement in the implementation of the Programme. The Task Force could be considered as a nucleus of the Steering Board of the BSRP, which could be enlarged with the inclusion of additional interested stakeholders such as members of the BSEC Working Group on Cooperation in S&T.*

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Located at the juncture of Europe, Asia and the Middle East, Black Sea Region possesses a distinct place in the world due to several reasons, i.e. its strategic location, rich energy resources, economic potential etc. The region’s importance and potential was always recognized but further reasserted following the recent developments in world politics, especially after the EU’s latest enlargement and being a neighbor in the region. Having developed a cooperation pattern in an institutionalized way through the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) for almost two decades, the countries in the extended Black Sea Region have achieved considerable progress in certain fields.

Being one of the spearheads of cooperation in the region, Science and Technology is one of the most advanced areas regarding collaboration and joint action and still with a great potential to be further exploited. Built on the establishment of former and ongoing successful projects (e.g. BS-ResPot, BS-ERANET, etc.) and initiatives in the region (e.g. the adoption of Action Plans), a Black Sea Research Programme (BSRP) is thus defined as the next challenging objective to achieve.

The Black Sea Research Programme (BSRP) should respond to the needs of the region. Supported by a number of states in and out of the region, BSRP’s foundation should not be referred to as an additional initiative in the numerous initiatives in the region but as a tool for the implementation of already defined policy objectives.

The Black Sea Research Programme aims to represent the strongest form of networking in different aspects of S&T affairs in the region with strong emphasis on transnationality and regional benefit. Hence, it will set up a common strategy, a joint work programme and joint targeted actions.

## **Landscape and affiliations**

Even if there is no single definition of the Black Sea region, we can assume that it includes, Bulgaria, Greece, Moldova and Romania in the west, Russia and Ukraine in the north, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in the east and Turkey in the south. Though Armenia, Azerbaijan, Greece and Moldova are not littoral states, history, proximity and close ties make them natural regional actors.<sup>1</sup>

It encompasses both EU Member States, a candidate country (TR), countries belonging to the European Neighborhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership initiative (AR, AZ, GE, MD, UA) and Russia as strategic partner through the Four Common Spaces initiative.

Twelve countries around the Black Sea and beyond belong to the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), a political organization with headquarters in Istanbul.

In terms of S&T cooperation of the countries of the region with the EU MS and with the EU's Framework Programme, the region includes current and potential Associated countries (TR, MD, etc.), countries that signed a Cooperation Agreement in S&T with the EU (RU, UA), as well as International Cooperation Partner Countries – ICPC (AR, AZ, GE). In addition, many bilateral S&T cooperation Programmes exist between the countries of the region and EU MS, as well as among the countries themselves.

## **Regional research cooperation and multilateral S&T cooperation initiatives**

Several multilateral cooperation initiatives addressing directly or indirectly S&T have been taken during the last years in the Black Sea region. Among these we can mention the following:

### *The 2<sup>nd</sup> BSEC Action Plan*

The adoption of the 2<sup>nd</sup> BSEC Action Plan on Cooperation in S&T (2010-2014) constitutes the major political initiative since it confirms the willingness of the countries to work together in the field of S&T and it provides several broad priorities for action. In that respect, the 2<sup>nd</sup> BSEC Action Plan in S&T should be considered as a key element in the development of the Black Sea Research Programme.

More specifically, the 2<sup>nd</sup> BSEC Action Plan in S&T reconfirms the **policy orientations** identified in the (first) BSEC Action Plan 2005-2009, namely:

- 1) *Human Resources* with particular emphasis on the need to strengthen, stimulate, and exploit the local expertise and creative potential as assets for national and regional development;
- 2) *Capacity building* with a need to assess the progress, to consolidate the achievements and to address the weaknesses of the research systems and structures in the countries of the region;

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<sup>1</sup> Black Sea Synergy - A new regional cooperation initiative, COM(2007) 160 final,

- 3) Renewal and upgrading of the national *research infrastructure* through national financial investments, financing through public/private partnerships and external sources of funding;
- 4) *Innovation* and more specifically the optimum exploitation of the research results and in particular their transformation into innovative products and processes.

Together with the reconfirmation of these policy orientations, the 2<sup>nd</sup> BSEC Action Plan highlights some **specific initiatives and tools** that need to be considered to further promote regional cooperation:

- *Promotion of binding MoUs;*
- *Development of Black Sea Sectoral Partnerships;*
- *Optimal use of the BSEC Project Development Fund (PDF);*
- *Creations of synergies and support to multilateral horizontal projects (under the FP and beyond);*
- *Promotion and better utilization of the existing numerous Bilateral cooperation programmes.*

In accordance with the main purposes and axes of the above mentioned 2<sup>nd</sup> BSEC Action Plan in S&T (2010-2014), the BSEC Working Group on Cooperation in Science & Technology has recently adopted (Istanbul meeting, Nov. 4-5 2010) the BSEC WG Plan of Action (2010-2012), presented by the Hellenic Republic in its capacity as the WG country coordinator. This Plan of Action is proposing specific initiatives/actions for the upcoming two-year period to support the policy domains of *Human Resources, Capacity Building, Research Infrastructure, Innovation, Historical Relations and Cultural Ties*. Moreover, in the context of the Plan of Action, special emphasis is given on the *Synergies* and complementarities to be developed with the ongoing S&T projects enhancing cooperation among the countries of the extended Black Region with the EU Member-States (IncoNet EECA, ERANETRUS, BS-ERANET). Regarding the BS ERANET in particular, since the majority of the BSEC Member States are also consortium partners, it is recommended to deliberate on a joint work plan between the BSEC WG on S&T and BS ERANET's Task Force working on the design and implementation of a sustainable BSRP to the benefit of the whole region.

### **Other initiatives, projects and programmes**

There are a number of other initiatives, projects and programmes targeting the Black Sea region. An indicative list is attached as Annex 1.

## **II. THE BLACK SEA RESEARCH PROGRAMME CONCEPT**

### **Definition**

The term “Programme” in the present document should be seen as a *realistic and detailed process* aiming at the transformation of the political will for cooperation and of the policy documents deriving from it, into concrete activities. In other words, the BSRP should not constitute one additional policy document with broad objectives but on the contrary, a *systematic series of actions* that will implement at least part of the set policy objectives. **In that respect, the association of a *funding mechanism* to the Programme is a sine-qua-non condition for its existence and successful implementation.**

In order to be sustained, the BSRP would need the political backup by BSEC and its Member States, the EU MS and the European Commission. The Programmes’ activities should be rooted in the objectives of the existing policy initiatives and documents and therefore, the Programme should be seen as the implementing tool of the agreed policies. However, some flexibility should exist and a process for revising the objectives since the stakeholders of the BSRP will not necessarily be identical to the stakeholders of existing policy documents (such as the BSEC 2<sup>nd</sup> Action Plan on Cooperation in S&T).

As it was mentioned earlier, in 2010 a Pilot Joint Call for research proposals has been issued and financed by several EU Member States and countries of the Black Sea region. When considering that fact, the BSRP could be seen as a systematic and improved repetition of the process for the launching of the Pilot Joint Call under the BS-ERANET.

### **Key characteristics of the BSRP**

There are several characteristics of the BSRP that need to be defined and agreed when adopting the Programme. These characteristics include:

#### *Stakeholders/Programme owners*

The group of National authorities and institutions that would be ready to contribute to the implementation of the Programme should be considered as Stakeholders or Programme owners for the BSRP.

The group should be formed on a variable geometry basis. The BSRP should include a procedure for the identification and inclusion of additional interested stakeholders throughout the lifecycle of the Programme.

The Programme owners should sign a binding Memorandum of Understanding describing the basic rules for their cooperation in the implementation of the BSRP.

#### Management structure of the BSRP

The BSRP should be managed by a Steering Board that will include representatives of the Stakeholders. The Terms of Reference and rules of functioning of the Steering Board should be described in the Memorandum of Understanding.

### *Content of the BSRP*

The content of the BSRP in terms of *type of activities* to be implemented, as well as in terms of *thematic priorities* could be defined for the whole duration of the Programme or, preferably, they could be revised/redefined bi-annually, leaving sufficient flexibility for adaptation to emerging needs or to the wishes of new stakeholders.

Among the possible type of activities to be implemented by the BSRP the following can be considered:

- Support to Joint Research Projects;
- Capacity building activities;
- Mobility of Researchers;
- Innovation;
- Research infrastructure related activities;
- Monitoring, Foresight, Outreach, Dissemination

The thematic priorities should include region-specific topics such as: Environment, Health, Energy, Marine and Maritime research, Materials, etc.

In any case, a systematic consultation process needs to be implemented, as well as a negotiation phase in order to reach a consensus among the stakeholders on the content ('BSRP Work Programme') and the schedule for Calls or any other mean for its implementation. A preliminary discussion on the content for the BSRP took place at the level of the Task Force the conclusions of which are attached as [Annex 2](#).

### *Duration*

In contrast to the Pilot Joint Call, which had an ad-hoc character, the BSRP should be multiannual allowing for a systematic repetition of the foreseen activities, i.e. the consultation process for the identification of stakeholders/funding parties, the consultation for the definition of the content, the implementation mechanisms (calls and other means). Such systematic repetition will consolidate the process and will improve the quality of the mechanisms and funded actions.

In that respect, the duration of the BSRP could be set to 4 to 6 years, allowing for few cycles for the aforementioned process.

### *Funding mechanism and Budget*

As mentioned earlier, the existence of a funding mechanism is the major difference between a Programme and a policy document. The funding mechanism for the BSRP should be based on contributions from interested countries (in EU and in the Black Sea region) and from organizations. Among such organizations we can mention the European Commission and in particular the ERANET+ and the ENP Instruments, but also others such as the World Bank, the UN, Foundations, etc. What is important is to set-up a systematic consultation process that would identify such donors for the core activities of the BSRP (but possibly also for specific activities that could be of particular interest for some donors).

Indicative target values for the annual and overall budget of the BSRP should be set from the beginning, based on the experience from the Pilot Joint Call, as well as the characteristics of the budget (common pot, virtual pot, etc.).

As a last step, the maximum amount per supported action should be defined, based on the overall available budget and on the type of activities to support.

#### *Secretariat*

The BSRP will constitute a joint initiative of several interested countries and organizations, i.e. of several programme owners. In order to be successful and efficient, such scheme needs an important coordination effort among the stakeholders and a suitable implementation structure, in other words a Secretariat.

The Secretariat should function under the responsibility/supervision of the Steering Board and its role should be to:

- Support the functioning of the Steering Board;
- Organize the consultation process for the identification of new partners/stakeholders;
- Organize the consultation process for the definition of the content and activities of the Programme;
- Issue the calls for proposals or implement any other means of action (eligibility criteria such as type of participants, minimum number of entities and countries, types of eligible expenses etc.);
- Administer the proposals and organize their evaluation;
- Administer the successful projects (contracts, funding);
- Control the budget and deliverables of the projects and possibly organize their peer-reviewing;
- Disseminate information about the BSRP to BSEC, EU and other relevant international organizations.

The expenses incurred for the functionality of the Secretariat will be kept to a minimum and be borne by the stakeholders themselves.

#### *Possible implementation mechanism*

To implement the BSRP, at least at its initial phase, an ERA.NET PLUS project proposal could be prepared.

## **Annex 1**

### **Other initiatives, projects and programmes**

#### **Black Sea Synergy (a new regional cooperation initiative; 2007)**

The initiative is launched by the EC authorities after joining of Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union with a primary task development of cooperation within the Black Sea region and also between the region as a whole and the European Union. Specifically, the Black Sea Synergy will focus on development and extension of *pan-European research backbone GEANT via the Tempus programme* as a useful instrument for establishing cooperation projects between universities in the EU and Black Sea region, focusing on higher education reform.

The initiative intends to promote capacity-building and S&T policy dialogue with the Black Sea countries, in particular through the new instruments available under the 7th Research Framework Programme (FP7). It will ensure *the inclusion of specific research activities and topics of mutual interest in FP7 work programmes* and will promote synergies between FP7-funded activities and other appropriate EC financial instruments.

#### **Danube strategy initiative**

**A vital space for Europe**, the Strategy widens this approach to tackle priorities in an integrated way. Geographically it concerns primarily but not exclusively: Germany (Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria), Austria, the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Romania and Bulgaria within the EU, and Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine (the regions along the Danube) outside. Since the Danube flows into the Black Sea, it should be coherent with Black Sea perspectives.

#### **ESFRI Regional group report on Research Infrastructures 2008**

**The report of the ESFRI regional group** “Research Infrastructures in - and for - the regions; their role within ERA; cooperation between states” presented at the Czech presidency European conference on research infrastructures introduces a new concept of the so called Meta regions. “Meta regions” concept allows to focus more on specific common “cultural” basis, with “cultural” having the widest meaning, going from common historical background to trade, to environmental and scientific aspects. This concept allows, in the EU spirit, to better overcome the borders between States and/or Regions, underlining and strengthening the cultural continuum. The document outlines the historical-scientific background of the “Central European”, the “Black Sea”, and the “Baltic States” meta-regions.

#### **EU Marine strategy Directive (2008)**

Defines the Black sea as one of the main maritime regions and sets concrete targets for the Member states including Member states having borders on the same marine region.

These targets require common actions and development of coherent strategies with the marine basins.

This is not meant to be an observatory of various initiatives but a notion on the importance of the Black Sea within the enlarging European union and within the current initiatives and policy targeted of the EU Members states. (There are many other strategic documents that worth to be mentioned, e.g.

### **BS ERA-NET**

The BS. ERA-NET project is a networking project aimed at integrating the participating countries from the Black Sea extended region in the European Research Area by linking research activities within existing national, bilateral and regional RTD programmes. BS-ERA.NET is financed by the **European Commission** within the FP7 and managed by a consortium of **17 institutions** from **13 European countries**. The main tasks are:

- **Information exchange** between Member States and Candidate countries and with Black Sea Region countries promoting an effective and efficient international scientific EU cooperation strategy at EU level;
- **Definition and preparation of joint activities;**
- **Implementation of the designed mechanisms and instruments** in order to harmonize the stand alone activities at national and regional level.

### **ERA-NET RUS**

ERA.Net RUS aims at intensifying and strengthening S&T cooperation between Russia and Europe by the coordination of MS/AC S&T programmes towards and with Russia. The project is funded under the 7th EU Research Framework Programme and runs from February 2009 until January 2012. The project consortium comprises eighteen partners from European countries and the Russian Federation. The six work packages include analytical exercises, the implementation of a joint call with the aim of developing a sustainable programme and the organisation of conferences and workshops.

### **SCOPE-EAST**

The project "Scenarios for a co-ordinated approach to sustainable S/T cooperation with the Eastern Neighbours of the EU (SCOPE-EAST)" intends to take sustainable steps in view of an enhanced coordination of the R&D co-operation of interested EU-Member States and Associated Candidate States with Russia and Eastern Europe. SCOPE-EAST will address the question of how to achieve optimum coherence between national cooperation strategies and the EU R&D cooperation strategy and of how cooperation in R&D can contribute to other policies of the EU such as the European Neighbourhood policy. Target countries of SCOPE-EAST are in the first step Russia and Ukraine.  
<http://www.scope-east.net/>

## **IncoNet EECA**

The partnership between the countries of the European Union and Eastern Europe/Central Asia (EECA) is of utmost importance for the political, economic and social development of both regions. The project will address policy stakeholders from the EU/AC and EECA countries. The aim is to establish and sustain a bi-regional S&T Policy Dialogue between the EU/AC countries and the Eastern European and Central Asian countries. The existing policy framework for cooperation will hereby be highlighted and improved. Special focus will be given to develop new opportunities and links between the scientific and research communities of the two regions.

<http://www.inco-eeca.net/>

## **The Global Environment Facility (GEF)**

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a global partnership among 178 countries, international institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector to address global environmental issues while supporting national sustainable development initiatives. It provides grants for projects related to six focal areas: biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, the ozone layer, and persistent organic pollutants.

[http://www.gefweb.org/interior\\_right.aspx?id=50](http://www.gefweb.org/interior_right.aspx?id=50)

## **The Black Sea Scene**

The Black Sea SCENE project aims to establish a Black Sea Scientific Network of leading environmental and socio-economic research institutes, universities and NGOs from the countries around the Black Sea and to develop a virtual data and information infrastructure that will be populated and maintained by these organisations to improve the identification, access, exchange, quality indication and use of their data and information about the Black Sea.

<http://www.blackseascene.net/>

## **Annex 2**

### ***Preliminary main axes for the BSRP discussed at the level of the Task Force:***

#### **1. Support of Joint Research Projects (based on the experience of the BS-ERA.NET PJC)**

- In thematic priorities to be defined, along with the budget and length for every project.

#### **2. Capacity Building**

- Organization of Summer Schools.
- Organization of workshops / training courses for RTD Managers in the region (organizing new events and taking already on-going initiatives under BSRP label)
- Support and/or incentives for FP applications.

#### **3. Mobility of Researchers**

- Development of international mobility schemes for researchers.

#### **4. Innovation**

- Establishing specific calls for SMEs or SME-Academia cooperation.
- Organization of Brokerage events for FPs, Eureka and other initiatives.
- Organization of events targeting policy makers in the region to develop region specific initiatives or to enhance awareness among the policy makers.

#### **5. Research Infrastructures**

- Implementation of Mobility schemes for Access to Medium or Large scale Infrastructures.
- Development of a database of research infrastructures in the Region.

#### **6. Monitoring, Foresight, Outreach, Dissemination.**

- Support for monitoring exercises.
- Support for foresight exercises.