

EU strategy for the Black Sea

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Traian UNGUREANU (EPP, RO) on an EU Strategy for the Black Sea.

Members recall that the Black Sea region comprises the EU Member States Bulgaria, Greece and Romania, the candidate country Turkey and the ENP partners Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, as well as the Russian Federation as a strategic partner. They recall that the Black Sea region is of geo-strategic importance for the energy security of the EU.

The committee considers that, given the strategic importance of the Black Sea region for the EU and the rather limited results of the BSS, a **strategy should be launched to enhance the coherence and visibility of EU action in the region** and that the EU Black Sea Strategy should be an integral part of the EU's broader foreign and security policy vision. This Strategy should take the form of an integrated and comprehensive EU approach with a detailed action plan, clear objectives, flagship initiatives and benchmarks. Regular reviews of the implementation of the strategy should be carried out and the relevant European Parliament committees should be consulted at key stages of this process.

Members recommend that consistency between EU-level policy and the national strategies of the EU Member States in the Black Sea region needs to be ensured. EU Member States must agree on clear priorities in order that a realistic and financially sound action plan can subsequently be drawn up, together with a corresponding system for assessing its effectiveness. In parallel, Members call for a Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme to be drawn up for the next programming period in order fully to address and continue the efforts to achieve all the objectives stated in the ENPI CBC Strategy Paper 2007-2013.

Objectives of the Strategy: Members stress that the main objective pursued by the EU and the Member States in the EU Strategy for the Black Sea Region should be to establish an area of peace, democracy, prosperity and stability, founded on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and providing for EU energy security. They consider that good governance, the rule of law, promotion of respect of human rights, migration management, energy, transport, the environment, and economic and social development should constitute priority actions.

Appropriate funding: Members are convinced that the success of the strategy depends on the provision of appropriate and identifiable funding. They call for the **creation of a specific budget line for the Black Sea Strategy**, and for the development of efficient disbursement methods, tailored to the specific characteristics of the region, and controls on the use of the funds. The report encourages priority financing of small-scale development projects and stresses the need for a project-based approach with a view to including local authorities, business communities, NGOs or other civil society organisations (CSOs) in designing, joint ownership and implementation of Black Sea Strategy activities.

Adequate human resources: Members stress that adequate human resources must be devoted to the task of achieving the objectives of the new strategy, particularly by taking visible account of that strategy in the organisational structure and staffing of the EEAS.

Partnerships: Members regard inclusiveness and regional ownership as important principles of the EU approach towards the region and sees Turkey and Russia as partners which should ideally be properly

involved in Black Sea regional cooperation. They believe that the dual role of Bulgaria, Romania and Greece as both riparian states and EU Member States is essential to the success of EU policy in the Black Sea region.

The report considers that in order to provide visibility, strategic guidance and high-level coordination, ministerial meetings between the EU and the wider Black Sea region countries should be organised on a regular basis and include all actors and countries in the region, including the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution, the EBRD and the EIB. It recognises the importance of regional and local authorities and stakeholders for the planning and implementation of the strategy. Welcoming the creation of the Black Sea Civil Society Forum, Members underline the role of the non-governmental sector in ensuring both the effective implementation of the Strategy.

Complementarity with other initiatives: Members stress the complementary nature of the Strategy and the Eastern Partnership, and they call on the Commission to make positive use of the differing approaches of the two initiatives. The committee also welcomes the development of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, which is to be completed by the end of 2011.

Security and good governance: Members focus on security issues in this region and underline the protracted conflicts, displaced populations, bilateral disputes, closed borders and strategic rivalries leading to militarisation and proliferation of arms, weak institutions and governance and the deterioration of democratic rule, cross-border crime and trafficking, etc. They stress the vital importance of establishing, encouraging and developing good-neighbourly relations between the Black Sea countries as a premise for successful cooperation, and **regard it as unacceptable that the region should still be facing the problem of closed borders between neighbours.**

Recalling that the EU can and should play a more active role in shaping the Black Sea security environment, Members call for enhanced EU involvement in regional strategic dialogue, and EU cooperation with its strategic partners on security issues and on conflict prevention and resolution. They call on the Vice-President/High Representative of the Union to step up efforts to encourage Russia to comply with the six-point Sarkozy Plan to stabilise and resolve the conflict in Georgia.

The report underlines the need to:

- develop an early-warning system as a conflict-prevention and confidence-building tool in the Black Sea region, to avoid destabilisation and conflict-escalation;
- establish a regional legal framework and mechanisms to deal with the proliferation of arms in the Black Sea region;
- call for cross-border crime and trafficking, in particular in drugs and human beings, and illegal migration to be tackled in the Black Sea Strategy,
- improve management of migration in and from the Black Sea;
- use the Integrated Maritime Policy to coordinate search-and-rescue and accident-prevention activities in the Black Sea region;
- establish a Black Sea surveillance strategy;
- improve governance, democratic rule, respect for human rights and state capabilities;
- increase respect for human rights and democracy in occupied South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Members express particular concern at the extension of the port agreement for Russia's Black Sea Fleet in Crimea and its possible impact on stability in the region.

Energy, transport and the environment: Members consider, on the one hand, the Black Sea region to be of strategic importance for EU energy security and the diversification of the EU's energy supply. They reiterate the pressing importance of a coherent strategy for the Black Sea region. On the other hand, they

consider cooperation in the areas of energy, transport and the environment to be crucial to the harmonious and sustainable development of the region.

The report emphasises the need to strengthen multilateral energy cooperation in the Black Sea region, for which the WTO and the Energy Charter Treaty provide the key principles. It supports full market and regulatory integration on the basis of EU energy and environment legislation and encourages the **participation of countries in the wider Black Sea region in the Energy Community Treaty and EU**, EIB and EBRD assistance for the modernisation of energy infrastructure in the Black Sea region. It also emphasises the importance of Member States taking a common approach towards the Black Sea region, with a view to achieving the EU's long-term objective of security of energy supply and stability in its neighbourhood.

Members recall the need for **more vigorous action by the Commission in support of measures to diversify gas supply** and for a common normative framework to promote a transparent, competitive and rules-based gas market. They reiterate the importance of the Southern Corridor projects, in particular the fundamental importance to Europe's energy security of the **EU strategic priority project Nabucco** and of its swift realisation and stress the significance of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) transportation to Europe, in the form of the AGRI project and the development of LNG terminals in Black Sea ports, and of the Constanta-Trieste Pan-European Oil Pipeline. The Commission is urged to conclude agreements with the potential supplier countries for the Nabucco pipeline by the end of 2011. The report emphasises the potential offered by renewable energy sources in the Black Sea region, which could make a major contribution to a secure energy future at global level and to sustainable economic growth, and calls on the Commission and the Black Sea riparian countries to unlock this potential.

Members consider that, for the purposes of international trade and the transport of hydrocarbons in the region, it is essential to develop the EU's Black Sea and maritime Danube ports, including oil and gas terminals and intermodal transport infrastructure. They call on the Commission and Member States to expedite the completion of priority trans-European transport projects and their progressive assimilation with the TRACECA corridor. They call on the Black Sea riparian states to conclude a memorandum of understanding on the development of Black Sea maritime corridors and ask the Commission to open a TEN-T budget line with funding for Black Sea maritime corridors similar to those which already exist for the Baltic Sea, North Sea and Mediterranean Sea maritime corridors.

On an **environmental** note, Members emphasise the need for a balance to be struck between economic development and environmental protection. They call on the Commission to prioritise the requirements of energy efficiency and protection of the environment and climate when funding infrastructure projects. Efforts are also called for as regards the management of sustainable fisheries.

Economic, social and human development: pointing out that the region has extraordinary natural resources which can encourage rapid economic growth, Members believe that the economic, social and human development of the region as a whole should be promoted by: (i) a further liberalisation of trade and the intensification of intra-regional trade; (ii) combating fraud and corruption; (iii) emphasising the importance of cooperation in the field of tourism and of port and coastline development.

Convinced that the EU should play a greater role in the Black Sea region by offering the countries in the region more **prospects for closer integration with the EU**, Members stress that opportunities for trade liberalisation and the creation of a free trade area in accordance with WTO principles should be carefully considered.

Recognising that the global financial crisis has hit the Black Sea region hard, bringing both a period of growth averaging 6% per annum, Members emphasise that this needs to be addressed by strengthening

financial and banking regulations, improving fiscal credibility and transparency, fighting tax fraud, tax evasion and corruption, intensifying regional cooperation and enhancing coordination among regional organisations such as the BSEC. Cross-border cooperation should also be strengthened.

Lastly, Members regard the importance of improving the administrative capacity of all local and regional stakeholders in the Black Sea region as well as the importance of visa facilitation and the mobility of persons in the region (in particular for businessmen, academics, young people, local officials, etc). They believe that programmes promoting intercultural and interfaith dialogue need sustained encouragement in order to promote cooperation in the region as does the Black Sea Universities Network.