



Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2007/2101(INI)	Procedure completed
Black Sea regional policy approach		
Subject		
4.70.05 Regional cooperation, cross-border cooperation		
6.40.02 Relations with central and eastern Europe		
6.40.03 Relations with South-East Europe and the Balkans		
6.40.04.02 Relations with Russian Federation		
6.40.05.08 Relations with Turkey		
6.40.15 European neighbourhood policy		
Geographical area		
Black Sea area		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	AFET Foreign Affairs		17/04/2007
		PPE-DE ANASTASE Roberta Alma	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	INTA International Trade		07/05/2007
		PSE ARIF Kader	
	ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	ITRE Industry, Research and Energy		07/06/2007
		PSE ICĂU Silvia-Adriana	
	TRAN Transport and Tourism		08/05/2007
	UEN RUTOWICZ Leopold Józef		
REGI Regional Development		07/06/2007	
	PPE-DE MATSIS Yiannakis		
PECH Fisheries	The committee decided not to give an opinion.		
LIBE Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.		
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	General Affairs	2800	14/05/2007
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	External Relations	FERRERO-WALDNER Benita	

Key events			
11/04/2007	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2007)0160	Summary
14/05/2007	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		Summary
06/06/2007	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
18/12/2007	Vote in committee		Summary
20/12/2007	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0510/2007	
16/01/2008	Debate in Parliament		
17/01/2008	Results of vote in Parliament		
17/01/2008	Decision by Parliament	T6-0017/2008	Summary
17/01/2008	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2007/2101(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Strategic initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/6/49696

Documentation gateway					
Non-legislative basic document		COM(2007)0160	11/04/2007	EC	Summary
Committee opinion	TRAN	PE392.057	19/10/2007	EP	
Committee opinion	INTA	PE392.060	24/10/2007	EP	
Committee opinion	REGI	PE394.073	21/11/2007	EP	
Committee draft report		PE396.706	21/11/2007	EP	
Committee opinion	ITRE	PE394.147	23/11/2007	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE396.707	10/12/2007	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0510/2007	20/12/2007	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0017/2008	17/01/2008	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2008)1176	27/02/2008	EC	
Follow-up document		COM(2008)0391	19/06/2008	EC	Summary

Black Sea regional policy approach

PURPOSE: Commission Communication on development of cooperation within the Black Sea region and also between the region as a whole

and the EU.

CONTENT: the Commission presents this paper on increased EU involvement in further defining cooperation priorities and mechanisms for the Black Sea area and it puts forward Black Sea Synergy as a new regional cooperation initiative of the EU. It defines the Black Sea region as including Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova in the west, Ukraine and Russia in the north, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in the east and Turkey in the south.

The European Union has already made major efforts to stimulate democratic and economic reforms, to project stability and to support development in the Black Sea area through wide-ranging cooperation programmes. Three EU policies are relevant in this context: the pre-accession process in the case of Turkey, the European Neighbourhood Policy (with five eastern ENP partners also being active in Black Sea cooperation) and the Strategic Partnership with the Russian Federation. Moreover, the EC has contributed to a whole range of sectoral initiatives of regional relevance. With the accession of Bulgaria and Romania, the prosperity, stability and security of our neighbours around the Black Sea are, more than ever, of immediate concern to the EU. The Commission feels that this requires a more coherent, longer-term effort which would help to seize these opportunities, to bring increased stability and prosperity to the region. Greater EU engagement in Black Sea regional cooperation will contribute to this objective.

At the outset, Black Sea Synergy would focus on those issues and cooperation sectors which reflect common priorities and where EU presence and support is already significant. Consequently, the Communication formulates a number of short- and medium-term tasks related to: democracy, respect for human rights and good governance; managing movement and improving security; a more active EU role through increased political involvement in ongoing efforts to address the conflicts (Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno- Karabakh); energy; transport; environment; maritime policy; fisheries; trade; research and education networks, science and technology; employment and social affairs; and regional development.

Black Sea Synergy is intended as a flexible framework to ensure greater coherence and policy guidance. In assessing the usefulness of Community support for particular initiatives, the active involvement of the countries and regional bodies directly concerned, including through financing, should serve as a key criterion.

The Commission has established a Black Sea CBC programme under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). This sea basin programme focuses on supporting civil society and local level cooperation in Black Sea coastal areas. In addition, there will be new cross-border co-operation programmes between Bulgaria and Romania (funded from the European Regional Development Fund) and between Bulgaria and Turkey (funded from the Instrument for Pre-Accession). These will both allow for maritime and coastal actions that will enhance the development of links and co-operation along the western coast of the Black Sea.

With regard to financial support, as a general principle, co-financing would be applied. Where appropriate, Community financial support could be available under the national, regional and cross-border programmes of the ENPI, other external assistance instruments and, for EU Member States, the European Regional Development Fund. The increased flexibility of the new EC funding instruments should facilitate the funding of regional cooperation initiatives. The regional activities of the EBRD and the EIB as well as the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank are already significant and Black Sea Synergy could offer new possibilities, including the development of mechanisms for joint financing, making use of experience gained with schemes like the Northern Dimension partnerships.

A high-level political launch would provide political orientation and visibility to EU Black Sea Synergy. Should Black Sea Synergy partners so decide in the light of tangible progress, regular ministerial meetings might take place, attended by the EU and BSEC countries. Black Sea Synergy would also take advantage of the useful contacts already existing between the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of BSEC. At present seven EU Member States have observer status with BSEC. Responding to BSEC's initiative, the Commission intends to also seek observer status and to support EU Member States' application for observer status.

Black Sea regional policy approach

The Council held a brief exchange of views on a communication from the Commission on a new regional cooperation initiative for the Black Sea region. It adopted a series of conclusions in which it underlined that following the accession of two Black Sea littoral states, Bulgaria and Romania, the EU's interest in furthering stability and prosperity in the Black Sea area has become even greater.

The Council invited the future Presidencies and the European Commission to continue work on an enhanced and coherent EU engagement in and with the Black Sea area, particularly in the framework of a strengthened European Neighbourhood Policy and building on synergies with regional bodies and initiatives.

The aim should be to intensify regional cooperation in sectors of cross-border relevance such as energy, the environment, transport, telecommunications, science and technology, freedom, justice and security, as well as democracy, human rights promotion, respect for international law and civil society cooperation.

Given the strategic importance of the Black Sea area to the EU, the Council invites the Commission to carry out a review during the first half of 2008 of the development of the 'Black Sea Synergy Initiative', as a basis for further consideration by the Council of its engagement towards the region as a whole.

Black Sea regional policy approach

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Roberta Alma ANASTASE (EPP-ED, RO) in response to the Commission's communication on a Black Sea regional approach. The committee welcomes the objectives set out in this document which aim to enhance regional cooperation in the Black Sea region and which are among the top priorities of the Union's foreign policy agenda.

The report stresses that the Black Sea regional policy approach must be used neither to provide an alternative to EU membership nor to define the frontiers of the EU. It considers, however, that the objectives specified herein should represent an integral and coherent part of the broader EU foreign policy towards the neighbouring countries and countries participating in the Black Sea regional strategy.

The committee focused on the following issues:

Security challenges: the report underlines that the unresolved conflicts persisting in the Black Sea region constitute a major challenge to the stability and sustainable development of the region. It emphasises that the EU needs to define a stable set of priorities in the area of freedom, security and justice within the framework of the Black Sea Synergy, aimed at establishing harmonisation and compatibility in entire policy areas. The committee recalls the need to address the challenges posed by transnational crime, trafficking and illegal migration, whilst fully respecting the non-refoulement principle. Support for a proposal to allow Europol to be given a mandate and resources to produce analytic work relating to the region, in particular in the field of migration has been welcomed.

Promotion of political stability and effective democracy: the report stresses that fostering respect for human rights, democracy and fundamental freedoms is one of the main pillars of the EU's external policy, and emphasises the need to mainstream those values respectively both in bilateral relations and in the regional approach. It stresses the crucial importance of establishing and developing good neighbourly relations among the countries of the Black Sea region and with their neighbours, based on mutual respect, territorial integrity, non-interference in each others' internal affairs and the prohibition of the use of force or threats to use force, as fundamental principles for fostering regional cooperation.

Cooperation in the field of energy and transport: MEPs reiterate their support for the creation of new infrastructure and viable transport corridors diversifying both suppliers and routes, such as the trans-Caspian/trans-Black Sea energy corridor and the Nabucco, Constanța-Trieste and AMBO pipelines, as well as other planned gas and oil transit projects crossing the Black Sea and the INOGATE and TRACECA projects. They consider that the sustainable development of the Danube and the economic potential to link the countries surrounding the Black Sea should be among the EU's priorities in the region.

Environmental issues: the committee is deeply concerned about the environmental situation in the Black Sea region, in particular that of the Black Sea, affected by uncontrolled pollution and aggravated by numerous ecological accidents. It calls for increased cooperation between the EU and the Black Sea countries in order to tackle the whole range of environmental challenges in the region.

Economic cooperation: the report points out the uneven, albeit strong, economic growth in the entire region, but draws attention to the fact that growth is more sustained in the oil and gas exporting countries. Stressing the fragility of the private sector in many countries bordering the Black Sea, the committee underlines the need to improve the investment climate, for both local and international companies, in particular by stepping up the fight against corruption and fraud. The report encourages harmonisation and further liberalisation measures and supports the creation of a free trade area in accordance with WTO principles. MEPs also take into account the significant role of coastal and maritime tourism as a major catalyst for the development of the Black Sea region in terms of trade and economic growth.

Institutional aspects: MEPs favour a leading role for the EU Member States of the region in promoting enhanced cooperation with and within the region. They consider that Romania, Bulgaria and Greece, as EU Member States in the Black Sea region, can and should lead the way in this respect. The report recalls that a number of regional cooperation mechanisms are already in place in the Black Sea area and it underlines, therefore, the need for the EU and the Black Sea countries to coordinate activities and prevent duplication of effort. It stresses the need to set-up an NGO platform for the Black Sea with the aim of creating a framework for exchanges between the civil societies of the region.

Financing: to meet these objectives, adequate financial means are required. MEPs call for a rational use of Community financial instruments through better coordination of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, the Structural Funds and the pre-accession funds available to the region. The Commission is called upon to make the decentralised financial instrument Small Project Funds available for people-to-people projects in the area of cross-border cooperation and to make special efforts to encourage the use of that instrument.

Black Sea regional policy approach

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Roberta Alma ANASTASE (EPP-ED, RO) in response to the Commission's communication on a Black Sea regional approach. The resolution was adopted by 581 votes for, 19 against and 17 abstentions. Parliament welcomes the Communication, and the aim of enhancing cooperation by supplementing the existing bilateral policies with a new regional approach. It notes, in particular, that the energy security issues and the accession negotiations with Turkey, as well as the forthcoming expiry of the PCAs and the negotiations on their future, place regional cooperation in the Black Sea area among the top priorities of the Union's foreign policy agenda. The future development of the Black Sea would benefit greatly from an independent Black Sea strategy in the long term.

The resolution stresses that the Black Sea regional policy approach must be used neither to provide an alternative to EU membership nor to define the frontiers of the EU. Regional cooperation in the Black Sea region should involve the EU, ENP countries, candidate country Turkey and Russia as equal partners. Only by gradually creating a feeling among the Black Sea countries of shared responsibility for the region's common challenges, including security issues, will it be possible to fulfil the full potential of Europe's involvement in the region.

Parliament focuses on the following issues:

Security challenges: the unresolved conflicts persisting in the Black Sea region constitute a major challenge to the stability of the region. Parliament notes the substantial military presence of Russia in the region, and points out that the 1997 agreement between Russia and Ukraine concerning the stationing of the Black Sea fleet expires in 2017. This unresolved matter has already created some friction between the Russian and Ukrainian governments. Parliament encourages the EU to engage in this strategically important issue and to work more closely with the governments of Russia and Ukraine. It urges the Council and the Commission to lower the visa fees to an acceptable level for ordinary citizens of countries participating in the ENP or in a Strategic Partnership with the EU. It also urges the conclusion of visa-facilitation and readmission agreements with those Black Sea countries that do not yet enjoy them, as well as to promote mobility by all other possible means, including the signing of mobility partnerships with ENP countries.

Energy and transport: Parliament reiterates its support for the creation of new infrastructure and viable transport corridors diversifying both suppliers and routes, such as the trans-Caspian/trans-Black Sea energy corridor and the Nabucco, Constanța-Trieste and AMBO pipelines, as well as other planned gas and oil transit projects crossing the Black Sea and the INOGATE (Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe) and TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe - Caucasus - Asia) projects connecting the Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions. Emphasising the importance of the Danube as one of the main economic arteries connecting the EU and the Black Sea region, it considers that the sustainable development of the Danube and its economic potential to link the countries surrounding the Black Sea should be among the EU's priorities in the region. Parliament asks the Commission for a study exploring possible concrete initiatives in this respect, including environmental concerns. If full advantage is to be taken of the EU's access to the Black Sea, it will be vital to develop the harbour infrastructures at the EU's

Black Sea ports (Bourgas, Constanța, Mangalia and Varna) as well as those located at the Danube estuary, with a view to ensuring intermodal transport.

Parliament goes on to state that it is deeply concerned about the environmental situation in the Black Sea region, in particular that of the Black Sea, affected by uncontrolled pollution and aggravated by numerous ecological accidents, as well as that of the Danube and its delta.

Economic cooperation: the resolution points out the uneven, albeit strong, economic growth in the entire region, but draws attention to the fact that growth is more sustained in the oil and gas exporting countries. It encourages further liberalisation measures and supports the creation of a free trade area in accordance with WTO principles. MEPs also take into account the significant role of coastal and maritime tourism as a major catalyst for the development of the Black Sea region. They stress the need to develop tourism infrastructure and to encourage diversification of tourism products, making better use of natural resources (e.g. geothermal resources). Facilitation of visa regimes in the neighbourhood will encourage mobility and foster trade and economic activity. The Black Sea Synergy should constitute an adequate framework for promoting the development of tourism in the Black Sea region. Parliament goes on to note inter-regional initiatives such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway project, but stresses that the project bypasses the existing and fully operative rail line in Armenia. It urges the South Caucasus republics and Turkey to pursue effectively policies of regional economic integration and to refrain from any short-sighted and politically motivated regional energy and transportation projects which violate ENP principles of sound development.

Institutional aspects: MEPs favour a leading role for the EU Member States of the region and consider that Romania, Bulgaria and Greece, as EU Member States in the Black Sea region, should lead the way. They underline the importance of Russia's and Turkey's positions in the Black Sea region, stating that it was important for the success of the Black Sea regional cooperation to involve these countries in a constructive way, alongside all the other rim States. The political dimension of the dialogue and cooperation with and within the Black Sea region should also be further developed.

Financing: MEPs call for a rational use of Community financial instruments through better coordination of the ENPI, the Structural Funds and the pre-accession funds available to the region. They approve the doubling of the financial resources made available under the ENPI for the funding of cross-border projects. The Commission is called upon to make the decentralised financial instrument Small Project Funds available for people-to-people projects in the area of cross-border cooperation and to make special efforts to encourage the use of that instrument.

Black Sea regional policy approach

This document comprises the first annual report from the Commission on the implementation of the Black Sea Synergy. It describes the progress achieved so far in implementing the tasks set by the 2007 Communication 'Black Sea Synergy - a New Regional Cooperation Initiative'. It also renders account of the series of contacts and discussions with partners in the Black Sea region. These have led to the launch and endorsement of the Synergy as a collective endeavour and have produced a number of proposals. The Black Sea Synergy Initiative is complementary to the European Neighbourhood Policy, the enlargement policy for Turkey and the Strategic Partnership with the Russian Federation.

The 2007 Communication formulated concrete goals and tasks in sectors or thematic fields such as the environment, trade, maritime, energy, transport, employment and trade. The Commission has started implementing most of these tasks.

The report also highlights that experience of the first year has proven the validity of the principles contained in the 2007 Communication. The initiative's main goal remains to invigorate action at regional level promoting stability and prosperity in the Black Sea area. It is a flexible, inclusive and transparent framework, based on the common interests of the EU and of all Black Sea states. The Commission welcomes the fact that Black Sea Synergy participants envisage continuing the present pragmatic and project-oriented approach. Consequently, work should proceed to accomplish the tasks set by the 2007 Communication and the Kyiv Joint Statement.

During the Foreign Ministers' meeting in Kyiv and the months thereafter, EU Member States and Black Sea Synergy partners have made suggestions as to how the Black Sea Synergy cooperation process can be firmly rooted as a long-term endeavour. These proposals can provide new impetus to regional cooperation with partners to the east of the European Union. The Commission intends to explore and actively take them forward to promote more effective and ambitious action:

- long-term, measurable objectives in fields like transport, environment, energy or maritime safety should be set to spur more concerted action. These would require the support of all BSS members. In each case a lead country and/or organisation should be identified to ensure coordination of activities which might be undertaken at national or regional level to achieve the objectives set;
- to facilitate the realisation of projects, sectoral partnerships could be established to provide a framework for co-financing (including through the NIF) and a basis for the involvement of IFIs. These partnerships might bring together all or some of the Black Sea Synergy participants to cooperate on a series of projects. The successful experience of the Northern Dimension provides a useful example of how this could work;
- the frequency of ministers' meetings should reflect concrete needs. Foreign ministers could meet as required to mark the major milestones of the process.

There have been a number of other proposals that also deserve further study:

- involvement of Belarus in some of the sectoral activities, related to the Synergy;
- creation of a Black Sea Civil Society Forum;
- strengthening of academic and student networks;
- establishment of an Institute of European Studies in the Black Sea Region.

The Commission stands ready to work with Member States and all stakeholders on these and other new ideas, strengthening Black Sea regional co-operation that:

- complement the bilateral, tailor-made cooperation we have with our partners under the ENP and other policies applying in the region;
- are inclusive, involve all Member States and Black Sea countries;
- provide added value.

To conclude, the initial results of the Black Sea Synergy reveal that the development of EU-supported Black Sea regional cooperation is a process taking place in a complex environment. Continued progress requires the consistent and active involvement of a growing number of

actors, including both Member States and Black Sea partners. As in the first year, the Commission will be ready to contribute to this important work.