

Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the 'Setting up civil society organisations networks in the Black Sea region'

(2009/C 27/29)

By letter of 15 July 2007, Ms Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Member of the European Commission for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, asked the European Economic and Social Committee, under Article 262 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, to draw up an exploratory opinion on

Setting up civil society organisations networks in the Black Sea region.

The Section for External Relations, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 12 June 2008. The rapporteur was Mr Manoliu and the co-rapporteur was Mr Mitov.

At its 446th plenary session, held on 9-10 July 2008 (meeting of 9 July), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 143 votes to 1 with 4 abstentions.

1. Conclusions and recommendations

1.1 Black Sea Synergy is designed to focus political attention on the region and to capitalise on the new opportunities gained from Romania's and Bulgaria's membership of the EU. Black Sea Synergy concentrates on five issues: good governance, transport, energy, environment, and the fight against cross-border crime.

1.2 The Black Sea Synergy should also contribute to the promotion of the European social model, and the principle of social and civil dialogue. It should also address poverty reduction in the Black Sea region in cooperation with relevant international organisations.

1.3 The EESC calls on the Black Sea governments, regional and international organisations to involve civil society in regional dialogue and cooperation and to offer a fresh perspective on major topics, such as sustaining political stability, democracy, rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms; promotion of economic reforms, development, and trade; cooperation in the field of transport, energy and the environment; and people-to-people contacts.

1.4 In the EESC's view there are significant opportunities and challenges in the Black Sea region that require coordinated action at the regional level involving civil society, especially in key sectors such as energy, transport, environment, movement and security.

1.5 The EESC welcomes the different private and public initiatives that have been set up to support active participation of the civil society and social organisations in the shaping of the future of the region. In particular, the EESC supports involving existing cooperation networks for civil society and social organisations in the Black Sea Forum for Partnership and Dialogue (BS Forum) and Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC).

1.6 The EESC promotes establishment and strengthening of the role of national ESCs and Tripartite Commissions in all Black Sea countries, and development of regional cooperation among tripartite structures in the region. In countries without national ESCs, social partners should be encouraged to engage in the consultation process and creation of national ESCs.

1.7 The EESC encourages the carrying out of a comprehensive research on the situation of the civil society and social partners in the countries of the Black Sea region.

1.8 The EESC and the ILO will organise a joint conference in November 2008 on the Role of Civil Society Organisations in the countries of the Black Sea Region: Regional network creation and promoting social dialogue. The conference will involve regional stakeholders and will be the follow-up of the exploratory opinion.

2. Introduction

2.1 The Committee is pleased to respond to the request from the European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Ms Benita Ferrero-Waldner, to draw up an exploratory opinion on Black Sea Synergy. The Commission is particularly interested in an assessment on how civil society organisations (CSOs) can be better involved in the implementation of the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on 'Black Sea Synergy — A new Regional Cooperation Initiative' COM(2007) 160 final.

2.2 The EESC welcomes the first joint meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the 27 EU Member States with their colleagues from the Black Sea region countries on 14 February 2008 in Kiev. The EESC's participation as an observer in this meeting was an important step for the implementation of the Black Sea Regional cooperation strategy.

2.3 *Integrated development in the Black Sea region*

2.3.1 The Black Sea region ⁽¹⁾ is a geographical area rich in natural resources and strategically located at the junction of Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East. More than ever before, the prosperity, stability and security of the European Union's neighbours around the Black Sea ⁽²⁾ are of immediate concern and strategic importance to the EU. The Black Sea region is a market with great development potential approaching 200 million inhabitants, a hub for energy and transport flows, an area of confluence of different cultures and also unsettled conflicts.

2.3.2 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 (Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan) also being active in Black Sea cooperation and the strategic partnership with the Russian Federation based on four Common Spaces.

2.3.3 The EESC backs the Commission's contribution to a whole range of sectoral initiatives of regional relevance: human rights and individual freedoms; the rule of law, cooperation on justice, freedom and security; trade and economic integration and regulatory convergence; transport, maritime policy, energy; environment; the information society; employment, social policy and equal opportunities; human capital, education; and public health.

2.3.4 In the EESC's view there are significant opportunities and challenges in the Black Sea region that require coordinated action at the regional level especially key sectors such as energy, transport, environment, movement and security.

2.3.5 The EESC considers that the existence of different formats, approaches and policies of the Black Sea regional organisations and cooperation initiatives underline the extent to which cooperation in development and management of synergies can be defined in the Black Sea area. An overview of existing regional organisations, cooperation initiatives, programmes and policy analysis centres is available in the appendices.

2.4 *The EU's goals in the Black Sea region*

2.4.1 Over the past 15 years, the European Union has developed major efforts concerning the Black Sea region to stimulate democratic efforts, to support economic reforms and social development, to protect stability, and sustain regional cooperation.

2.4.2 The EESC suggests that deeper EU involvement should complement bilateral efforts, invigorate regional cooperation, ensure greater coherence and political guidance and focus political attention at the regional level, which will foster the desired

⁽¹⁾ The Black Sea region includes Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Republic of Moldova in the West, Ukraine and Russia in the north, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in the east and Turkey in the south. Though Armenia, Azerbaijan, Republic of Moldova and Greece are not littoral states, history, proximity and close ties make them natural regional actors.

⁽²⁾ With the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU, the Black Sea has become a European sea.

zone of stability, prosperity and cooperation shared with all its new neighbours-to-be.

2.4.3 The EESC considers that the Black Sea regional approach should be targeted and used neither to provide an alternative to EU membership nor to define the final frontiers of the EU.

3. **Characteristics of Black Sea region civil society organisations**

3.1 The historical, political and socio-economic background in the ten countries of the Black Sea Area and consequently also the conditions for civil societies differ considerably. During the Soviet period the 'social actors' or 'professional cooperation' were reduced by the ruling party regime to simple 'transmission belts'. This can be seen as a common regional pattern for the Black Sea area, except for Turkey and Greece. Since the early 1990s, all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have been rapidly engaging in a political and economic transition with important consequences also for the civil societies.

3.2 The EESC advocates supporting strengthened cooperation between the EU and the Black Sea region countries based on a shared understanding of common values, fundamental freedoms, commitment to open society, and dialogue based on independence of civil society partners.

3.3 The EESC considers the following main reasons for the slow development of the CSOs in the Black Sea region: weakness of the judiciary system and its dependence on governments, in most cases the judiciary system protects the interests of the authorities against citizens; absence of a balanced distribution of authority and responsibility between central and local authorities; the tightening punitive and fiscal functions of the governments; manipulation of officials through corruption and bribery; the transforming of civil rights and liberties into fictitious notions; limitation on public access to information; governments maintaining a fake dialogue with selected representatives of the so-called civil society; the lack of legal and economic conditions to support real free civil society organisations; CSOs are based on international or corporate financial sponsorship; the weak development of a democratic culture.

3.4 There is a need to undertake a comprehensive and comparative study on the situation of the civil society organisations in the Black Sea region. This study has to cover the challenges defined by the current situation in the region, focus on the present opportunities for civil society organisations including the role of a regional network and analyse the emerging initiatives for organised civil society at the regional and European level. The study should also analyse the freedom of associations, the registration and fiscal rules and procedures, freedom of expression, functioning of tripartite consultations.

4. Networks of civil society organisations in the Black Sea region

4.1 The EESC points out that it is the responsibility of the civil society and social organisations to decide on the way they organise themselves at national, regional and international level.

4.2 The EESC backs the Commission's approach not to create a new regional structure for civil society organisations and encourages development of a civil society dimension in existing networks, as well as participation of civil society organisations in regional and trans-national networks.

4.3 The EESC recommends that the civil society and social organisation networks established at regional level develop closer ties with the Organisation of the Black Sea Cooperation (BSEC), which is the platform for economic cooperation in the region and the most developed intergovernmental organisation in the Black Sea region. The EESC considers that it would be beneficial to include an effective partnership with the civil society organisations as a key dimension of the BSEC's political orientations and activities.

4.4 The EESC considers that the BS Forum could become a platform for open dialogue among the governments and organised civil society, based on its experience of bringing together NGOs from the region and facilitating governmental — non-governmental interaction. The Forum was set up by several Heads of States of various countries of the Black Sea in 2006. It does not intend to establish a permanent structure and would not duplicate the activities of the existing cooperation mechanisms in the region.

4.5 The EESC suggests 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.

4.6 The established organised civil society and social organisations networks should be open to the participation of every interested civil society organisation in the Black Sea region.

5. Economic and Social Councils in the Black Sea region

5.1 The EESC cooperates with three national Economic and Social Councils and two similar bodies from the Black Sea region (see Appendix II for a detailed description), that are also active in the International Association of Economic and Social Councils (AICESIS) framework:

— Bulgaria — Economic and Social Council;

— Greece — Economic and Social Committee;

— Romania — Economic and Social Council — CES;

— Russia — Public Chamber;

— Ukraine — National Tripartite Social and Economic Council.

5.2 The EESC has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Russian Public Chamber. It is also planned to reinforce cooperation with the Ukrainian National Tripartite Social and Economic Council. Russia also has a tripartite commission, which the EESC should be able to involve in a dialogue.

5.3 The EESC cooperates with Turkey through the Joint Consultative Committee. The EESC supports the reform of the existing Economic and Social Council in Turkey in order that it has a well-defined institutional body and can participate in the international networks of the ESCs.

5.4 There is the National Commission for Consultation and Collective Bargaining in Republic of Moldova, a tripartite body established on the basis of the law on collective bargaining. The Commission is chaired by the First Vice-Prime Minister and the secretariat support is provided by the Ministry of Economy and Trade which also deals with labour issues. An Economic and Social Council is also emerging in Georgia but the EESC currently does not have cooperation with these bodies.

5.5 In countries without national ESCs, social partners should be encouraged to engage in the consultation process and creation of national ESCs.

5.6 Strengthening cooperation at the regional level and international cooperation between the EESC and the ESCs of the Black Sea region should be promoted. In the long term perspective, the EESC could contribute to the creation of a network among the existing and emerging Economic and Social Councils, as well as other tripartite structures in the region.

6. Involvement of civil society in shaping national, regional and international policies

6.1 Developing civil society offers a fresh perspective on major topics, the EESC therefore calls on Black Sea governments, regional and international organisations to involve civil society in more efficient participation in regional dialogue. In the EESC's view the following four areas should receive primary attention in dialogue and cooperation:

— Sustaining political stability, democracy, rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms

— Promotion of economic reforms, development, and trade

— Cooperation in the field of transport, energy and the environment

— People-to-people contacts.

6.2 *Sustaining political stability, democracy, rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms*

6.2.1 The EESC approach encourages the Commission to make full use of the Black Sea Synergy and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights to promote cross-border and regional cooperation among the civil society organisations. The EESC underlines the significance of intercultural dialogue aimed at conflict settlement, creating an area of sustainable democracy, rule of law, and good governance at local and regional levels.

6.2.2 Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the respect of independence of the social partners and the civil society organisations, and the freedom of press should be at the core of the EU's external policy in bilateral relations and in the regional approach.

6.2.3 Black Sea Synergy should also contribute to the promotion of, the European social Model, the principle of social and civil dialogue. It should also address poverty reduction in the Black Sea region in cooperation with relevant international organisations, in particular, the World Bank and the ILO.

6.3 *Promotion of economic reforms, development, and trade*

6.3.1 The Black Sea area has experienced significant political, institutional, macroeconomic and regulatory reforms in the last decade. There are significant differences between the economies of the countries in the region in terms of availability of factors of production, natural resources, production capacities, and market size. Countries of the Black Sea region have different levels of development, stage of implementation of reforms, degree of economic and social balance, and capacity to respond to the basic needs of their citizens. Countries in the region have to deal with the informal economy, corruption, migration and poverty.

6.3.2 The countries in the Black Sea region experience a high dynamism in the private sector. This is a major determinant as to the competitiveness of the economy and its long-term growth potential. Support for small and medium-sized enterprises should be encouraged to contribute to the development of economic and social balance.

6.3.3 In the EESC's view the long-term economic sustainability of the Black Sea region is directly linked with the environmental situation, growing negative externalities, social responsibility issues, respect for common social standards and a growing sense of eco-responsibility. The EESC emphasises the importance of strengthening social, educational and cultural services available to all citizens in order to combat poverty and inequality.

6.3.4 The EESC underlines the need to improve the investment climate, to promote market economy reforms, encourage liberalisation measures and supports, in accordance with WTO principles, the creation of a free trade area in the Black Sea region. The impact of technological innovation could open up new fields for international cooperation, external investment and the development of services.

6.4 *Cooperation in the field of transport, energy and the environment*

6.4.1 The EESC considers the Black Sea region to be a geopolitically and strategically important area as a production and transmission region for diversification of the energy supply for the EU. The EESC is in favour of encouraging diversity of supply — further strengthening support for the definition and creation of new, viable and secure, infrastructure and transport corridors, suppliers and routes.

6.4.2 Rising oil and gas prices, the EU's increasing dependency on a few external suppliers and global warming are also concerns for the countries in the Black Sea region. The EU has initiated a debate on the need for a European Energy Policy to assure sustainable development, competitiveness and security of supply⁽³⁾. The EESC is aware that the economic and social balances in the countries of the region can be highly affected by the rise of energy prices.

6.4.3 New supplies route such as the trans-Caspian/trans-Black Sea energy corridor⁽⁴⁾ and the Nabucco pipeline⁽⁵⁾ (a pipeline project which will span 3400 kilometres and bring 31 billion cubic tones of natural gas per year) as well as the INOGATE and TRACECA projects should constitute an adequate framework for creating a competitive energy market. Russia has initiated creation of the South Stream a pipeline running from Russia under the Black Sea via the Balkans and Central Europe, and the Nord Stream, a pipeline in the Baltic Sea.

6.4.4 The EESC emphasises that efficient implementation of foreign policy regarding potential new energy corridors supplying oil and gas from the Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions should be founded on support for Azerbaijan to achieve real independence as an energy supplier, helping to develop its national oil and gas industries, and support for Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine as key factors to provide new energy transit corridors to the European space. It should be taken into account that Russia is also an interested actor in this process. The EESC suggests that full support should be given to the European companies involved in Eastern Europe and Central Asia in oil and gas development and in pipeline construction. The EU should also aim to reinforce the role of Turkey as a stability factor in the region

⁽³⁾ The European Council of 8-9 March 2007 endorsed an Energy Policy for Europe. Subsequently a two-year Action Plan (2007-2009) was developed.

⁽⁴⁾ The corridor includes projects that have already been carried out like the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline as well as energy infrastructure which are currently under consideration or preparation like the Brody-Odessa pipeline and the extension to Plock, the Constanta-Omisalj-Trieste, the Burgas-Vlore and the Burgas-Alexandroupolis oil pipelines.

⁽⁵⁾ The project has been plagued by logistical delays, disputes over financing and a lack of political will.

6.4.5 The EESC considers that the development of energy-saving policies in the Black Sea region should be included as key priorities in the EU's cooperation and technical assistance programmes. Energy related programmes should contribute to energy saving, reduction of costs and decreasing pollution.

6.5 *People-to-people contacts*

6.5.1 The EESC welcomes the coming Cross Border Cooperation (CBC) programme for the Black Sea Basin in the framework of the financial instrument of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENPI 2007-2013) and underlines the importance of promoting people-to-people contacts in particular among the young generations in the Black Sea countries.

6.5.2 The EESC is in favour of further strengthening the cooperation to build mutual awareness and encourage economic, social and cultural contacts and promoting

people-to-people exchanges as a way of consolidating durable growth, prosperity, stability and security in the Black Sea region.

6.5.3 The EESC emphasises the necessity for effective implementation of visa facilitations and readmission agreements that would facilitate educational and youth exchanges, business-to-business contacts, mobility of researchers as part of increasing research cooperation, contacts among regional and local authorities, NGOs and cultural groups.

6.5.4 People-to-people contacts can promote cooperation in the field of education, training and research underlining the importance of enhancing intercultural dialogue via available EU programmes ⁽⁶⁾. Business-to-business contacts and cooperation between employers' organisations should be actively encouraged to establish closer links and to transfer experience and standards for activities.

Brussels, 9 July 2008.

The President
of the European Economic and Social Committee
Dimitris DIMITRIADIS

⁽⁶⁾ Tempus, Erasmus Mundus, Seventh Research Framework Programme, CBC programme for the Black Sea Basin.

APPENDIX I

OVERVIEW OF REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE BLACK SEA AREA

1. Organisations are divided into four categories, indicating the participating countries and aims of the regional cooperation:
 - 1.1 The first category — institutionalised organisations with a well-defined structure
 - **Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation — BSEC** (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine; 13 observers, including the EU and USA) implements multilateral political and economic initiatives aimed at fostering interaction among Member States.
 - **Organisation of the Black Sea Commission — BS Commission** (Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine) aims at protection of the Black Sea against pollution, and implementation of the Bucharest Convention and the Black Sea Strategic Action Plan.
 - **Organisation for Democracy and Economic Development — GUAM** (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine) aims at creating a Euro-Asian Trans-Caucasus transport corridor and a common space of integration and security in the GUAM region.
 - **Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group — BLACKSEAFOR** (Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine) contributes to strengthening mutual confidence and stability in the region through enhanced co-operation and interoperability among the naval forces.
 - **Commonwealth of Independent States — CIS** (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan) Turkmenistan is an associate member. The CIS endeavours to create a common economic space based on the principles of free movement of goods, services, workers, and capital.
 - **Union of Black Sea and Caspian Confederation of Enterprises — UBCCE** (representatives of private sector industrial and employers' organisations from Albania, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Iran, Kazakhstan, FYR Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, and Turkey) aims at favouring adoption of policies conducive to the better functioning of a market economy and fostering development of a competitive environment that encourages sustainable growth in the Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions.
 - 1.2 The second category — forums without a formal decision-making structure
 - **The Black Sea Forum for Partnership and Dialogue** ⁽¹⁾ — **BS Forum** (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Turkey, and Ukraine) is a platform for cooperation and commitment to the development of a new regional strategy and a common vision.
 - **EU-Neighbourhood-East Parliamentary Assembly (EURO-NEST)**. The European Parliament decided in November 2007 to create a joint multilateral forum of the EP with the Parliaments of Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan, as well as pro-democracy observers from Belarus.
 - **Community of Democratic Choice — CDC** (Members: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Georgia, FYR Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russia, Slovenia and Ukraine; participants: Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland; observers: USA, EU, Council of Europe and OSCE) aims at reaching higher standards of sustainable development by strengthening regional cooperation, promoting democracy and protecting human rights.
 - **The Black Sea NGO Network — BSNN** (an association of 60 NGOs from Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine) is a CSO aiming at the protection of the environment, the promotion of democratic values, and sustainable development in the region.
 - **The Baku Initiative** ⁽²⁾ — (partners: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan; observer: Russia; EU representatives: DG Transport and Energy, DG External Relations, EuropeAid Cooperation Office) aims at the progressive integration of the Black Sea and Caspian Sea region energy markets with the EU markets.

⁽¹⁾ The Forum is a Romanian initiative.

⁽²⁾ Related to the INOGATE Cooperation Programme.

1.3 The third category — programmes developed mainly by the EU

- **Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe — (INOGATE)** (Bulgaria, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine, and 15 other countries) is an international co-operation programme promoting the regional integration of the pipeline systems and facilitating the transport of oil and gas.
- **Transport Corridor Europe — Caucasus — Asia (TRACECA)** (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan) aims at improving trade and transport along the Europe-Caucasus-Asia Corridor.
- **The Danube Black Sea Task Force — DABLAS** (Bulgaria, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine and nine other countries, as well as the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) Secretariat, the Black Sea Commission, the International Financing Institutions and the European Commission) aims at coordinating actions between all financial instruments operating in the region. Civil society is involved in the various tasks carried out by the DABLAS Task Force.

1.4 The fourth category — analysis and funding of policy initiatives

- **The German Marshall Fund — The Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation (BST)** (operates in Bulgaria, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine) is a public-private partnership aiming at rebuilding trust and strengthening public institutions, affirming the value of citizen participation in the democratic process, and fostering regional and cross-border ties in the public, private, and non-profit sectors.
- **The International Centre for Black Sea Studies — ICBSS** (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine) ICBSS is an independent research and training centre pursuing applied, policy-orientated research, to build capacity and promote knowledge on the Black Sea region. It is a related body of the BSEC.
- **Crisis Management Initiative (CMI)** is a non-profit organisation that implements an initiative 'Civil Society Participation in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) — A Regional Approach to Conflict Resolution'. This initiative aims at creating a regional partnership network of four leading NGOs/think tanks from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Republic of Moldova to promote civil society dialogue with the respective governments.

APPENDIX II

EESC'S COOPERATION WITH THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCILS IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

Economic and Social Council of Bulgaria was established by a law 'On the Economic and Social Council' in 2001. The Council is a consultative body and consists of a Chairman and 36 members appointed by managing bodies of the representative organisations on the national level: 12 members from the employers; 12 members from employees and workers; and 12 members from other organised groups that include also two independent academics appointed by the Council of Ministers. It adopts statements on laws, national programmes, national plans, and acts of the National Assembly. The Council issues annual memorandums on economic and social development, as well as analyses economic and social policies.

Economic and Social Committee (OKE) of Greece was established by Law 2232/1994. It is tripartite organisation of the represented interests: employers, employees and various interests group composed of farmers, representatives of independent professions, local governments and consumers. The OKE consists of a President and 48 Members, who form three Groups with an equal number of members. The aim of the OKE is the promotion of social dialogue through the formation of common positions on issues concerning society as a whole or its particular groups.

Economic and Social Council (CES) of Romania is defined by the Constitution of Romania (revised in 2003) as a consultative body of the Parliament and the Government in areas established by the Law on the CES organisation and functioning. The CES is comprised of 45 members appointed as follows: 15 members as representatives of the employers' confederation at national level; 15 members as representatives of the trade unions' confederation at national level; and 15 members appointed by the Government. The CES has an advisory function to develop strategies and economic and social policies, and it acts as a mediator in case of disputes between social partners.

Public Chamber of the Russian Federation was created on the basis of Federal Law No 32 of 4 April, 2005. The Chamber consists of 126 members: 42 members appointed by the President of Russia who in their turn elect 42 other members from the nationally active civil society organisations, and then all 84 choose the remaining 42 from the list of the regionally active civil societies. The members work in 18 commissions as well as in the form of working groups with participation of outside experts. The Chamber comments on drafts of new legislation, reviews existing laws and publishes its own reports.

National Tripartite Social and Economic Council (NTSEC) of Ukraine was created on the basis of a Presidential Decree in 2005 and acts as an advisory body to the President of the Republic. The NTSEC consists of 66 members: 22 members from the representatives of various professions and professional associations, 22 representatives of the employers and 22 representatives of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine at the level of Deputy Minister. The NTSEC is supported by the ILO to develop civil and social dialogue at national level.

The EU-Turkey Joint Consultative Committee is composed of 18 members from the EESC and 18 members representing organised civil society in Turkey. It meets twice a year (once in Brussels and once in Turkey) to discuss different topics of mutual interest which are relevant for civil society. The main purpose is to ensure the involvement of organised civil society in the accession negotiation process: follow-up of the different chapters opened, to analyse the economic and social consequences of the implementation of the Community acquis, meet with EU and Turkish authorities and make recommendations.
