For centuries, contacts between the Black and the Baltic seas were intensive and resulted in fascinating outcomes. Rediscovery of this rich heritage requires a stronger emphasis on the North-South axis in the European history and culture.
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From the Vikings to the European Union

The Baltic and the Black Sea cities as drivers of European integration

Warsaw 2018
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Recommendations
Main theses

• For centuries, contacts between the Black and the Baltic seas were intensive and resulted in fascinating outcomes. This relationship had an important contribution to the history of the whole Europe. Rediscovery of this rich heritage requires a stronger emphasis on the North-South axis in the European history and culture. Today, this legacy can serve as an important source of inspiration for the enhancement of cooperation between the Black Sea and Baltic Sea, especially in the sphere of tourism, education, science and culture.

• In recent years relationships between the EU and the Black Sea have intensified despite a rising instability in the region which was caused mostly by Russia’s neo-imperial policy. The Baltic Sea countries play a crucial role in the approximation between the Black Sea region and the EU. The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) launched cooperation with the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). However, the Baltic cities are also actively engaged in cooperation with the Black Sea Region through European institutions (the European Committee of the Regions, in particular). Although the Baltic cities signed many twin/sister city agreements with the Black Sea partners, there is still large room for improvement in regards to cooperation in bilateral and multilateral formats (between ad hoc groups of cities or regional unions of towns).

• From the end of the Cold War, the Baltic Sea cities have been succeeding in establishing a regional cooperation which is considered to be one of the most developed in the world. The Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) is the best illustration of this endavour. The level of regional cooperation amongst the Black Sea cities, however, is well below its potential because of the geopolitical divisions in the region. For instance, the Black Sea cities have not managed to establish a Union of the Black Sea cities. Although, the Baltic cities signed many twin/sister city agreements with the Black Sea partners, there is still large room for improvement.

• The opening of the UBC towards the Black Sea fits well into the organisation’s new strategic goals which assume a larger engagement of the Baltic region with the external world and having its own agenda on European matters. The Black Sea region, for various reasons, seems to be the obvious choice as the first destination for the expansion of the UBC activities outside the Baltic Sea region (testing ground).

• In the case of enhancement of a bilateral and multilateral cooperation between the Black Sea and Baltic cities, the latter may undertake the role of advocates of integration on the local level (bottom-up approach) between the Black Sea and the EU sharing with the Black Sea towns their know-how and best practices. The bottom-up approach is the most welcome considering that in the Black Sea region the social trust towards local governments significantly exceeds trust towards central government. Also, getting closer with the EU requires dissemination of the European standards and values within the societies. What is more, in the case of negative political and social developments in the Black Sea region these networks between towns may serve as the last resort, preventing the ties between the EU and the region from being completely broken down.
• Cooperation between the Baltic and Black Sea regions cannot be limited only to maritime matters. In fact, the Sea-Land-Sea approach (seaports as hubs on maritime-land routes and gates to the interior) constitutes the second pillar of the Black Sea-Baltic connection.

• The establishment of cooperation between the Black Sea and the Baltic cities demands a considerable improvement of its economic dimension. Development of transport infrastructure on the North-South axis within Europe may facilitate this process substantially.
1. Between geography and demography

Cooperation between the Baltic and the Black Seas is based on strong geographical foundations. The shortest distance between the Baltic and the Black Sea merely exceeds 1200 km. The basins of both seas, created by the longest European rivers (the Danube, Dnieper, Don, Desna, Dniester, Odra, Daugava, Vistula, and Neva), make a common space, which is linked, directly or indirectly, through their tributaries. Most of Europe’s territory is covered by the basins of these rivers and their tributaries. Moreover, proximity between the rivers and their tributaries draining into both seas is often very small, especially between the Daugava, Neman, Oder and Vistula, on the one hand, and the Danube and Dnieper, on the other. This geographical environment has, for centuries, allowed historical, commercial and cultural ties to be established between the Black and Baltic seas.

At the same time, the Baltic and the Black Seas’ countries differ substantially, especially regarding the importance of coastal regions in their social and economic life. Turkey and Germany, two countries with the largest potential to play the role of engines of regional cooperation, possess access also to seas other than the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea respectively. Moreover, these other seas play a considerably more important role in their economic and social life. The share of the Turkish population living on the Black Sea coast, as compared to Turkey’s overall population, is rather modest. For instance, the largest Black Sea city in Turkey (excluding Istanbul which should be treated as a special case) is Samsun. Its population slightly exceeds 500 thousand inhabitants, which makes Samsun the thirteenth city on the list of most populous cities in Turkey. What is more, Trabzon, the second biggest Turkish city located on the Black Sea coast, is more than 2.5 smaller than Samsun. Certainly Istanbul should be defined as partly a Black Sea city as its most northern neighborhood stretches to the sea, even though the city center is located approximately 40 kilometers to the south. Thus, Istanbul has always been more oriented towards the Mediterranean Sea. In the case of Germany, the largest EU country in the Baltic region, Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, which are lands with access to the Baltic Sea, are inhabited by less than five percent of the country’s population. The largest German cities (Kiel, Lubeck, Rostock) located on the Baltic Sea coast occupy the 30th-40th position on the list of German cities. In turn, Sweden, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia may be defined as Baltic Sea countries per se, as each of them has only access to this sea and the distance from the interior to the coast is relatively close. Despite access to the North and Baltic Sea, Denmark is more Baltic-oriented because of its demographic structure (its largest cities are located on the Baltic coast). Norway, though, which does not have access to the Baltic Sea, was – for centuries – like Greece in relation to the Black Sea – very strongly integrated with other Baltic countries. Poland’s coastal provinces are home to more than 10 percent of inhabitants of the country. The Tri-City Metropolitan Area consists of Gdańsk, Gdynia, and Sopot and constitutes the third largest metropolitan area in the country.
In the Black Sea region, Bulgaria and Ukraine are the countries where coastal regions occupy a significant place in their economies and are inhabited by a considerable share of the population. For instance, three big Ukrainian cities (Mariupol, Odesa, Mykolaiv), which are among the ten largest Ukrainian towns, are located on the Black Sea coast. Also, Varna and Burgas, Bulgaria’s third and fourth largest cities respectively, are important seaports. The coastal areas play a slightly less important role in Romania, though, Constanta is the second largest metropolitan area in the country. Russia is a special case as it is the only country belonging to the Baltic and Black Sea regions at the same time. In the case of Russia the Black Sea region occupies a less significant place within the country’s economic and demographic structure. Such an assessment confirms the fact that St Petersburg is the second largest city in Russia and the fifth one in Europe. Its population significantly exceeds the population of the largest Russian Black Sea city. St Petersburg is also the most dynamic and one of the richest towns in Russia.¹

¹ All the demographic data based on statistical offices of the Baltic and Black Sea countries.
2. History and culture

The history of the ties between the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea is old and rich, even though it has not still found an appropriate place in the historical memory of the Baltic and Black Sea nations, let alone the whole Europe. These ties date back to the Migration Period, which took place at the end of the Ancient era. In this period the Goths migrated from Scandinavia, through the Baltic Sea and the lands of today’s Poland and Ukraine, to the Crimea peninsula. There they established their own community with a separate identity and lived for more than one thousand years gradually becoming more and more assimilated with various ethnic groups, especially Crimean Tatars. The Baltic-Black Sea connection flourished spectacularly in the era of the Vikings, that is the Scandinavian sailor-warriors who in Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region were called Varangians. They played a key role in the setting up of Kievan Rus’, the first state that united both seas. According to the distinct American-Ukrainian historian, Omeljan Pritsak, Kievan Rus’ emerged as a network of trade outposts set up by the trading company that was established by the Varangian Rurik dynasty. This network developed along the north–south axis, which set up the most important trading artery of Eurasia. It was based on the North-South Axis and composed of a number of individual routes. The trade route from the Varangians to the Greeks was definitely the most important one and connected Scandinavia, through Kievan Rus’ with the Eastern Roman Empire, which was ruled from Constantinople, then the largest city in the world. The majority of the route comprised a long-distance waterway, including the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea and several of their tributaries. The Dnieper river system played a particularly important role. An alternative route was set up along the Dniester river. Meanwhile, the Daugava, Vistula and Volkhov constituted northern sub-routes of this artery. Trade conducted on the route contributed greatly to the development of cities. The route from the Varangians to the Greeks began in the main Scandinavian trading centers such as Birka, and Gotland located in Sweden. Kyiv and Novgorod emerged as the key towns located on the route. It is also very indicative that the Varangians called Rus' Gardariki, which can be interpreted as “the kingdom of towns”. The crucial role of trade and sailing is confirmed by the name Rus' which most probably originates from a Finish word, borrowed from the Old Norse, describing the Vikings, which means “men who row”. The adventures of the Varangians became the main subject of historical Scandinavian novels of the 19th and 20th centuries (for instance, Long Ships or Red Orm by Frans Bengtsson, a Swedish author). The route played also a key role in the Christianization of Kievan Rus’. The Orthodox Christianity came to Russia from Constantinople, via Crimea, and then reached as far as Estonia and Scandinavia.

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From the 13th to 15th century a large part of the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea basins were under, mostly formal, control (vassal states) of the Golden Horde, a powerful Tatar Muslim (since the beginning of the 14th century) steppe Empire. It was the only case in the history when the Black Sea state expanded its influence to the North. Meanwhile, the tradition of Varangians was continued by the Great Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland in the 14th to 16th century. They established an union which became a continental empire that united the Baltic Sea with the Black Sea. In the 16th century Jan Kochanowski, the father of Polish modern literature, while describing the Lithuanian-Polish Union coined a phrase “Between the Two Seas” (“Między morza dwoje”). This expression, in form of a noun – “Międzymorze” – gained a key place in the concepts of Polish foreign policy in the 19th and 20th centuries, foreseeing the cooperation of countries located between the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea under the Polish leadership. According to Fernand Braudel, a prominent French historian, Poland’s territorial expansion along the Vistula and Dniester resulted in the establishment of important trade route on the European scale, which run from Gdańsk to Istanbul through Lviv. Braudel called it a Polish corridor. It was Poland’s key trading artery from the 15th to 18th centuries, with a number of cities developing along its course. Among them was, for example, Lublin where merchants from the shores of the Baltic Sea (Gdańsk)
would meet Muslim caravans from the Middle East at great annual fairs. At that time, this situation was exceptional in the world of the Western culture. In the 17th century, following the model set up by the predecessors from Birka, Sweden started to expand from the Baltic to Black Sea. In the middle of the 17th and beginning of 18th century the Swedish army conquered a large part of Poland. The expansion ended in 1709 with a defeat of Swedes in a battle against Russia near Poltava. In fact the Russian victory had an enormous impact on both regions, allowing Russia to build a Eurasian Empire stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

Box 2. Swedish Kalabalik in the Black Sea

For five years after the Polava Battle, Charles XII, King of Sweden, found shelter in the Ottoman Empire, which joined the war against Russia on his side. Together with Charles XII, who learnt Turkish, several thousand Swedes settled in Karlstad which was built for them near the city of Bender in Moldova, in the vicinity of the Black Sea. When the costs of their maintenance became too high for the Ottomans, the sultan decided to get rid of the unwanted guest and sent his troops to the Swedish settlement. This developed into an armed conflict which even resulted in a temporary imprisonment of Charles XII. The event became known in the history of Sweden as Kalabaliken i Bender, that is ‘tumult in Bender’. The return of King Charles XII and his companions to Sweden resulted in the rise of profound interest in Ottoman culture (architecture, cuisine, gardening). The Swedish language even assimilated certain Turkish words, for example... kalabalik. After Charles’ return to Sweden the Ottoman Turks began to visit the country regularly. In 1718 this resulted in Sweden agreeing to award them the privilege of practising Islam, making it the first exemption from the nearly 200-year-long monopoly of Lutheranism in the country’s religious life. The privilege resulted in a domino effect and marked the beginning of secularisation of Sweden, as identical rights were gradually granted to Jews, Catholics, and other denominations. The five-year stay of the soldier-king as an émigré in Turkey also left a profound mark on the Swedish navy. Using the blueprints for Charles XII’s vessels made in Bender (on which we also find captions in Turkish, written in the Arabic alphabet) two warships were built in Sweden: the Jilderim and the Jarramas, or to use Turkish ‘Yildirim’ (Lightning) and ‘Yaramaz’ (Disobedient), with the latter becoming the flagship of the Swedish navy. Its name passed from generation to generation, and the last Jarramas went out of service only in the mid-20th century. Charles XII cooperated closely with the Ukrainian Cossacks and Crimean Tatars. His brothers in arms were Ivan Mazepa and Pylyp Orlyk, prominent Ukrainian hetmans. Charles XII became even the godfather of Pylyp Orlyk’s sons. Orlyk found shelter in Sweden. He lived in exile in Sweden for five years.


The intensive contacts between the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea resulted in migration movements between both regions. Lithuania became home to Muslim Tatars mostly coming from Crimea and the Black Sea steppe. Tatar mercenaries, prisoners of war, and political émigrés were settled in villages close to the Baltic Sea in order to protect borderlands with the Teutonic Order. In the 16th to 18th century they fought in many wars in Livonia and Prussia waged by Lithuania-Poland against the Teutonic Order, Denmark, Russia and Sweden. In this period, the presence of the Muslim minority in Lithuania was an unprecedented phenomenon for western countries. The Lithuanian Tatars kept intensive contacts with the Crimean Khanate and Istanbul. In the 19th and 20th century they played a key role in the development of Turkish and Tatar modern national identities in the Black Sea region. In fact, they were treated as a source of inspiration by the Muslim modernizers from the Black Sea region, who saw in them a living evidence of a successful transfer of western
civilization which does not require a religious conversion. After the Second World War many Lithuanian Tatars moved to Gdańsk. It is not an accident that the only mosque with a minaret to be found in Poland is located in this city. However, the city’s ties with the Tatar culture are much older.

**Box 3. A Muslim Holy Man and Gdańsk**

The Ottomans did not forget about their Tatar brethren living around the Baltic Sea. This fact is best shown by the legendary biography of Sari Saltuk, a great Muslim mystic combining various religious traditions which became very popular in the Ottoman Empire. Saltuk lived in the late 13th century and was most probably a Tatar from Crimea. He became a symbol of the missionary activity among Christians, which is why according to a legend his remains were buried in many places all over the world, notably in Christian countries. One of such places was Gdańsk, or to be more precise, the Church of St Nicolas. Nicolaus was a saint with whom Sari Saltuk was strongly associated. Evliya Çelebi, the greatest Ottoman traveller, believed that Saltuk’s remains made their way even to Sweden. His tombs were found in many places in the Balkans. Among them the most important one was in Babadag in Romanian Dobruja, which is in a short distance from the Black Sea coast. The place is described in Polish literature by Andrzej Stasiuk who depicted it in his novel *Jadąc do Babadaga* (Travelling to Baabadag).


Another group that came from the Black Sea region and lives in the Baltic region are the Karaims. Members of this group, who are ancestors of the Turkic-speaking adherents of Karaite Judaism, live in Crimea and Istanbul. In the Middle Ages, the Karaims migrated to Lithuania. One of the largest Karaim communities settled in Panevezys. For centuries the Lithuanian Karaims cultivated ties with their brethren in faith from the Black Sea region. In the first half of the 20th century they even gained the attention of Turkish nationalists reforming their language. However, even earlier they had become a subject of interest for Scandinavian scientists. At the end of the 17th century Gustav Peringer, a Swedish professor from the Uppsala university, based on the order issued by king Carl XI, arranged a special expedition to Lithuania and was the first scholar to pay attention to the Karaims’ ethnic and linguistic identity. He published several ground-breaking publications on this topic. As a result of his work, Swedish studies of Karaims may be interpreted as the beginning of modern Oriental studies in Sweden.

In the 19th century many inhabitants of the Baltic Sea region migrated to the Black Sea region. In this period thousands of Germans from the Baltic Sea region, Swedes, Finns and Estonians settled in southern Ukraine, Moldova, Romanian Dobrudja and Georgia, including Abkhazia. The fate of Estonians living in Abkhazia became an inspiration for a successful cooperation between Estonian and Georgian film industries. Its main fruit was a movie titled *Tangerines* which, in 2014, was nominated to the Academy Awards and the Golden Globe.
Germans were the most populous nation migrating to the Black Sea region from northern Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries. Because of their large number this community started to be called the Black Sea Germans. They settled on lands off the north coast of the Black Sea, mostly on the territories of today’s Ukraine. The first German settlers arrived to the Black Sea region from the surroundings of Gdańsk. Mennonite settlers from the Vistula delta established Molotschna Colony in the vicinity of the Azov Sea, west of Mariupol. It consisted of almost 60 villages. It was the largest settlement of Mennonites in the entire Russian Empire. In the second half of the 19th century settlers from Molotschna formed daughter settlements on the Crimean peninsula and then in Kherson Oblast. In the late 19th century, hundreds of people left this colony to settle in North America. Later many of them relocated to South America creating a global network of Mennonites. The Molotschna colony was self-governing with little intervention from central authorities. At the time when compulsory education was still unknown in Europe, the Mennonites formed elementary schools in each village and made school attendance obligatory. Johann Cornies was Molotschna’s most noted resident. He was a prominent modernizer of agriculture and the key colonist of the Black Sea steppes. Cornies was born at the end of the 18th century and raised in the delta of the Vistula, near Gdańsk. He was the first president of the Agricultural Improvement Society based in Odesa, which was the main organization that supported German colonists. The organization introduced modern farming practices to the colonies. Cornies himself owned a large estate which served as a model farm. Tsar Alexander II, as well as other high-ranked government officials, visited the estate. Cornies helped also in the establishment of the agricultural colonies for Jews in the Black Sea steppe, within the framework of the so-called „Judenplan”. Cornies was also instrumental in settling the nomadic Muslim Nogais. Many of them were made sedentary because of Cornies’ efforts, although later they immigrated to Turkey. Cornies died in 1848. Thousands of people attended his funeral. Among them were Germans, Ukrainians, Russians, Nogais and Jews.

3. Geopolitical challenges

Despite enormous historical and cultural ties the current geopolitical position of the Baltic and the Black Sea differs radically from what it was in the past, which has a substantially negative impact on the cooperation between them. The Baltic region is dominated by eight countries belonging to the EU (Germany, Poland, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania). They constitute the backbone of the main regional organization (The Council of the Baltic Sea States – CBSS).\(^4\) Besides them, the CBSS includes Russia, Norway and Iceland, two of them are located outside of the Baltic region. However, Norway and Island are strongly connected to the Baltic region (the Nordic Council) and belong to the EU-orientated European Economic Area and NATO. Russia remains the only country in the region which is not a part of the European architecture. However, the internal diversity of the Baltic region increases if we take into consideration the fact that several EU countries from the region have not joined the Eurozone (Denmark, Poland, Sweden) and some of them are not members of NATO (Sweden, Finland). The geopolitical situation in the Black Sea region is clearly more complex. The sea is bordered by six countries (Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, Georgia, Romania, Bulgaria) but only two of them are EU members (Bulgaria and Romania). Moreover, six countries (Moldova\(^5\), Albania, Greece, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Serbia) do not have an access to the Black Sea, but they participate in the main regional organization (the Black Sea Economic Cooperation – BSEC).\(^6\) This group is highly diverse as it includes the EU member state (Greece)\(^7\), three candidate countries (Turkey, Albania, Serbia) and participants of the Eastern Partnership programme. The latter is an EU initiative dedicated to the Eastern Neighbourhood policy (European Neighbours of the EU) which applies to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. However, the scale of these countries’ integration with the EU differs substantially. In recent years the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries split finally into two groups: the states interested in EU membership (Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine) and those that are not interested in the accession (Armenia, Belarus, Azerbaijan). Like in the Baltic region, in the Black Sea region Russia remains a country which is the least integrated institutionally with the EU.

The Black Sea region faces, however, some substantially more serious challenges than geopolitical diversity. Currently, the region constitutes the most unstable part of Europe, mostly due to Russia’s neo-imperial policy towards Georgia, Moldova and above all, Ukraine. In 2008 Russia engaged in a war between Tbilisi and the rebellious province of South Ossetia and then invaded Georgia. In 2014 Russia occupied and illegally annexed Crimea and invaded Eastern Ukraine (Donbas). The main consequence of Russia’s military interference is emergence of para-states (separatist states without, or with very limited, international recognition). Nowhere in the world so many para-states can be found in one region as they are in the wider Black Sea (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria, Donetsk, Luhansk, Nagorno-Karabkh). All of them are involved in


\(^{5}\) Moldova is a landlocked country but located in an immediate vicinity of the Black Sea.

\(^{6}\) The Black Sea Economic Cooperation, http://www.bsec-organization.org

\(^{7}\) The EU confirms its multi-speed character in the region. Greece belongs to the Eurozone and the Schengen zone. Meanwhile, Romania and Bulgaria have not accessed any of them.
frozen or low-intensity conflicts which may be easily reheated, especially if we take into consideration the fact that Russian armed forces are deployed in these hot spots. However, the whole blame for the instability in the region cannot be put solely on the Kremlin. Russia often misuses the already existing interethnic tensions. The Azeri-Armenian frozen conflict in Nagorno Karabkh is a good example here. This conflict contributed not only to the ongoing state of war between Baku and Erevan, with regular military skirmishes, but also to the lack of diplomatic relations between Turkey, which supports Azerbaijan, and Armenia. For the same reason the land border between these two states remains close. The North Caucasus witnesses a guerilla war between Russian security forces and the Islamic-separatist insurgency which has taken lives of several hundred people in recent years. The wars in the Black Sea region had a negative spillover into the Baltic region. In 2014 the Baltic Sea became the main arena of Russian military provocations – unprecedented in scale – directed against the EU and NATO. 8 This trend again confirms the intertwining between both regions.

8 For instance, in 2014 Estonia’s sovereign airspace was violated by Russian aircraft more often than over the previous eight years. In 2014 Finland witnessed several violations of its airspace by Russian aircrafts, against an annual average of one to two in the previous decade. In September 2014, Sweden experienced its most serious airspace incursion by Russian aircraft in eight years.
4. The EU and the Black Sea

All these negative developments should not put too much shadow on the positive trends. Paradoxically, Russian aggressive policy has strengthened – though to a various degree – the European vocation of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. In recent years these three states signed the Association Agreements with EU, including the Deep and Comprehensive Trade Agreements (DCFTA). The EU, in turn, abolished its visa regime for the citizens of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Unfortunately, at the same time, the EU-Turkey relations deteriorated substantially and accession negotiations turned into a virtual process. At the first glance, the situation in the Black Sea region seems to be so difficult that it often acts as a chilling effect for the proponents of a greater EU engagement in the region. However, the EU engagement has in fact increased radically. First of all, the accession of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 transformed the EU into one of the regional stakeholders. In 2007 the EU gained an observer status at the BSEC and two years later cooperation between the EU and BSEC was strengthened through enhanced EU participation in BSEC high level meetings. In 2008 the Black Sea Synergy was officially launched. The Synergy is intended as a flexible framework to ensure greater coherence and provide policy guidance to relations between the EU and regional countries. It is based on a bottom-up approach aimed at building on concrete deliverables in the areas of environment, maritime affairs, transport, energy, education, civil society, cross border cooperation and scientific research. The main positive outcome of the Synergy was the creation of The Black Sea NGO Forum which operates with the support of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the European Commission. The Forum aims at increasing the level of dialogue and cooperation among NGOs in the wider Black Sea Region, strengthening the NGOs capacity to influence regional and national policies and to increase the number and quality of regional partnerships and projects. In recent years the EU has launched even more initiatives dedicated to the Black Sea: the Black Sea Basin Programme 2014-2020 and partly the EU Strategy for the Danube Region which covers Central and Eastern Europe from the Balkans to Bavaria. In the case of the Black Sea countries this Strategy includes Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova and some regions of Ukraine. The source of inspiration for the EU Strategy for the Danube Region was the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). Although, in January 2011 the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling for the European Commission and the European External Action Service to prepare an EU strategy for the Black Sea region, such a postulate was never put into practice. The fate of this initiative is indicative and should be explained by a much weaker EU position in the Black Sea than in the Baltic Sea.

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Certainly, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) programme launched in 2009 turned out to be the EU initiative which brought the most tangible results. The turning point for the initiative occurred in 2014 when already mentioned the Association Agreements/Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (AA/DCFTAs) were concluded with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. These agreements aim at strengthened political association and economic integration. They constitute a roadmap of reforms that will bring the partner countries closer to the EU by aligning their legislation and standards to those of the EU. The EAP is based on four thematic platforms (economic development and market opportunities; strengthening institutions and good governance; connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate change; mobility and people-to-people contacts), supported by various expert panels and a number of flagship initiatives. The EU and partner countries leaders meet every other year at the Eastern Partnership Summits. Initially the main point of reference of the Eastern Partnership was the Eastern border of the EU. However, the center of gravity of the EaP gradually shifted to the Black Sea as Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova built the most advanced relationship with the EU.

5. The Baltic region and the Black Sea under the EU umbrella

Within the EU the Baltic Sea countries played a key role in the EU engagement in the region. The Black Sea Synergy was initiated by Germany. Meanwhile, the Eastern Partnership programme was launched by Poland and Sweden, gaining support from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Such a situation should be explained by the above mentioned historical and cultural ties, geopolitical and security calculations and economic factors. For instance, Germany and, to a considerably lesser degree, Poland play the role of the main economic partners for the Black Sea countries. Germany occupies the key place in the economic life of the Black Sea region (international trade, FDI, the ODA, remittances and tourism) Meanwhile, Poland’s share in the Ukrainian trade volume approaches 7% and almost 5% in case of Romania. The trade between Poland and these countries is characterized by a dynamic pace of growth. The Baltic countries also host large communities, or have well developed people-to-people contacts with the Black Sea region. Germany is home to the largest Turkish diaspora in the world (around 3 million people with at least partial Turkish-Kurdish background). Germany attracted also the above 1 million Romanians and Bulgarians and more than 250 thousand Ukrainians. Since 2014 Poland has become one of the main destinations for Ukrainian – mostly seasonal labour immigrants, students, shoppers and tourists. At least 500 hundred thousand of them, at one point, are in Poland. In 2016 Ukrainians crossed the Polish-Ukrainian border 10 million times. Importantly, while looking at the group of Ukrainian visitors to Poland we observe that the share of Ukrainians living in the Black Sea coastal regions has increased in recent years. Until recently, the citizens of Scandinavian countries and Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia have often spent holidays in Turkey. In 2015 Turkey was visited one and half million times by Scandinavians, particularly Swedes and the Danish and around 250 thousand citizens of the Baltic republics, especially Lithuanians. Proportionally to the number of inhabitants, Swedes, Danes and Lithuanians were the citizens of the EU states who most often visited Turkey. However, the number of citizens of Baltic countries travelling to Turkey decreased dramatically due to the wave of terrorist attacks which took place in Turkey in 2016 (Lithuanians were the only exception from that trend). Economic relations between Scandinavian countries and the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) with the Black Sea region are rather limited, remaining to a large degree below their potential. In the case of Scandinavian countries people-to-people contacts are especially limited with certain countries in the Black Sea region. For instance, in 2016 only 72 Ukrainians visited Norway and 100 Ukrainians came to Denmark.

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14 People of Turkish origin account for more than 1% of the inhabitants of Denmark and almost 0,5% in Sweden. By comparison, Ukrainians living in Latvia and Estonia constitute in both countries around 2% of inhabitants.

15 All the data concerning economy, ethnic structure, immigration and tourism based on statistical offices of the Baltic and Black Sea countries.
The strengthening of cooperation between the Black Sea and Baltic Sea regions in recent years may also be observed at the institutional and regional level. In March 2014 the Meeting of Regional Organizations discussing priority development and project orientation hosted by the Black Sea Economic Cooperation took place in Istanbul and was attended by leaders of the Council of Baltic Sea States. In December 2015 the Council of the Baltic Sea States signed a memorandum of understanding on the cooperation with the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). It assumes that cooperation should include exchange of reports and recommendations as well as arranging consultations, joint seminars, and workshops. The main idea behind the tightening of the institutional ties is to maximize mutual support and create synergies between the two regions. It should be stressed that Romania and Ukraine are among the eleven states that received the observer status at the Council of the Baltic States. Countries from the Baltic region, namely Germany and Poland, are represented as observers in the BSEC which assigned such status to thirteen states.
6. The Black Sea and Baltic Sea cities

Baltic cities also play an important role in the Eastern Partnership initiative. In 2011 the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership, also known as “CORLEAP”, was established within the EaP. CORLEAP is a political forum of local and regional authorities from the EU member states and Eastern Partnership countries. It is the only EU platform that offers an opportunity to discuss contribution of the cities and regions to the development of Eastern Partnership. Its members include 36 regional and local politicians: 18 of them are gathered in the EU’s Committee of the Regions and 18 come from the six Eastern partner countries. The body is co-chaired by the President of the European Committee of the Regions and a representative from partner countries who is elected by CORLEAP members each year. The Baltic cities have also a good representation in the Working Group with Turkey which was created by the CoR Bureau in December 2006 in order to provide CoR members with a forum for dialogue with Turkish local authorities. The Group is made up of 11 representatives of the EU local governments, including 2 municipalities from the Baltic Sea region (Latvia [Riga], Lithuania).

CORLEAP aims to foster internal local reform in the EaP countries. In 2015 in a letter sent to the Eastern Partnership CORLEAP declared that it “firmly believes that the moment has come to reorient the Eastern Partnership, to bring it closer to the citizens through the involvement of regional and local authorities, to make it more supportive of the reform processes in all the partner countries, allowing each Partner country the opportunity to follow its own path of reforms while at the same time remaining committed to the multilateral agenda for the whole region.” CORLEAP reiterated also its call for “a reinforced role for local and regional authorities in the implementation of Eastern Partnership policies and strategies, including their increased involvement in the work of the multilateral platforms and their panels, taking into account the decisive role of local and regional administrations (LRAs) in shaping policies and strategies at their respective levels.” In addition, CORLEAP postulated “an enhanced role for LRAs as information hubs, in particular for SMEs, providing information on opportunities and support available to access markets abroad (such as skills development programs, information on access to financing, information on access to other networks of businesses and SMEs, raising awareness of certification and standardization, offering legal assistance on intellectual property rights (IPR) and public procurement)” and called “the European Commission to re-orient budget support aid delivery modalities towards LRAs and to increase the amount of funds accessible to LRAs in Eastern Partnership countries, which

is currently negligible to non-existent”. The Baltic cities are particularly strongly represented in CORLEAP. Among CORLEAP’s 18 members seven are also members of the Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC). In the case of the Executive Bureau, composed of six officials, it may be said that the UBC possesses a “constitutional” majority since it is represented by four officials. Until very recently Marrku Markula of Epsoo in Finland, was the President of the European Committee of the Regions and, in consequence, a co-chair of CORLEAP. Currently, he occupies a post of the First Vice-President of the ECR and a CORLEAP Bureau Member. The Black Sea region is represented in CORLEAP by four cities (Batumi, two small towns in Moldova and one in Romania). This means that cities located close to the Black Sea account for around 15 per cent of EaP representatives in CORLEAP. The role of cities in the EaP increased in early 2015 when the Flagship on Sustainable Municipal Development was created. It is to encourage local authorities to cooperate with civil society organizations to enhance accountability, exchange best practices and strengthen municipalities’ capacities as efficient and effective administrations for local development. CORLEAP’s aspirations to enhance cooperation between cities and civil society was confirmed at its sixth annual meeting in September 2016 when a report titled “Developing civic participation as a way to strengthen local democracy in the Eastern Partnership countries” was adopted. The report was authored by Paweł Adamowicz, mayor of Gdańsk and a CORLEAP Bureau Member. The report promotes the idea of convergence of the EaP countries with the EU in the political sphere and a system of values through the devolution of power to local and regional administration as well as strengthening of cooperation between municipalities and civil society. The report points out that painful and necessary reforms, which have to be undertaken by the EaP countries, will be very difficult to implement without closer cooperation between state structures and political elites, on the one hand, and the society including the NGO sector in particular, on the other. In consequence, the increase of social trust in state and political elite constitutes a basic precondition for the democratization and modernization of EaP countries. Meanwhile, many opinion polls conducted in the EaP countries shows a considerably higher social trust in the local administration in comparison to central governments. Therefore, cities are particularly predestinated to change the attitude of local communities towards the state.

The European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA) may serve as the main instrument of EU cities’ engagement with EaP partners, Turkey and even Russia. ALDA is dedicated to the promotion of good governance and citizen participation at the local level. It focuses also on activities facilitating cooperation between local authorities and civil society. In the 1990s ALDA established the Local Democracy Agencies in Western Balkans, then in the Black Sea region. These agencies function as self-sustainable, locally registered NGOs, but they are different from local NGOs because of the international framework that they operate in. The LDAs developed partnerships with local authorities and NGOs from all over Europe. The most important aspect of the LDAs is the process of partnership building between local and international partners, between local authorities and NGOs. It is in itself a learning process for everyone involved and serves as a practical

20 It should be added that Romania is represented in the CORLEAP by two towns. One of them is located in the interior close to the Hungarian-Romanian border.
22 European Association for Local Democracy, http://www.aldaeurope.eu
example of how a democratic participatory planning process can create results. The Baltic cities have already engagement in the ALDA activities, including the Black Sea. Gdański is going to be the lead partner in the LDA which will be hosted in Mariupol in Ukraine. It will be the first LDA located on the coast side of the Black Sea. It should be underlined that Mariupol is located in vicinity of the frontline between the Ukrainian Armed Forces and its defense gained a symbolic value for Ukraine and its European vocation.

The approximation between the Black Sea and the EU on the bottom-up basis may be achieved also through the twining mechanism between the Baltic and Black Sea cities. If we exclude Greece as a special case (member of the BSEC), the cities of the Black Sea countries have the most developed cooperation with the cities of the Baltic countries (especially Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Poland and Germany). However, among the towns of countries having access to both seas, the cities located in the coastal regions or their vicinity, though they signed relatively many mutual agreements of cooperation, are underperforming in the field of twining mechanism. It means that this particular group of towns has not managed to sign many agreements of cooperation. Certainly, Varna has the most developed relations with the Baltic region. Varna signed agreements with Rostock, Aalaborg (non-member of the UBC), Malmo, Turku and St Petersburg. Odesa twined with Gdański, Klaipeda and Oulu (non-member of the UBC). The latter has a twining agreement with Bursa, a Turkish town located in vicinity of the Black Sea. Gdański established also a partnership with Mariupol in Ukraine. In the Black Sea region St Petersburg is twinned with Istanbul as the only city from the UBC. Meanwhile, Kiel, the largest German Baltic town, twined with Samsun, the most populous Turkish Black Sea town (besides Istanbul, which – as it was mentioned before – is a special case). Generally speaking, members of the UBC from Finland and Estonia created the most developed relations with the Black Sea partners. The Finish city of Espoo cooperates within the twining mechanism with Sochi, which maintains such a format of cooperation also with Parnau from Estonia. Meanwhile, another Estonian town, Rekvare, established a twining relation with Senaki in Georgia and Maardu with Chornomorsk in Ukraine. Palanga from Lithuania has a twin city agreement with Kobuleti a Georgian town located in Ajaria and Örebro twinned with Shumen in Bulgaria. It should also be underlined that important cities from the Baltic region countries (including Norway) which do not belong to the UBC established twinning relations with the Black Sea partners. For instance, Stockholm, the capital of Sweden, is twinned with Istanbul while Szczecin is twinned with Dnipro. Kuopi, a Finish town which does not belong to the UBC, is a twin town of Trabzon.

The cities of the UBC established also twining relations with many cities from the Black Sea region located in the interior or, vice versa, the Black Sea seaports launched cooperation with towns placed inside the Baltic countries. For instance, Riga is a sister city of Tbilisi. Tallinn twined with Erevan, while Tartu with Gyumri in Armenia. Batumi is twinned with Daugvapils in Latvia, Lithuanian Taurage with Zestaponi a Georgian town and Koszalin with a Ukrainian located in their own countries or in the neighbouring states. Such a situation creates an opportunity for the expansion of networks between the Black Sea and Baltic Sea cities in wider formats.

The cooperation between the Baltic cities and the towns from the Black Sea countries remains a work in progress. New agreements on cooperation concerning various issues have been signed recently. For instance, in September 2016 Panevezys signed a memorandum of understanding with Rustavi, a Georgian town. It foresees cooperation in the areas of tourism,
education, culture, environment protection, youth, development of economic ties and public administration and local government.

However, quality of this cooperation is often more important than its quantity. Certainly, the long term character of twining mechanism between the Black Sea and Baltic Sea cities may constitute a significant advantage when it comes to cooperation between them. Certain Baltic cities signed agreements of cooperation with the Black Sea partners several decades ago. Cooperation between them started early since they belonged to the Soviet bloc. It was renewed after the fall of communism. For instance, Rostock signed an agreement with Varna as early as in 1966. The relationship was reanimated in 1991. Today this cooperation is based on school partnerships and cultural exchanges. The cooperation in the sphere of culture includes, among others, an annual exchange of invitations to the main city festivals: Varna Day and Hanse Sail, both taking place in August and a common museum exhibition project. In Autumn 2017 Varna will send the famous Varna Gold – the world’s oldest gold treasure – to Rostock for an exhibition at the Museum of Cultural History of Rostock, while the latter will send a special exhibition to Varna. It should be recalled that Varna was actively engaged in the multilateral cooperation between the Black Sea cities. For instance, the statue of the International Black Sea Club (see below) was accepted at the beginning of the 1990s in Varna and it was registered in accordance with the Bulgarian law in the court based in the city.

The bilateral cooperation between the Black Sea and Baltic cities covers a wide scope of areas, ranging from tourism, culture to the economy and environment. At times this cooperation is undertaken under the umbrella of central institutions. For instance, in 2012 Rostock established cooperation with Batumi, which is financially and institutionally supported by the Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) adhered to the German Ministry for Commercial Cooperation and Development. This cooperation covers topics such as: urban planning, sustainable city development and urban waste management. Expert meetings are organized regularly and serve as a platform to share, with Georgian partners, the best practices and know-how. Rostock-Batumi cooperation shows also that at the local level economic cooperation is gaining relevance. However, at the macro-level, or at least interregional level, economic cooperation between the Black Sea and Baltic towns still needs substantial improvement. Recent developments in relations between the Black Sea region and the EU in the economic sphere create new opportunities for cooperation between towns. First of all, the DCFTA with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine entered into force in 2016 (Moldova, Georgia) and 2017 (Ukraine), while in December 2016, the European Commission asked the European Council for authorization to launch talks to modernize the Custom Union. The launch of negotiations will strongly depend on the shape of relations between Ankara and the EU which is intertwined with the negative trends occurring in Turkey (authoritarian slide). The economic cooperation between the Baltic and Black Sea cities may increase substantially in the case of development of communication infrastructure between both regions (see box below). Moreover, it is hard to imagine the development of infrastructure without engagement of cities as transport hubs, promoters of connectivity and engines of economic cooperation within the regional values chain between the countries. 23

23 All the data about cooperation and twinning based on webpages of the Baltic and Black Seas cities.
Box 5. Infrastructure projects between the Black Sea and the Baltic

The Orient- East Med Corridor<sup>5</sup> aims to connect maritime interfaces of the North, Baltic, Black and Mediterranean Seas. It links the German ports of Bremen, Hamburg and Rostock, through Central Europe, with the port of Burgas and Istanbul. It focuses on fostering the development of the ports of the North, Baltic, Black and Mediterranean Seas as major multimodal logistics platforms and providing economic centers in central Europe with modernized, multimodal connections to Motorways of the Sea.

The idea behind establishing the Via Carpathia route was launched by Poland in 2006 when Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary signed the first joint declaration entitled "The Łańcut Declaration on the extension of the TEN-T network". In 2010 three countries, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece, joined this initiative and in 2016 Ukraine and Turkey were included. The main road corridor is supposed to go through Klaipėda–Kaunas–Białystok–Lublin–Rzeszów–Košice–Miskolc–Debrecen–Oradea–Lugoj–Calafat/Constanta–Sofia/Şile–Thessaloniki and will have branches to the neighboring countries (Ukraine, Turkey).

The project of water corridor (Danube-Oder-Elbe) is supposed to unite, through channels and rivers, the Black Sea with the Baltic and the North Sea. The idea has gained a new life in recent years. In February 2017 the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the DOE and started joint lobbying for the financial support for this project in the EU institutions. The MoU foresees also an establishment of a working group which will work out a feasibility study of the project. V-4 is going to submit a joint application to the EC proposing the revision of the TEN-T that will allow to launch the project earlier.

VIKING Train<sup>6</sup> is the most advanced infrastructure project connecting the Black Sea with the Baltic region. It is a joint project of Lithuanian, Ukrainian and Belarusian Railways and ports of Klaipeda, Chernomorsk and Odesa. The route crosses Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania and links the network of sea container lines of the Baltic and the Black seas, Mediterranean and Caspian seas. The regular runs were launched in 2003. Between 2012-2016 the VIKING expanded substantially because Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova and Turkey joined it. The project possess a strong Baltic dimension. Within its framework all sizes and sorts of containers and trucks are carried through the Baltic Sea mostly from the Scandinavian countries and Germany to Klaipeda. The project aims at the development of the maritime transit routes between Turkey and Ukraine through the Black Sea. The second goal foresees the establishment of the land route from Turkey, through Bulgaria and Romania, and further extending the route to Klaipeda.

Odesa-Brody-Gdańsk pipeline (also known as the Sarmatia pipeline) is a project of a crude oil pipeline between the Ukrainian city of Odesa at the Black Sea and Gdańsk in Poland. The pipeline is supposed to transport Azeri, Kazakh and Iranian oil to the Baltic Sea region. The section from Odesa to Brody, located close to the Polish-Ukrainian border, has already been constructed. In 2017 the idea returned to the agenda of Polish-Ukrainian bilateral cooperation.

6  Viking Train, http://www.vikingtrain.com/

Besides the economy people-to-people contacts (see box below) constitute another area which may be improved in the coming years. In 2014 the EU lifted visas for Moldova and in 2017 for Georgia and Ukraine. In 2016 the EU launched negotiations on the liberalization of visa regime with Turkey, but, unfortunately, after an initial rapid progress they got to an impasse due to the Turkish refusal to amend its restrictive anti-terrorist law and adapt it to the European standards.
Box 6. Istanbul: a melting pot

The role of cities is also crucial regarding people-to-people contacts from the Baltic and Black Sea towns. Istanbul is a good example in this regard. It is the key meeting point for people for the Black Sea and Baltic Sea region as it constitutes the main destination for foreign tourists visiting Turkey. More than 30 percent of all foreigners coming to Turkey pay a visit to Istanbul. Meanwhile, the number of visits to Turkey undertaken by foreign tourists in 2017 will probably exceed 30 million. In 2015 it surpassed 35 million. People from the Baltic Sea countries (including Russia) account for around 30% of visits to Turkey and citizens of the Black Sea countries make around 20 per cent of visits.

Unfortunately, the Baltic and Black Sea cities have not managed yet to establish – for various reasons – cooperation in multilateral formats. The International Black Sea Club (IBSC) represents the main organization gathering the Black Sea cities. The IBSC has the observer status within the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC). Around 30 cities belong to the International Black Sea Club. Among them are: Constanta, Galati (Romania), Burgas, Varna (Bulgaria), Piraeus, Theassaloniki, Kavala (Greece), Azov, Taganrog, Rostov on Don, Anapa (Russia), Poti, Batumi, Sukhumi (Georgia) Trabzon, Samsun, Izmit (Turkey), Moldova (Tiraspol) and Odesa, Mykolaiv, Sevastopol, Chornomorsk, Kerson, Yuzhny, Mariupol, Yalta and Feodosiya (Ukraine). Cooperation between them is constrained by political conflicts. Sukhumi and Tiraspol are capitals of para-states, Abkhazia and Transnistria, respectively. Yalta, Sevastopol and Feodosiya are located in Crimea which is occupied by Russia. The IBSC aspires to address problems of rational utilization of the Black Sea resources and its environmental protection. It aims at strengthening the system of organizational, economic, scientific, technological research, business and cultural relations among the Black Sea municipalities. The IBSC tries to coordinate efforts of the Black Sea cities for solving common tasks in the priority fields of economics, science, ecology, transport, tourism, culture and telecommunications.

However, when compared the IBSC has a substantially weaker influence in the Black Sea region that the UBC in the Baltic Sea region. First of all, the club does not have the same legal status as the union possesses. It is, for example, quite indicative that the IBSC does not possess its own website, being present only on Facebook. The fact that the Union of Black Sea Cities has not been established can be explained by the fact that the Black Sea region is torn apart by deep divisions. The UBC gathers almost 85 cities and the IBSC less than 30 cities. The UBC undertook a regional approach and expanded significantly its membership beyond the immediate coast side. More than 35 percent of the UBC member cities do not have direct access to the Baltic Sea. Moreover, many of them are located as far as 250 kilometers from the coast side. Conversely, only a few member cities of the IBSC are not seaports. Nonetheless, both organizations have not succeeded in convincing important cities located in the Black Sea and Baltic region to join them. Even more, some towns have already left them. For instance, Istanbul does not participate in the IBSC. Stockholm, Goteborg, Copenhagen, Szczecin, Lubeck, Kaliningrad and Oslo are also not members of the UBC. Russia is represented in the UBC by one city only. In 2017 the UBC and the IBSC started to approach each other. In October 2017 a delegation from the UBC attended the IBSC summit in Galati where the organization commemorated its 25th anniversary. In response, a representative of the IBSC participated in the UBC’s 14th Congress in Vaxjo.
Recommendations

- The UBC should establish a working group composed of experts, local officials, businessmen and NGO activists who will be responsible for coordination of the bilateral cooperation between the Baltic and Black Sea cities. It will facilitate the establishment of new partnerships between them and setting up of wider formats, namely cooperation involving several cities. Such a working group will serve as a kind of a think-tank conducting research on the Black Sea-Baltic relations. Comprehensive sectoral reports, with lists of detailed recommendations, should be the main outcome of their activities. The working group/task force should play a role of a data bank and a coordination center, allowing an exchange of information. It will evaluate assets, weak points and the needs of the Black Sea and Baltic cities improving the share of the best practices and know-how between them.

- In order to accelerate the process of networking and research, cities from both regions should establish, besides regional organizations, joint consortia which, on a smaller scale, will follow the above mentioned model of cooperation namely the creation of working groups/task forces conducting audits, evaluations and providing cities with expertise, assistance, consultancy and recommendations.

- The UBC should establish an official partnership with the IBSC, encouraging the Black Sea partner to transform itself into a more institutionalized organization, namely the Union of Black Sea Cities. Such a transformation is needed as multilateral cooperation requires a parallel institutional set-up. Cooperation in other organizational formats may be taken into consideration in the case of the lack of interest of Russian members of the IBSC in its transformation. Both unions should establish a close cooperation with the state-based regional organizations (BSEC, CBSS). The UBC and IBSC, in turn, ought to institutionalize their relations with the EU by regular meetings with all relevant European institutions, especially with the Committee of the Regions.

- The UBC and IBSC should together launch a Baltic-Black platform (B&B) which will gather experts, businessmen and municipal officials from both regions and organize thematic seminars. The main outcome of these meetings will be ready-to-use expertise published regularly (in form of reports, case studies, guidebooks, feasibility studies etc). The platform will present regularly its achievements during the General Conference of the Union of the Baltic Cities.

- Taking into consideration geographical circumstances, historical legacy and the current infrastructural project, cooperation between the Baltic and Black Sea cities should involve cities located between both seas on the North-South axis. They should focus especially on the lobbying for infrastructural projects located on it.

- The rise of awareness of the common cultural and historical heritage among the societies of the Baltic and Black Sea regions and the rediscovery of the fascinating legacy of the past should be increased in order to convince the societies and representatives of the elite in both regions that they are not starting their cooperation from the scratch. A short overview
of cultural and historical ties between both countries shows that plenty of events, historical figures and places may serve as a source of inspiration for interregional initiatives and projects as well as increase people-to-people contacts. Moreover, efforts to develop interregional cultural tourism, including restoration, reconstruction and conservation of cultural monuments, organization of exhibitions and concerts, could result in economic benefit to both regions. The rise of a mutual social awareness in both regions requires an establishment of an exchange programme for young people between schools under the umbrella of cities.

- The Baltic Sea countries achieved a considerable success in protecting the environment. Meanwhile, the Black Sea copes with a high level of water pollution and tries to deal with this problem through a regional cooperation involving the EU. Therefore, the ecological know-how should be treated as a particularly useful support of the Baltic cities for their Black Sea partners.
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