



European Economic and Social Committee
The President

Bucharest, 24 October 2012

Black Sea NGO Forum 2012
Participation and inclusion for responsible development

Staffan Nilsson's opening address

Seul le texte prononcé fait foi

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

It is with great pleasure that I take part in the 5th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum in Bucharest and I would like to thank the organisers for the invitation. As last year, I feel privileged to share the task of opening this civil society event with

- Mr Titus Corlatean, the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs;
- Mr Niculae Idu, Head of the Representation of the European Commission in Romania;
- and Ms Olivia Baciu representing FOND.



European Economic and Social Committee
The President

First of all, - I am here in my capacity as President of the EESC, the EU institution representing European organised civil society and a consultative body for the European Union. The only non-political EU advisory body - the organized civil society body which voices citizens' interests and is directly linked to them. The EESC is composed of representatives of employers' organisations, trade unions and of other organisations from all twenty –seven Member States, representing farmers, consumers and NGOs.

Our main responsibility is to produce reports or 'opinions' on the proposals for legislation drawn up by the other European institutions and our particular concern is the economic, social and environmental impact of this draft legislation.

We have 15 members from Romania (5 from the employers' organisations, 5 from trade-unions and 5 other representatives of various interests' organisations); we highly appreciate their contribution to the work of the EESC and I believe they are the best ambassadors here in Romania to speak about our work; I'm here only for one day, they are based here.

On external relations, the main aim of our Committee is to create and maintain links with civil society actors in non-EU countries. Our role is to inform our partners about recent policy and trade developments, to provide a forum for exchange of views and discussions, to share and exchange best practices and to network and facilitate networking at regional, European and international level.

A lot has happened both in the EU and in the countries of its close neighbourhood since the EU-led Black Sea Synergy initiative providing scope for regional cooperation was launched (in 2008).

A lot has evolved since the last Black Sea NGO Forum took place.

What did not change however is a vital need for civil society active engagement and mobilization of all parts of our societies to act together. This is the only way to face the challenges of our times, but also to look for solutions and opportunities.

We all know that the Black Sea Basin is a very complex region with growing geostrategic importance. There is a big diversity of economic conditions and political interests among the Black Sea states and they are all at various levels of global influence and interaction with international actors.



European Economic and Social Committee
The President

These differences may become an obstacle in defining common approaches and joint endeavours but it does not necessarily need to be the case. Differences have potential to generate quality of actions and they may contribute to innovative solutions. But to unlock this potential, we need more interaction, more exchange between people, more effective networks and the right mind-set, and last but not least the political will and determination.

The Black Sea regional cooperation is a unique opportunity to overcome years of division and to obtain results that were unlikely to be achieved through traditional political approaches and means.

I agree with recent statements made by Commissioner Füle and Commissioner Damanaki during events related to the Black Sea: **we need to reflect on a new and innovative approach on how to take cooperation in the Black Sea region forward.**

The EESC is ready to be actively involved in the process of identifying ways for a renewed EU engagement in the region. This Forum contributes to this process as it provides the right set-up for intensive and serious debates on this matter, which . can generate new ideas and solutions.

For this purpose, we also need to establish closer ties with the existing organisations and institutions which are active and well established in the Black Sea region, such as the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) which has recently celebrated its 20th anniversary, and without any doubt, is one of the most influential organisations in the Black Sea region. As recommended in the previous EESC opinion (“Setting up civil society organisations networks in the Black Sea region”, 2008), civil society and social organisation networks established at regional level could develop closer ties with it.

If we think about sustainable development and protection of the environment, including the marine environment of the Black Sea waters, we cannot forget about the Black Sea Commission which is an intergovernmental body to implement the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution and its Protocols.

Civil society in the region should explore ways of establishing closer links with these organisations which have truly regional interests and implement region-



European Economic and Social Committee
The President

wide actions so that they can benefit from their experience but also contribute to their actions and identify possible synergies.

This Forum aims to produce another concrete result, namely a set of new ideas on how the EU could better support regional cooperation in the Black Sea region and how concrete recommendations regarding the strengthening of the Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme (JOP) could be addressed.

Since its launching, the Black Sea Basin JOP significantly improved its capacity and broadened its experience, and this momentum has to be maintained. The programme should therefore be further strengthened, also in terms of funding, so that all high quality projects submitted under specific calls for proposals could receive financial support to benefit their region and its populations.

The EESC advocates that for the next financial framework (2014 – 2020), the Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme should focus on supporting thematic civil society networks in the region. The Committee has long been requesting for this in one of our past opinions on setting up civil society organisations networks in the Black Sea region.

We suggested "that the civil society networks should have the following priority areas of cooperation: defining common interests, formulating medium and long-term strategies to address civil society capacity-building, fostering greater synergies among civil society organisations to create preconditions for the success of regional cooperation projects, assessing existing instruments, evaluating national and regional capacities, identifying critical requirements, and preparing for the future in a pro-active manner".

All these are still actual and valid proposals. In addition, the Programme could also put more focus on strengthening links between Black Sea civil society networks and their EU counterparts.

Let me now turn your attention to the main theme of this Forum – participation and inclusion for responsible development. I very much appreciate the choice of this subject. It is timely. And I would add, for a sustainable world as well. Hence the EESC's contribution to the Rio+20 process. Where progress was made in Rio was actually the development agenda, and responsible development measures have been adopted in the outcome Rio+20 document: The Future We Want.



European Economic and Social Committee
The President

When we talk about development, it is becoming more and more obvious that it is not about any kind of development; we need the development which prevents environmental degradation, loss in biodiversity and ecosystems, depletion of natural resources, and worsening of labour and social conditions, as only such approach to development and growth is responsible and can be sustainable in a long term.

Sustainable development is all about integrated approach to solving multi-dimensional problems and addressing cross-cutting issues. Hence the political message of my mandate as president for the EESC: Engaging people for a sustainable Europe!

And I would add, for a sustainable world as well. We have been trying to mainstream sustainability in all our policy work in the last few years. The social dimension of sustainable development must be recognised and given the same importance as the economic and environmental ones. We need to remember this, especially in times of economic crisis, when many would try to compromise on social dimension. In the EESC we have argued several times and on various occasions that sustainable development policies do make economic and social sense in times of crisis.

We need to strive for development which is responsible and inclusive, development that would not leave aside any country, any group or an individual in a society.

When we talk about generating growth, encouraging and supporting entrepreneurship, we should also think about social entrepreneurship. When we talk about investments as a tool to promote sustainable development, we need to strive that these investments cover basic social needs, contribute to welfare and social cohesion and at the same time keep its economic value and protect the environment.

Within the EESC I represent farmers and their organisations in Sweden, so please allow me to say a few words about agricultural policies. Agriculture is an important sector in all countries of the Black Sea region, it is therefore crucial to ensure that agricultural policies and investments in agriculture-related sectors focus on promoting agricultural systems that permit the sustainable use of vital natural resources, protect biodiversity, minimise pollution and facilitates mitigation of climate change. Last but not least, we need to remember that



European Economic and Social Committee
The President

climate change and pollution do not follow any borders, they are global issues, and they require global approach.

This means that all stakeholders: farmers and entrepreneurs, producers and consumers, the private and the public sector, workers and NGOs, women and men, elderly people and youth, we all need to be involved and committed.

I am very pleased to see that we are so many here to take further the cause of inclusive and responsible development. I am convinced that this Forum is an excellent opportunity to take our discussions further and to achieve concrete and practical results. I wish you fruitful and constructive conversations.

Thank you for your attention.



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