

Brussels, 20 June 2008

Way forward for the Black Sea Synergy

The Commission has today presented a Report on the progress achieved during the first year of the Black Sea Synergy initiative, which was launched in April 2007. The initial results show the practical benefits this new regional approach can bring, and its potential for the future.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations and Neighbourhood Policy, commented: "*The Black Sea Synergy is bearing its first fruit in promoting stability, and prosperity in this area to the east of the EU. It does this through a wide range of projects aiming at: combating climate change, establishing regional fisheries management, focusing on protecting the Black Sea, stimulating cooperation in the fields of energy and transport, managing movement better by establishing a platform on migration. Furthermore the initiative also promotes democracy, respect for human rights and good governance in the Black Sea region. The initiative is now well-established and the Report makes proposals as to how we can take our work on this evolving partnership to the next stage*".

The Black Sea Synergy is complementary to the European Neighbourhood Policy and other EU policies applied in the Black Sea region. A wide range of projects and activities have underlined the EU's commitment and have reinvigorated cooperation within the region. The initiative has deepened contacts with governments, local and civil society actors, as well as regional organisations, like the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC).

The Report sets out proposals for the next phase of the Black Sea Synergy:

- * Long-term measurable objectives could be set in areas such as environment, transport, energy or maritime safety to mobilise efforts by BSS partners.
- * Lead countries or organisations could be selected to coordinate actions to meet these objectives.
- * Sectoral partnerships could be established to provide a framework for co-financing of projects involving some or all of the Black Sea Synergy partners.
- * To increase the involvement of civil society and people to people contacts, a Black Sea Civil Society Forum and an Institute of European Studies in the Black Sea are proposed
- * Belarus could be included in some BSS activities at technical level.

The first meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the European Union and the countries of the Black Sea region took place in Kyiv in February 2008. This Meeting adopted a Joint Statement, welcoming the greater involvement of the European Union in Black Sea regional cooperation.

For more information on the Black Sea Synergy:

http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/blacksea/index_en.htm