

## THE CHALLENGES OF REGIONAL COOPERATION. THE EUROPEAN BLACK SEA DIMENSION

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### ABSTRACT:

*THE ORGANISATION FOR BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION (BSEC) BRINGS TOGETHER ONE OF THE MOST DIVERSE REGIONS IN THE WORLD. FORMED FOLLOWING THE END OF THE COLD WAR FROM TWO OPPOSING POLITICAL AND MILITARY BLOCS, THE BSEC SERVES AS AN EXEMPLARY MODEL OF THE SPIRIT IT TAKES TO OVERCOME DIFFERENCES AND TO JOINTLY MAKE PROGRESS. THE PROSPECT OF EU ENLARGEMENT IN THE AREA IN COMBINATION WITH THE READINESS OF BSEC MEMBER STATES FOR CLOSE COLLABORATION WITH EUROPE MERITS SERIOUS ATTENTION. THIS PAPER ARGUES THAT BSEC SHOULD FOCUS MORE STRONGLY RIGHT NOW ON A SET OF CORE FUNCTIONS THAT HAVE AN INTRINSICALLY IMPORTANT REGIONAL ASPECT, RATHER THAN ASPIRE TO BE A GENERAL PURPOSE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION COVERING ALMOST ALL DESIRABLE POLICY OBJECTIVES OF THE MEMBER STATES.*

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**KEYWORDS:** EUROPEAN UNION, BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION (BSEC), BLACK SEA REGION (BSR), COOPERATION, INTEGRATION

### INTRODUCTION

The international situation has been undergoing profound changes since the advent of the new century. The trend towards world multipolarity and economic globalization is developing amid twists and turns. Peace and development remain the themes of our era. The world is hardly a tranquil place and mankind is still confronted with many serious challenges. However, preserving world peace, promoting development and strengthening cooperation, which is vital to the well-being of all nations, represents the common aspiration of all peoples and is an irreversible trend of history<sup>2</sup>.

The creation and development of the European Union is an event of far-reaching significance following World War II. Since the launch of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952, the EU has become what it is today through the stages of the Tax and Customs Union, the Single Market and the Economic and Monetary Union. Its integration in the foreign policy, defense and social fields has made headway. The Euro has been put to circulation successfully and a single area of justice is taking shape. The EU is now a strong and the most integrated community in the world, taking up 25 and 35 percent of the world's economy and trade respectively and ranking high on the world's list of per capita income and

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<sup>2</sup> Francis Snyder, ed., *The European Union and China, 1949-2008: Basic Documents and Commentary* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009), 490

foreign investment<sup>3</sup>. Despite its difficulties and challenges ahead, the European integration process is irreversible and the EU will play an increasingly important role in both regional and international affairs.

Established in 1992, the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) is an inter-governmental organization created with the aim to foster interaction and harmony among its member states, as well as to ensure peace, stability and prosperity encouraging friendly and good-neighbourly relations in the Black Sea region<sup>4</sup>. BSEC permanent members are the three EU Member States (Bulgaria, Greece and Romania), Black Sea Synergy's countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine) plus Albania and Serbia. BSEC observers are the European Union (Commission of the European Union), Austria, Belarus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Arab Republic of Egypt, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Tunisia, the United States of America, International Black Sea Club, Energy Charter Secretariat and the Black Sea Commission<sup>5</sup>.

BSEC's diversity makes it also very convenient to play the role of a bridge between Europe, the Caspian Sea and Central Asia. The BSEC member states together constitute a vast Euro-Asian space of almost 20 million square kilometers, populated by 340 million people. It possesses huge deposits of natural, particularly energy, resources. It is also very important for the transportation of the energy resources of the Caspian Sea and Central Asia to the rest of the world. Its geo-strategic importance is substantial since it includes Russia, Ukraine, Turkey and the countries of the Caucasus among its members<sup>6</sup>. Especially after the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2001, BSEC was intended to become an excellent example of how countries so different from each other cannot only co-exist, but also cooperate closely in many fields<sup>7</sup>. The success of a formation like BSEC may be also instrumental not only in promoting economic growth and stability in the region but in facilitating its integration with the wider European structures too<sup>8</sup>.

The BSEC has developed a rather sophisticated organizational structure which, in addition to its intergovernmental bodies, includes also the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank, the BSEC Parliamentary Assembly, the BSEC Business Council and the International Center for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS), its think tank<sup>9</sup>.

Since the beginning of the Cold War and then after the event on 9/11 in USA and 3/11 in Madrid, Spain, the Black Sea as a region became a very important area for both European Union and NATO<sup>10</sup>. The sudden increase in importance doesn't really result from the fact that most of the Black Sea countries have established some kind of forms of cooperation on

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<sup>3</sup> Snyder, *The European Union and China*, 491

<sup>4</sup> Eftychia Bakopoulou et al., "20 Years BSEC. Evolution of Institutions, Evolution of Priorities: Interlinks within the Black Sea Region in a New Era", Xenophon paper no. 12 (October 2012), International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS)

<sup>5</sup> Observer status in the BSEC is open, upon request, to any State or international organization which expresses its readiness to make practical and valuable contribution to the work of the BSEC. Observer status may be granted, suspended or terminated by the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in accordance with the Rules of Procedure.

<sup>6</sup> Terry D. Adams et al., *Europe's Black Sea Dimension*, Centre for European Policy Studies (Brussels, 2002), accessed February 28, 2015. <http://www.ceps.eu/files/book/28.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Mustafa Aydin, "Europe's New Region: The Black Sea in the Wider Europe Neighbourhood", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 5 (May 2005): 257–283

<sup>8</sup> Adams et al., *Europe's Black Sea Dimension*

<sup>9</sup> Yannis Papanikolaou in Terry D. Adams et al., *Europe's Black Sea Dimension*, Centre for European Policy Studies (Brussels, 2002), accessed February 28, 2015. <http://www.ceps.eu/files/book/28.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Gavriil Preda and Gabriel Leahu, eds., *Black Sea: History, Diplomacy, Policies and Strategies*, vol. I (Bagheria: Mineo Giovanni Editore, 2012) accessed January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015, <http://eubsr.ucdc.ro/eubsr2012-vol1.pdf>

different levels with the EU. The region represents an important area for such reasons like: it borders both the energy-rich Caspian Basin and the conflict-prone Caucasus, thus acting as a gateway and a barrier in the same time.

Now that the Cold War is history, the region has become more complicated and extremely difficult to manage, as the fall of the Soviet Union revealed tensions that the Cold War had somehow suppressed and masked<sup>11</sup>. On the other hand, poverty, corruption, organized crime and territorial claims, threaten continuously to undermine, to weaken both the existing regimes and the equilibrium in the area. Existing conflict resolution and peacekeeping instruments such as the UN, OSCE and NATO, as well as the security and confidence-building agreements like CFE Treaty, have not been adequate to deal with these new/old challenges/threats<sup>12</sup>, and have so far been only partially successful in containing (but not solving) them.

There are some *strategically reasons* to link the Black Sea area (in the strict geographical sense, consisting only of the six littoral states) with the wider geographic areas of the Caucasus, the Caspian, and Eastern and South-Eastern Europe when dealing with the political and economic security and stability of the region.

## THE EUROPEAN BLACK SEA DIMENSION. CHALLENGES FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

It is often argued that the EU has no strategy towards the Black Sea region. But in fact, the EU has no less than three strategies towards the region: enlargement to South East Europe and Turkey, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) towards its Eastern (and also its Southern) neighbours, and the four “common spaces” with Russia<sup>13</sup>. Indeed, therein lies part of the problem. Within each of these separate strategies, bilateral relations dominate. This is incidentally supported by all the neighbours themselves. In the ENP, the EU pays only lip service to regional cooperation, and its principal mechanisms and instruments are bilateral. One exception is the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI)<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Jean Dufourcq and Lionel Ponsard, eds., “The Role of the Wider Black Sea Area in a Future European Security Space”, vol. 1, *NDC Occasional paper* 10, NATO Defence College, Academic Research Branch, Rome, December 2005, accessed February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015, <http://www.ndc.nato.in>

<sup>12</sup> Vasile Secăreș, “The New Strategic and Security Landscape of SEE: The case of Wider Black Sea Area”, NATO Defence College, Academic Research Branch, *Research Paper* 15 (February 2005):6-8

<sup>13</sup> Miroslav Mečár, Marcel Kordoš, Nad'a Štefková, “EU and Black Sea Regional Cooperation: Current Prospects of BSEC”, article processed under the Project “Strengthen the cooperation between the Black Sea economic cooperation (BSEC) and the EU”, no: 35/2006, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovak Republic, accessed January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2015, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/eu-and-black-sea-regional-cooperation-current-prospects-of-bsec-tr.mfa>

<sup>14</sup> The European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) is the financial instrument for European neighbourhood policy (ENP). Operational since 1 January 2007, it represents the strategic continuity with enlarged objectives of the former cooperation programmes TACIS (for the Eastern European countries) and MEDA (for the Mediterranean countries). It is addressed to ENP partner countries including Russia and offers co-funding for promoting good governance and equitable social and economic development process. The ENPI also supports cross-border and trans-regional cooperation as well as the gradual economic integration of recipient countries with the European Union (EU) beneficiary countries. This Regulation establishes the basic principles governing the ENPI, its scope and the programming of assistance. The budget for the ENPI amounts to 11 181 million for the period 2007-2013, of which 95 % is for national and multi-country programmes and 5 % for cross-border cooperation programmes. More info available at:

[http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/external\\_relations/relations\\_with\\_third\\_countries/eastern\\_europe\\_and\\_central\\_asia/r17101\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/external_relations/relations_with_third_countries/eastern_europe_and_central_asia/r17101_en.htm). The **European Neighbourhood Instrument** (ENI), effective from 2014 to 2020, replaces the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument - known as the ENPI. This cooperation instrument continues to be managed by DG Development and Cooperation - EuropeAid, which turns decisions taken on a political level into actions on the ground. The 16 ENI partner countries are: Algeria, Egypt, Israel,

of financial assistance, which provides significant opportunities for the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). It was proposed that funding to the neighbours should be doubled under the ENPI, which became operational from 2007 under the new EU budget. More importantly, it will target areas both inside and outside the Union's borders, including all the countries of the Black Sea region<sup>15</sup>.

Thus, a first and immediate challenge for BSEC was to put regional issues on the ENPI agenda, and develop a list of priority projects of Black Sea regional cooperation for funding from the new instrument.

The dominance of the bilateral approach is a general feature of EU neighbourhood policies. But it is noteworthy that the EU has developed complementary regional policies in its relations with all of its neighbouring regions – for instance the Northern Dimension, the Stability and Association Process and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership – except towards the Black Sea region<sup>16</sup>. The EU participates actively in regional organisations and initiatives in the wider European area – such as the Barents and Baltic Councils, the Central European Initiative, the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and others – with the exception of BSEC<sup>17</sup>. This of course raises the question of why the EU has not developed a Black Sea “dimension”. EU officials would respond, however, that the EU has a Black Sea regional policy, through regional sectoral initiatives and programmes in key areas of regional cooperation in the region. These include the INOGATE (Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe) programme and multilateral agreement, the TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia) and the Black Sea PETrA (Pan-European Transport Area) programmes on transport, and the DANBLAS (Danube-Black Sea Environmental Task Force) initiative, to mention the most important<sup>18</sup>.

A second challenge for BSEC would be to explain why these programmes and initiatives are not sufficient, and what the added value of greater EU involvement in BSEC would be. The EU could further respond that indeed it does participate in BSEC activities when it finds it is useful, but that most of the time, in its view, such participation is not particularly useful. BSEC is regarded by many in the EU as an inefficient “talking shop” without significant regional cooperation of any particular relevance to the EU. This is less true now than it used to be. BSEC has undertaken substantial policy initiatives in recent years, following a rather long period of consolidation<sup>19</sup>. That this would take such a long time was however to be expected, considering the diversity and lingering animosities among many of the countries of the wider Black Sea region. These initiatives are all in line with EU goals and provide added value, increasingly also within areas falling within EU competences.

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Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, **in the South**, and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine **in the East**.

<sup>15</sup> “The EU and Black Sea regional cooperation: Some challenges for BSEC”, an amended version of a presentation at a parliamentary conference on “The Wider Black Sea Region in the New European Architecture”, organised by the Hellenic Parliament with the support of the International Center for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS), Athens, 8 April 2005, accessed January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015, <http://www.euractiv.com/east-mediterranean/eu-black-sea-regional-cooperation-challenges-bsec/article-138597>

<sup>16</sup> “The EU and Black Sea regional cooperation: Some challenges for BSEC”

<sup>17</sup> “The EU and Black Sea regional cooperation: Some challenges for BSEC” and also, Adrian Pop and Dan Manoleli, coord., “Towards a European Strategy in The Black Sea Area. The Territorial Cooperation”, Study 4 (Bucharest, December 2007), European Institute of Romania, accessed February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015, [http://www.harvard-bssp.org/static/files/370/Studiu%204\\_black%20sea\\_final\\_EN.pdf](http://www.harvard-bssp.org/static/files/370/Studiu%204_black%20sea_final_EN.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> “The EU and Black Sea regional cooperation: Some challenges for BSEC”

<sup>19</sup> “The EU and Black Sea regional cooperation: Some challenges for BSEC” and also, Margriet Drent at al., eds., “Towards Shared Security: 7 Nation Perspectives”, *Harmony Papers* 14 (2001), The Center Of European Security Studies, accessed January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015, [www.cess.org/doc.php?id=18](http://www.cess.org/doc.php?id=18)

It is in the interest of the EU and BSEC that such initiatives are not thwarted by technicalities and misunderstandings. There have indeed been instances in the past when BSEC members and EU members and candidates (Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey) have been reluctant or unwilling to support BSEC initiatives because of (unjustified) uncertainty about their compatibility with EU membership requirements<sup>20</sup>. It would be useful to have the EU machinery involved throughout the process of development of such initiatives within BSEC.

There have also been instances where opportunities to cooperate have been lost due to the EU's tendency to ignore the Black Sea institutions. An important current example concerns the High-Level Group on the extension of the Trans-European Networks to the wider European area. This was launched by the EU in the autumn of 2004, with discussions underway in five regional groups, one of which covers the Black Sea region<sup>21</sup>. International Financial Institutions participate in this dialogue, but the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB) has not been invited to the talks. This is an unnecessary omission which frankly should not have happened. It should be an immediate task for BSEC and the BSTDB, as well as the European Commission, to ensure that the BSTDB is invited to join the High-Level Group.

Progress in substantial cooperation in BSEC increasingly takes place in non-economic areas, including agreements on emergency assistance, organized crime, visas and the growing emphasis on security issues. From an EU perspective, this is probably the area where the potential added value of regional cooperation in the Black Sea area is greatest. Indeed, the BSEC – by bringing together countries that are not on bilateral speaking terms in some policies areas – is in itself an important confidence-building measure, which is often not appreciated in Western Europe<sup>22</sup>. Correcting this oversight constitutes yet another challenge for BSEC.

The principal reason for the absence of an EU Black Sea dimension is the lack of support inside the EU<sup>23</sup>. Although Greece – the only BSEC member that is also a member of the EU – has been a driving force in the establishment and operation of BSEC, its efforts to elicit support for a more active engagement with Black Sea regional cooperation during its EU Presidency in the first half of 2003 were scuttled mainly due to the debacle over Iraq<sup>24</sup>.

An interesting parallel was Finland's effort to develop the Northern Dimension initiative during its EU Presidency in late 1999. All EU foreign ministers except the Finnish host refused to participate at the first Northern Dimension Foreign Ministers meeting in November 1999, in protest against Russia's campaign in Chechnya. However, the Northern Dimension had other patrons. Sweden and then Denmark carried the Northern Dimension

<sup>20</sup> "The EU and Black Sea regional cooperation: Some challenges for BSEC"

<sup>21</sup> "The EU and Black Sea regional cooperation: Some challenges for BSEC" and also, Commission on The Black Sea, "A 2020 Vision for The Black Sea Region", Report (May 2010), accessed January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015, [www.blackseacom.eu](http://www.blackseacom.eu)

<sup>22</sup> Directorate of Policy Planning, Council of Europe, "The Pursuit of Undivided Europe. Experts' Views on the Political Relevance of the Council of Europe" (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2014) accessed February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015, [http://www.coe.int/t/policy-planning/Think\\_tanks/Pursuit\\_of\\_Undivided\\_Europe.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/policy-planning/Think_tanks/Pursuit_of_Undivided_Europe.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> "The EU and Black Sea regional cooperation: Some challenges for BSEC". See also, Sinem Akgul Acikmese and Dimitrios Triantaphyllou, "The Black Sea Region: The Neighbourhood too Close to, yet still Far from the European Union", *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 16:3 (2014): 279-285 accessed February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015, [doi:10.1080/19448953.2014.928533](https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2014.928533)

<sup>24</sup> "The EU and Black Sea regional cooperation: Some challenges for BSEC" and also, Daniel Hamilton and Gerhard Mangott, "The Wider Black Sea Region in the 21st Century: Strategic, Economic and Energy Perspectives", (Washington, D.C.: Center for Transatlantic Relations, 2008), accessed February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015, [http://transatlantic.sais-jhu.edu/publications/books/Wider\\_Black\\_Sea.pdf](http://transatlantic.sais-jhu.edu/publications/books/Wider_Black_Sea.pdf)



initiative forward during their EU Presidencies in 2001 and 2002, respectively, turning the initiative into a permanent fixture of EU neighborhood policy.

A similar situation could emerge in the Black Sea region. Some time ago, three BSEC members had also become EU members, while most of the other members of BSEC aspire, whether officially acknowledged or not, to the status of candidates for EU membership, most of them being in a "pre-pre accession"- phase. Being a candidate for EU membership requires that virtually all political energy and administrative resources should be dedicated to the task of accession, making it basically the only foreign policy of the state concerned. This could weaken the push for regional cooperation in the Black Sea region. But this tendency could be counteracted by the more recent BSEC EU member states, in the first instance Bulgaria and Romania and then Croatia. This could indeed follow the pattern of Finland and Poland, neither of which had an active neighborhood policy of their own in their pre-accession phases – in the early 1990s in the case of Finland and for Poland from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s. Both became active in soliciting stronger EU engagement with their non-member neighbours – Russia and Ukraine, respectively – following their accession to the Union in 1995 and 2004 respectively. There have been indeed early signs that Romania and Bulgaria, seen for instance in the Joint Statement issued by the Bulgarian and Romanian Prime Ministers on 31 March 2005, have been moving beyond their preoccupation with accession and were taking an increasing interest in promoting Black Sea regional cooperation in Europe.

Another initiative could be to develop a coordinated effort among the EU members of BSEC to put Black Sea regional cooperation on the EU agenda. For this to be successful, however, it would be necessary to receive further support from other member states. Some of the early EU member states have shown a particular interest in strengthening EU policy towards the countries of the Black Sea region, and could support an EU Black Sea dimension. Indeed, the latest EU member states and their Eastern neighbours are increasingly trying to join forces to promote cooperation between the EU and the countries of the wider Black Sea region, in what is increasingly referred to as the "Baltic-Black Sea axis". In early February 2005, four "new" EU members (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland) and two "then" candidates (Romania and Bulgaria) founded the "New Group of Georgia's Friends". The "New Friends" propose to share with Georgia their experience in the process of accession to the EU and NATO and to promote such processes in the wider Black Sea region. Following the Rose and Orange revolutions, the members of GUAM<sup>25</sup> (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova) were looking to revitalize their grouping, and have invited the leaders of Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Lithuania, Hungary and a representative of the EU to participate at their summits.

So far, these new configurations have been mainly limited to high-level meetings issuing high-sounding statements of good intentions. The challenge now is to translate this political rhetoric into practical regional cooperation, in which the BSEC clearly has an important role to play.

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<sup>25</sup> Organization for Democracy and Economic Development. Previously named GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova). The September 11 terrorist attacks served as the main catalyst for Uzbekistan's decision to suspend its GUAM membership. In particular, Tashkent's interest in the security aspect of GUUAM declined after September 11, when the Uzbek government forged a bilateral security relationship with Washington. Although the agreement initially included a declaration of mutual defense, Moldova has since declared its disinterest in participating in any GUAM-based mutual defense initiative. Moldova has been involved in information exchange, trade and transportation, border control, and energy projects issues within this regional agreement. The years since 2005 have seen significant developments in Moldova's relations with the West.

It would also be necessary to find support from other EU institutions. The growing role of the European Parliament has recently been seen during the presidential elections in Ukraine, where its support for free and fair elections led former president Yushenko to refer to the European Parliament as the “godparents of the Orange Revolution”.

Developing closer relations with the European Parliament, principally a challenge for the Parliamentary Assembly of the BSEC (PABSEC) to handle, is thus likely to become increasingly important in developing EU-BSEC relations and a possible European Black Sea Dimension.

## CONCLUSION

Russia has suggested creating what it sees as “an atlas of risks” for the Black Sea region, encompassing the territories of the Black Sea littoral states, the Balkans and the Caucasus. “Russia attaches great importance to the work of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). We will chair the organization in 2016 and we have already prepared a preliminary plan of activities. Among other things, Russia’s Emergencies Ministry has suggested creating an atlas of risks in the Black Sea region. We are working on this initiative at the moment”<sup>26</sup>.

Countries in the Black Sea region agreed in December 2014 to expand economic cooperation with each other, and with partners around the world. Foreign ministers from the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) organization, who gathered for a regular session in Greece’s second-biggest city Thessaloniki in December 2014, confirmed “willingness among member states to expand and deepen multilateral economic cooperation within BSEC, as well as their intention to develop equal and mutually-beneficial cooperation with international partners”<sup>27</sup>. Participants to the reunion positively assessed Greece’s six-month chairmanship of the organization from July to December 2014, despite the numerous difficulties the country had to tackle along the way.

Starting January 2015, Moldova took over the rotating presidency of BSEC, uniting the countries surrounding the Black Sea. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova took over the presidency of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization Business Council (BSEC) within the reunion of the Council of Directors. Moldova Presidency’s priorities are promoting the export potential by diversifying exports and increasing products competitiveness in partner-states. To this effect, Moldova aims to develop and promote national brands from member countries of BSEC as instrument to boost exports.

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<sup>26</sup> Victor Arkhipov, the chairman of the Russian National Committee for Black Sea Economic Cooperation (RNC BSEC). Arkhipov noted the effectiveness of economic cooperation with Bulgaria, which is also a BSEC member and has been chairing the organization from January to June 2014: “We have established very good cooperation in the spheres of energy, agriculture, pharmaceutical industry and tourism. I think that despite all difficulties, our relations will continue to develop”.

<sup>27</sup> Ioannis Stribis, “The evolving security concern in the Black Sea economic cooperation”, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 3:3 (2003): 130-162 accessed February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015, [doi:10.1080/14683850412331321688](https://doi.org/10.1080/14683850412331321688)

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\*\*\* "The EU and Black Sea regional cooperation: Some challenges for BSEC" - amended version of a presentation at a parliamentary conference on "The Wider Black Sea Region in the New European Architecture", organized by the Hellenic Parliament with the support of the International Center for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS), Athens, 8 April 2005, accessed January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015, <http://www.euractiv.com/east-mediterranean/eu-black-sea-regional-cooperation-challenges-bsec/article-138597>

\*\*\* Commission on The Black Sea, "A 2020 Vision for The Black Sea Region", Report (May 2010), accessed January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015, [www.blackseacom.eu](http://www.blackseacom.eu)

\*\*\* Directorate of Policy Planning, Council of Europe, "The Pursuit of Undivided Europe. Experts' Views on the Political Relevance of the Council of Europe" (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2014) accessed February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015, [http://www.coe.int/t/policy-planning/Think\\_tanks/Pursuit\\_of\\_Undivided\\_Europe.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/policy-planning/Think_tanks/Pursuit_of_Undivided_Europe.pdf)