

**T.C.  
MARMARA ÜNİVERSİTESİ  
AVRUPA BİRLİĞİ ENSTİTÜSÜ**

**AVRUPA BİRLİĞİ SİYASETİ VE ULUSLARARASI  
İLİŞKİLER ANABİLİM DALI**

**THE NEW PERSPECTIVE OF THE  
EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY  
FOR THE BLACK SEA REGION**

**YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ**

**TUĞBA ELMAS**

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**Danışman: Yard. Doç. Dr. MÜNEVVER CEBECİ**

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ONAY SAYFASI

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## **ABSTRACT**

In this thesis, it is argued that the Black Sea Synergy (BSS) is developed in order to eliminate the deficiencies and therefore prevent the failure of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Because the ENP deals with both the eastern and Mediterranean neighbours of the European Union (EU) within the same policy framework, it cannot effectively address their specific regional problems. However, the strategic importance of the Black Sea Region (BSR) in providing European security and especially its significant role in supply and transportation of non-Russian energy sources pushed the EU to develop the BSS that could enable it to overcome many regional security threats and benefit from various opportunities. Moreover, the BSS is also believed to respond the demands and expectations of the BSR countries more efficiently. So, through the launch of the policy, the EU aimed to ensure that the countries of the BSR would keep on complying with the EU norms, standards and further their reform processes. By this way, the Union could also improve its image as an influential foreign policy actor.

The study concludes that, first; the ENP could not address the specific problems and security threats in the BSR and it created disappointment on the part of the BSR countries. Second, because the BSR has occupied an important place in the EU's foreign policy agenda, due to its strategic importance; the EU needed to provide a new incentive in its relations with the BSR countries in order to obtain tangible results from this relationship. Third, although the BSS was established through taking into consideration the shortcomings of the ENP, it is doubtful whether it could become successful in fulfilling its declared promises.

## ÖZET

Bu tezin amacı, Karadeniz Sinerjisi'nin, Avrupa Komşuluk Politikası'nın Karadeniz Bölgesi'ne yönelik eksikliklerini tamamlamak ve bu politikanın Karadeniz Bölgesi'nde başarısız olmasını önlemek amacıyla geliştirilen bir strateji olduğunu kanıtlamaktır. Avrupa Komşuluk Politikası, Avrupa Birliği'nin doğusundaki ve Akdeniz Bölgesi'ndeki komşularını aynı politika çerçevesinde ele aldığı için, bu bölgelere özgü problemlerle müdahale etmekte ve onlara çözüm sunmaktada etkili olamamıştır. Ancak, Karadeniz Bölgesi Avrupa güvenliğinin sağlanması açısından büyük bir role sahiptir. Ayrıca, bölgenin, Rusya'dan bağımsız alternatif enerji kaynakları sunması ve enerjinin Avrupa'ya taşınmasındaki önemi, Avrupa Birliği'nin bölgeye yönelik etkili bir politika oluşturulması arayışına girmesine neden olmuştur ve bunun sonucu olarak Karadeniz Sinerjisi ortaya çıkmıştır. Karadeniz Sinerjisi'nin bölge ülkelerinin ihtiyaç ve beklentilerine etkin bir şekilde cevap verebileceği düşünülmüştür. Bu sayede, Avrupa Birliği, hem Karadeniz Bölgesi ülkelerinin Birliğin kuralları, normları ve standartlarıyla uyumlu olarak hareket etmelerini garantilemek istemiştir hem de kendisine etkili bir dış politika aktörü imajı kazandırmayı hedeflemiştir.

Çalışmanın sonucunda şu tespitlere ulaşılmıştır: İlk olarak, Avrupa Komşuluk Politikası, Karadeniz Bölgesi'ndeki problemlere ve güvenlik tehditlerine müdahale etmekte başarısız olmuştur ve bu nedenle bölgedeki ülkeleri hayal kırıklığına uğratmıştır. İkinci olarak, Karadeniz Bölgesi, stratejik konumu nedeni ile, Avrupa Birliği dış politikasında çok önemli bir yere sahiptir ve Birlik bölge ülkeleri ile arasındaki ilişkilerden daha somut getiriler alabilmek için yeni bir yapılanmaya ihtiyaç duymuştur. Son olarak, Karadeniz Sinerjisi Avrupa Komşuluk Politikası'nın eksikliklerini ve Karadeniz bölgesine yönelik zayıflıklarını göz önünde bulundurarak oluşturulmuştur ancak yine de beklentileri karşılayıp karşılayamayacağı şüphelidir.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>BLACKSEAFOR</b>	Black Sea Naval Co-operation Task Force
<b>BSEC</b>	Black Sea Economic Co-operation
<b>BSECBS</b>	Black Sea Economic Co-operation Business Council
<b>BSI</b>	Black Sea Interconnection
<b>BSR</b>	Black Sea Region
<b>BSS</b>	Black Sea Synergy
<b>BSTDB</b>	Black Sea Trade and Development Bank
<b>CARDS</b>	Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation
<b>CBC</b>	Cross Border Co-operation
<b>CDC</b>	Community of the Democratic Choice
<b>CEECs</b>	Central and Eastern European Countries
<b>CEI</b>	Central European Initiative
<b>CEPS</b>	Centre for European Policy Studies
<b>CFSP</b>	Common Foreign and Security Policy
<b>CiO</b>	Chairmanship in Office
<b>CIS</b>	Commonwealth of Independent States
<b>CMFA</b>	The Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs
<b>CSO</b>	The Committee of Senior Officials
<b>DABLAS</b>	Danube-Black Sea Task Force
<b>EBRD</b>	European Bank of Restructuring and Development
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>EEA</b>	European Economic Area
<b>EECA</b>	Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority
<b>EIB</b>	European Investment Bank
<b>EMP</b>	Euro-Mediterranean Partnership
<b>ENP</b>	European Neighbourhood Policy
<b>ENPI</b>	European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument
<b>et al.</b>	and others
<b>etc.</b>	and so on
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EUJUST-THEMIS</b>	Europe Rule of Law Mission to Georgia
<b>ESS</b>	European Security Strategy
<b>FTA</b>	Federal Transit Administration
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GUAM</b>	Georgia-Ukraine-Azerbaijan-Moldova
<b>HLG</b>	High Level Group
<b>IASON</b>	International Conference on the Sustainable Development of the Mediterranean and Black Sea Environment
<b>ibid.</b>	ibidem
<b>IBSC</b>	International Black Sea Club
<b>ICBSS</b>	International Centre for Black Sea Studies
<b>INCONET</b>	International Co-operation Network
<b>INOGATE</b>	Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe



<b>INTERREG</b>	Inter-regional Cooperation
<b>MEDA</b>	EU's Financial Instrument for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership
<b>MEP</b>	Members of European Parliament
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>NIS</b>	Newly Independent States
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>ODED</b>	Organization for Democracy and Economic Development
<b>OPEC</b>	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
<b>OSCE</b>	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
<b>PABSEC</b>	Parliamentary Assembly of Black Sea Economic Co-operation
<b>PCA</b>	Partnership and Co-operation Agreement
<b>PERMIS</b>	Permanent International Secretariat
<b>PETRAS</b>	Pan-European Transport Areas
<b>SME</b>	Small and Medium Enterprises
<b>PHARE</b>	Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies
<b>TACIS</b>	Technical Assistance of the Commonwealth of Independent States
<b>TAIEX</b>	Technical Assistance and Information Exchange
<b>TGI</b>	Turkey-Greece-Italy
<b>TRACECA</b>	Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>US</b>	United States
<b>USA</b>	United States of America
<b>USD</b>	United States Dollar
<b>USSR</b>	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
<b>WBSR</b>	Wider Black Sea Region
<b>WMD</b>	World Movement for Democracy
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organization

## **INTRODUCTION**

This study aims at analysing the Black Sea Synergy (BSS) initiative of the EU in terms of its special place within the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Its major argument is that the BSS initiative, within the context of the ENP, has been developed because of the ENP's ineffectiveness in addressing many issues regarding the security and stability of one of the most important neighbouring regions of the Union. In other words, through introducing the BSS, the EU has aimed at overcoming the weaknesses of the ENP towards the BSR and thus, preventing the failure of the EU's neighbourhood policy in its new form. Therefore, it can be stated the BSS would complement the existing cooperation initiatives between the EU and the BSR. In order to defend this argument, rather than a theoretical approach, the thesis offers an insight into the strategy of the EU in dealing with a specific region. This is why, the BSR as the most significant component of the EU's neighbourhood policy forms the basis of this study and is examined in detail.

### **Literature Review and an Overview of the ENP and the BSS**

In this study, primary and secondary sources are analysed thoroughly. The primary sources are the official documents of the EU on the ENP and the BSS. The secondary sources are intensively journal articles as well as books. Especially, *the Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* is a very important source in this regard and special attention is paid to an analysis of its various volumes. *Perceptions* also has a special issue on "Redefining Regional Security in Wider Europe and the Broader Middle East" and is also a considerably important source. The publications of the European Union Institute for Security Studies, the Centre for European Policy Studies and the International Centre for Black Sea Studies are also given special emphasis in this study. The works of D. Triantaphyllou, M. Emerson, D. Hamilton and S. Ganzle are paid special attention as they constitute the most important studies on the ENP and the BSS. The following overview is the writer's own analysis based on these primary and secondary sour

If the EU's historical approach to its neighbourhood is analysed, it is clearly seen that its neighbourhood policy did not differ from its enlargement policy. The prospect of membership had been offered as the ultimate goal of the two policies. Because, the EU believed that membership of its neighbouring countries was the best way for providing their compliance with the EU's norms and standards. Therefore, it did not need to develop a specific policy towards its neighbouring countries other than the enlargement policy. This logic of the EU showed itself most explicitly when the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) regained their independence through dissolution of the Soviet Union. Although the EU's historical and cultural ties were deemed important, the main aim of the Union was to ensure stability and security of these newly independent countries while signing the Europe Agreements. However, the EU had to find an alternative way to manage its neighbourhood when it was understood that the Union could not enlarge forever.

The ENP has been regarded as the new foreign policy tool of the Union towards its neighbouring countries, which replaced the promises of eventual membership, following the eastern enlargement of the EU in 2004. As understood from the statements issued by the Commission's communication on Wider Europe and the ENP Strategy Paper, the policy has been mainly driven by the objectives of creating a zone of stability and prosperity in the neighbourhood of the EU, free from all kinds of threats to security and sharing the benefits of enlargement through preventing the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and its neighbouring countries. For the realization of these objectives, the EU would provide financial and technical assistance to its neighbouring countries by means of different instruments and programmes developed within the framework of the ENP. One of the most important features of the ENP is that the adoption of the policy by the partner countries would not affect the implementation of the previously established agreements and policies between the EU and those countries. Rather, the ENP is driven by the aim of supplementing the already existing cooperation frameworks between the EU and the partner countries in order to increase the efficiency of these policies and make the Union more capable in dealing with those countries.

Through the launch of the ENP, the EU's interest and presence in the BSR has been felt perceptibly. The EU has become one of the leading regional actors through establishing bilateral relations with the BSR countries. However, in the following years, many shortcomings of the ENP regarding its implementation in the BSR have begun to keep the agenda of the EU busy. This is because, the ENP has failed to both meet the expectations of the BSR countries and address many issues related to the security and stability of the region. Therefore, the initial concerns about the full-fledged implementation of the ENP have turned into reality on the part of the BSR countries. The policy mainly caused dissatisfaction among the countries of the region and they negatively responded to being under the same framework with the Mediterranean neighbours of the EU. As is known, the 2004 enlargement made the countries of the BSR hopeful about their integration into the EU. Especially, following the colour revolutions in the 2003-2005 period, Georgia and Ukraine declared their aim of EU membership. However, their inclusion within the framework of the ENP displeased those countries and made them feel excluded because of the absence of a membership prospect within the ENP. As a result, concerns rose about deterioration of the relations between the EU and those countries of the BSR.

Besides this discontent on the part of the BSR countries, the ENP also failed to establish a strong EU stance in the region. This situation has been worsened through imposition of more assertive policies by Russia, which has been trying to use its energy supply dominance for obtaining other political objectives. However, the EU through including Bulgaria and Romania as its member countries in 2007 has inevitably become a Black Sea power and expected to establish a more effective policy in the region, which would enable it to deal with many problems while strengthening its influence. It should be stated at this point that, nearly all security threats existing in the region could only be confronted through organizing collective action on a regional basis rather than individual efforts of the BSR countries. However, the ENP and other bilateral arrangements of the EU with the BSR countries have not been sufficient in supporting such a regional initiative and have become ineffective in responding to those common threats. Therefore, increasing strategic importance of the region together with its

growing role in providing European security have pushed the EU to develop a strategy through which it could address various issues in different policy areas.

In this regard, while the EU was seeking to develop a strategy towards the BSR, it took the shortcomings of its existing policies into consideration. Especially, the nature of the security threats existing in the BSR has necessitated the establishment of a policy which could provide cooperation on a regional basis rather than bilateral cooperation with individual countries. The EU's search for such a comprehensive policy resulted in the adoption of the Commission Communication on Black Sea Synergy in April 2007. Through envisaging cooperation at the regional level, the Synergy has aimed to provide favourable results for the EU and whole region and accelerate the initiatives developed previously (European Commission, 2007b: 3). Not only countries of the BSR, but also the other regional bodies and actors would become a part of this initiative. By this way, the EU has aimed to create an atmosphere of cooperation throughout the region which is mostly characterized by conflict and instability. Therefore, strengthening dialogue and cross-border cooperation between the EU and the BSR were declared as the main targets of the Synergy (Ibid.: 2).

It is clear that the EU has worked hard in order to overcome the deficiencies of the ENP towards the BSR. This is because, it has become clear that the ineffectiveness of the ENP in meeting the demands and expectations of those countries and addressing the regional security issues would cause undesired results for both sides. The Union would become vulnerable to many security threats such as illegal immigration, all kinds of trafficking and organized crime penetrating into its borders. The EU, as a Black Sea power, was expected to implement a more influential and coherent strategy that enable it to deal with those security issues. Moreover, the failure of the ENP would also damage its reputation on the international arena and decrease the credibility of its policies. On the part of the BSR countries, this situation could cause their moving away from the path of the EU, as they were already disappointed because of their exclusion from getting a membership prospect. Therefore, this situation confirms the argument that the BSS has been developed in order to overcome the shortcomings of the Eastern

ENP and satisfy the countries of the BSR in such a way to increase their willingness to comply with the EU norms and standards.

Although the EU had followed an indifferent attitude towards the region for a long time, this radical change in the EU's BSR approach is closely related to the increasing strategic importance of the region in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in terms of energy and security. Through the Synergy initiative, the Commission has set a variety of areas that have become subject of cooperation between the EU and the BSR and made proposals regarding their future implementation. However, as mentioned in the report on the first year of the BSS, rather than focusing on a wide range of cooperation areas, the Synergy should determine a limited number of objectives. By this way, it can provide more tangible results and prevent the emergence of a capability-expectations gap<sup>1</sup> both on the part of the BSR countries and on the part of the EU.

### **Major Research Questions and Methodology**

As mentioned above, the major aim of this study is to analyse the approach of the EU to the BSR with a view to portraying the regional opportunities and challenges that pushed the Union to add a regional dimension to the eastern part of its ENP. In order to show the change in the attitude of the EU in dealing with its neighbourhood and specifically with the BSR, a historical approach is adopted in analysing the development of the ENP and the EU's involvement in the BSR.

The major research questions asked in this study are:

- Why did the EU need to develop a specific policy for dealing with its neighbourhood?
- How does the ENP approach to the BSR?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the ENP in its approach?

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<sup>1</sup> The term capability-expectations gap in European foreign policy refers to the gap that exists between the "tasks – which the EU would be expected to perform by many influential insiders and outsiders – and the actual capabilities of the EU in terms of its ability to agree, its resources and, the instruments at its disposal. (Hill, 1993: 315)

- What is the significance of the BSR for the EU?
- Which factors urged the EU to develop a specific policy for the BSR?

The method used in this study is policy analysis. Because the BSS is a work in progress, it might be premature to base it on a theoretical approach at this stage. Instead, a thorough analysis of the EU/EC's historical approach to its neighbourhood is made in order to portray the evolution of its policies in this regard and understand the logic behind its ENP. The ENP and the BSS initiative are also considered within this framework and scrutinized with a view to display the weaknesses of the ENP and show how the BSS has been developed as a remedy for these weaknesses.

For this reason, in the first chapter of the thesis, the ENP is analyzed within a historical framework with an overview to the factors behind its development. In this chapter, the ENP is examined in detail with special reference to its main objectives and instruments. The attempts for strengthening the ENP and, also, major constraints to the policy are also scrutinized in this chapter. The second chapter gives general information about the significance of the BSR. It focuses on major opportunities and challenges for the constituent countries and also for other regional actors. The established cooperation structures and the phases of the EU's involvement in the region are also analysed thoroughly. The last chapter explains the reasons driving the adoption of the BSS initiative together with the main targets and cooperation areas of the policy. The chapter ends through an evaluation of the Report on the First Year Implementation of the Black Sea Synergy. This study ends with the conclusion that the BSS was developed in order to fulfil the shortcomings of the Eastern ENP and motivate the BSR countries to continue with their reforms. In this regard, the EU cannot take the risk of the failure of its neighbourhood policy in such a significant neighbouring region in which the constituent countries have already been disappointed because of their exclusion from getting a membership prospect under the ENP's framework.

## I. THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY

The enlargement of the Union in 2004 may be regarded as a turning point for both Europe and its neighbourhood. This is because it not only denotes the participation of ten new countries into the Union but also marks a major transformation inside and outside of the EU. Following the accession of new members, the EU had engaged in a restructuring process for both maintaining its internal balance and designing policies that would be able to make it capable of getting under control its new environment. All these attempts of the Union paved the way for the development of the ENP.

This chapter aims to scrutinize the Union's approach in dealing with its neighbourhood since its inception as the EC. The reasons of the change in the Union's attitude towards its neighbourhood and the factors paving the way for the development of the ENP are analyzed within a historical framework. The objectives and main instruments of the ENP and also the EU's efforts for strengthening the policy are examined in order to show the EU's methods for turning the ENP into a long-term project. The chapter ends with an analysis of the constraints to the full-fledged implementation of the ENP.

### 1.1. A Historical Overview of the EU/EC's Approach to its Neighbourhood

It can be stated that, from the past till the present, the EU has mainly adopted two approaches towards its neighbouring countries:

- an approach aimed, first and foremost, at *stabilisation*, mainly based on fostering regional cooperation and broad partnerships (regionalism); and
- an approach (in addition to, or instead of, the above), aimed at *integration* proper, i.e. at bringing neighbouring countries directly into the EU through a bilateral process based on strict 'conditionality'. (Missiroli, 2003: 9)

The main difference between the two approaches is that because the second approach based on *integration* includes the membership prospect as the final target, EU conditionality can be used as a much more effective tool. (Ibid.: 17). Therefore, the *integration* approach has been more successful in providing the transformation of the



non-EU countries into secure and stable democracies in compliance with the EU norms, rules and standards. Such an approach can be also regarded as “a security policy in its own right” (Ibid.). The first examples of the integration approach were the memberships of Greece in 1981 and of Spain and Portugal in 1986 (Bretherton and Vogler, 2006: 138). By this way, the EU provided the democratic transition of these post-authoritarian countries and also increased its influence in the Mediterranean basin (Missiroli, 2003: 17).

It should be noted that due to the overlaying impact of the Cold War, the EC’s policies towards its near abroad remained limited until the 1990s. However, with the end of the Cold War, the EU determined a strategy towards its Eastern neighbouring countries which had newly become independent from the Soviet Bloc. Although the relations between the EU and the CEECs were limited during the Cold War period, EU membership became a major priority for the new CEE governments in 1989 (Bretherton and Vogler, 2006: 139). In response to their efforts, the December 1989 European Council called the Commission to work on proposals for establishing “a new type of association agreement” between the EU and the CEECs (Ibid.). This request of the Council resulted in the signing of the *Europe Agreements* with the ten CEECs in 1992 (Ibid.). Although the Europe Agreements did not include a membership prospect for the CEECs; through the June 1993 European Council, the membership prospect for the CEECs was approved and Copenhagen Criteria for membership was adopted (Ibid.: 140).

Throughout 1990s, while the EU was keeping the CEECs under control by means of the Europe Agreements which paved the way for their eventual membership, it had also developed some other policies towards its neighbouring regions in order to make them act conjointly with the EU (Kahraman, 2005: 9). One of these policies of the Union is the *Euro-Mediterranean Partnership* (EMP) launched for its southern neighbours in 1995. The EMP is a typical example of the Union’s approach, which aims at *stabilisation* of the neighbouring countries. Contrary to the Union’s policy towards CEECs, this regional approach does not include a membership perspective and aims to establish a partnership between the EU and its Mediterranean partners in order to

implement the objectives of establishing a zone of peace, security, stability, prosperity as stated in the Barcelona Declaration, which was adopted in 1995 (Ibid.: 10). Another example to the Union's *stabilisation* approach is the signing of the *Partnership and Cooperation Agreements* (PCAs) with Ukraine, Russia, Moldova and Belarus and the countries of Southern Caucasus between 1994 and 1995 (Missiroli, 2003: 10).

However, as Wallace (2003: 1) states; all these initiatives of the EU towards its neighbouring regions could not bring the expected success for both sides and caused partner countries who expected a lot from this relationship to experience disappointment. Because of the failure of the Union's existing neighbourhood policies, the EU considered it necessary to develop a new policy that would enable it to satisfy the expectations of its partner countries and motivate them for future cooperation without including a membership prospect.

Another view classifies the EU's approach towards its neighbourhood throughout the 1990's in three models:

- Comprehensive, all-inclusive models of pan-European cooperation (such as the 'European Confederation' and – to a lesser extent – the Europe Conference).
- Differentiated approaches of gradual and conditional integration of individual countries into the EC/EU (based on so-called Europe Agreements) or cooperation/integration with the EC/EU (based on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements).
- Geographically focused approaches of EU foreign policy, external relations and regional policy involving the EU and specific non-EU countries (particularly in the context of the Euro–Mediterranean partnership ('Barcelona Process'), the Northern Dimension initiative and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe). (Ganzle, 2007b: 114)

Differently from the first model between the integration and stabilisation approaches, Ganzle regards the Europe Agreements and PCAs as a model based on "gradual and conditional integration" of the neighbouring countries into the EU (Ibid.). He also accepts the idea of establishing a European Confederation introduced by the French President Mitterrand as one of the EC/EU's neighbourhood approaches (Ibid.: 115). This idea aims at "providing links between all European states, including the Soviet Union (Ibid.). The EMP and the Northern Dimension initiative are also

considered as other EC/EU neighbourhood policies towards specific geographical areas in the Union's neighbourhood.

A thorough analysis of these different categorizations, concerning the EU's neighbourhood approaches, shows that throughout the 1990's, the promises for eventual membership constituted the main basis of the EU's neighbourhood policy. The EU used membership tool towards the CEECs in order to transform those fragmented countries into stable democracies (Lippert, 2006: 86). This was mainly because enlargement was regarded as the best way of exporting security and stability to the neighbouring countries (Ibid.).

## **1.2. Underlying Reasons of the ENP**

The accession of the eight CEECs together with Malta and Cyprus in 2004 revealed the fact that the EU could not continue to establish its neighbourhood relations on the basis of membership prospect any longer. The Union's *absorption capacity* has become a commonly used term in order to state that the enlargement of the EU is not limitless (Ibid.). Because further widening of the Union would block deepening in the structured integration process which necessities member states' agreement on policies that would be adopted. This deepening-widening dilemma made the EU design alternative policies other than membership for managing its neighbourhood – as an influential foreign policy actor.

Moreover, the 2004 enlargement changed the neighbourhood of the EU which now includes Belarus, Ukraine, Russia and Moldova. This means that the enlarged EU has direct borders with the countries that suffer from political, social and also economic instability. The security challenges – ethnicity and minority conflicts, terrorism, all kinds of illegal trafficking, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, cross border crimes, illegal immigration, environmental degradation, breakdowns in governance and so many – which those countries deal with not only make the region vulnerable to all extremes but also threaten the integrity of the whole Union (Açıkmeşe, 2005: 1-3). Because of enlargement, the change in the nature of security threats seen in the EU's

new environment and the fears about potential spill-over of these threats into the Union pushed the EU to show more concern about the security and stability of its neighbouring countries with which it had established various types of relationships until that time.

The *big-bang* enlargement also gave rise to divisions among the EU member states about the direction of the EU's external relations. As all the member states have different interests and priorities in their own foreign policies, their concerns regarding external relations of the Union differ from each other (Aydın, 2004: 10). Accordingly, while Italy and Spain were concerned more about the Mediterranean dimension of the Union's foreign policy, Finland and Sweden paid more attention to the Northern dimension as a result of their national priorities (Ibid.). For this reason, the accession of the new member states into the Union meant that there would be further states in the Union which would try to make the EU's external relations overlap with their national foreign policy interests (Ibid.). This tendency of the new comers would cause further "dimensionalisation" of the EU's external relations (Ibid.). It also demonstrated the absence of a "coherent" neighbourhood policy in the EU (Wallace, 2003: 10). So, the EU had to develop a neighbourhood policy that would be able to both satisfy a variety of member states' concerns in different dimensions (southern-eastern) and cover the expectations of all the neighbouring countries equally, without causing any resentment on their part (Ibid.).

In addition to all these reasons behind the development of the ENP, another rationale which served as the basis of this policy is the *European Security Strategy* (ESS). The ESS was declared by Javier Solana at the Thessaloniki European Council in June 2003 and later adopted by the Brussels European Council held in December 2003, with some amendments. As Cremona (2004: 2) states, the security dimension of the ENP was established through this strategy. The ESS defines the threats that has emerged in the post-Cold War era and gives the EU a lead for overcoming these threats (Açıkmeşe, 2005: 3) through stating:

It is in the European interest that countries on our borders are well-governed. Neighbours who are engaged in violent conflict, weak states where organised crime flourishes, dysfunctional societies or exploding population growth on its borders all pose problems for Europe. The reunification of Europe and the integration of acceding

states will increase our security but they also bring Europe closer to troubled areas. Our task is to promote a ring of well governed countries to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean with whom we can enjoy close and cooperative relations (Solana, 2003: 7).

As emphasized in the Security Strategy, the EU could not remain unresponsive to the hard conditions in its neighbouring countries as they were not able to deal with those challenges and fluctuations by themselves. Especially, it had a sense of responsibility against those countries, which clearly showed their will for acting together with the EU. In the case of the CEECs, the EU worked hard in order to accomplish democratic transition of those countries which were separated from the rest of Europe for many years. The EU was also expected to show the same sensitivity for countries like Ukraine and Georgia who experienced the colour revolutions and other Western NIS of Belarus and Moldova. As Lynch (2004: 2) mentions; the EU has tried to prove itself as a *security actor* in its relations with the other countries after the failure of CFSP in Iraqi crisis. So, if it becomes successful in its task of “promoting well governed countries” in its neighbourhood, this will be an example of its success both as an influential security and foreign policy actor (Ibid.).

### **1.3. The Emerging Agenda of the ENP**

While enlargement was on the way, the EU began to prepare itself internally and externally for the changing conditions which the Union would inevitably face. So, the relations of the enlarged Union with its new neighbourhood became a primary concern of the EU long before. As Cremona (2004: 2) stated the foundations of the ENP could be based upon Commission Communication on “Agenda 2000: For a stronger and wider Union”. In its document published in 1997, the Commission emphasized the significance of establishing good relations between the enlarged Union and its neighbouring countries in order to serve the purpose of international security and peace through stating “the enlargement process will also require careful management in the Union’s relations with other partners in Europe and beyond, in order to ensure that it contributes to the overall objectives of strengthening international security and which would cover more developed and comprehensive areas of cooperation” (European

Commission, 1997: 13). Thereafter, the Commission approach related to the structure of the relations between the enlarged Union and its new neighbourhood began to take shape towards the development of a neighbourhood policy rather than other forms of relationship (Kahraman, 2005: 13).

Following these developments, in April 2002, the General Affairs Council called upon the Commission and High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, to work on this outlined policy of proximity which was likely to be in the form of a neighbourhood policy (Wallace, 2003: 5). As a response to this request, a joint letter prepared by Chris Patten and Javier Solana was presented at an informal foreign ministers' meeting (Ibid.). However, because these initiatives could not attract the expected attention, the Commission President, Romano Prodi, made his historic speech, *A Policy of Proximity*, on December 2002 (Ibid.). The speech declared the intention of the Union as to promote “a ring of friends” in its new neighbourhood (Prodi, 2002). It was also stated that the EU's relationship with the neighbouring countries would be in a form providing “more than partnership and less than membership” (Ibid.). According to Prodi, the extent of this relationship could be defined as “sharing everything but institutions” (Ibid.)

In the following Copenhagen European Council in December 2002, the concept of *Wider Europe* was accepted in principle (Ganzle, 2007a: 13). In this Council, it was also agreed that this policy would not only comprise the Union's eastern neighbourhood but also the countries in the southern Mediterranean (Council of the European Union, 2003: 7). Thus, the Mediterranean dimension was included within the framework of the new neighbourhood policy as a result of the corporate pressure exerted by the southern member states of the Union (Ifversen and Kolvraa, 2007: 11). This development was declared in Presidency Conclusions through stating:

The European Union also wishes to enhance its relations with Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and the southern Mediterranean countries based on a long-term approach promoting democratic and economic reforms, sustainable developments and trade and is “developing new initiatives for this purpose (Council of the European Union, 2003: 7).

In March 2003, the Commission published its Communication on “Wider Europe- Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and

Southern Neighbours”. Through this communication, the framework of the neighbourhood policy was laid down. The general reasoning of the policy and the methodology that would be followed in the establishment of this policy were specified under this drawn framework (Gebhard, 2007: 5). By this way, the Commission became able to draw a framework concerning purpose and principles of the neighbourhood policy (Ibid.). The Communication was approved at the Thessaloniki European Council in June 2003.

The Commission launched another Communication on “Paving the way for a New Neighbourhood Instrument” in July 2003. Through this document, a new neighbourhood policy instrument firstly pointed out in the Wider Europe Communication was introduced (European Commission, 2003a: 3-4). According to the Communication, this new instrument would give way to advanced *regional* and *cross-border* cooperation in different fields for effective managing the Union’s new external borders (Ibid.: 5). Contrary to the wide range of financial instruments which blocked the efficiency of the cooperation on the Union’s external borders, the Neighbourhood Instrument would include a *single approach* established through convergence of existing financial instruments (Ibid.: 7).

Through its 13 October conclusions, The Council welcomed this communication of the Commission that laid the main ground for developing such instruments available for the existence of effective *cross-border* and *regional/transnational* cooperation (European Commission, 2005: 363). The Council also gave support to the Commission’s attempt for the establishment of neighbourhood programmes during 2004-2006 that would comprise the period before adaptation of new neighbourhood instrument (Ibid.). The Commission was also tasked with working on the proposals of *country-specific* Action Plans which would be carried out at the end of the June 2004 (Gebhard, 2007: 6). As a response, the Commission launched its second White Paper, ENP Strategy Paper that was published in May 2004. The basis of the ENP outlined in the Wider Europe Communication was aimed to be developed through this document which also laid out the main principles and features of this strategy (Ibid.) The aim of the policy was stated as “to share the benefits of EU enlargement” so

as to “prevent the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and its neighbours” (European Commission, 2004a: 3). Additionally, through this paper, the Commission also purposed the inclusion of the countries of Southern Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) and Mediterranean countries in the Barcelona Process in the scope of the neighbourhood policy and declared the following Action Plans for the each neighbour country (Ibid.: 7).

On 14 June, while the Council approved these proposals of the Commission, it also mentioned its plan for the establishment of a *Strategic Partnership* with Russia including four *common spaces* (European Commission, 2005: 202). The Council welcomed the extension in the scope of the neighbourhood policy through covering South Caucasus countries and it also made a mention of its intention for the inclusion of Belarus with a democratic government and Libya in the neighbourhood policy (Ibid.). Finally, these Commission proposals and Council conclusions were approved by the European Council of 17/18 June 2004.

#### **1.4. Objectives and Basic Tenets of the ENP**

The Commission Communication of March 2003 which introduced the ENP declared the aim of the policy, previously mentioned in the Presidency Conclusions of Copenhagen European Council of December 2002, as “to avoid drawing new dividing lines in Europe and to promote stability and prosperity within and beyond the new borders of the Union” and thereby to establish “a zone of prosperity and a friendly neighbourhood” (European Commission, 2003b: 3-4). The Communication regarded the neighbouring countries as *essential partners* of the Union and pointed out that establishment of a relationship with those countries based on cooperation and interdependence would be advantageous for both sides through providing better conditions in economy, trade, production and enhancing political and social stability (Ibid.).

The objective of the policy took its final shape in the following Commission Communication of May 2004 which declared the aim of the ENP as “to share the



benefits of the EU's 2004 enlargement with neighbouring countries in strengthening stability, security and well-being for all concerned" (European Commission, 2004a: 3). The communication also repeated the goals of the policy specified in the former documents and mentioned the opportunities granted through the ENP and enable partner countries' inclusion in Community programmes and activities (Ibid.: 4). In this document, the Commission especially emphasized the Union's enthusiasm for acting in concert with the neighbouring countries in a variety of areas and sectors and aimed to create an impression that they are also a part of the Union although they are not members of it and the EU is ready for doing its best in order to meet the demands of them as fully as possible.

The introduced goals of the policy also concerning the areas of vital importance like security and energy indicate that the ENP was developed as the new foreign policy tool of the Community. In the face of the change in nature of the security threats as listed in the European Security Strategy, the EU had to establish an effective foreign policy or *post-enlargement* tool (Şenyücel et al., 2006: 6-7). The new neighbourhood of the Union comprising heterogeneous states has also reinforced the demand of the EU for such a policy (Ibid.: 6). By this way, it could contribute to global security as an influential foreign policy actor and meet its increased internal demands and external expectations all of which are directly related to the establishment of substantial regional policies in its neighbourhood (Ibid.: 8). In this sense, the EU developed the ENP both for overcoming the *enlargement fatigue* and managing its external borders effectively and also for finding a solution for its "inclusion-exclusion dilemma" (Ibid.). As it is understood, the incentive of the EU in developing the ENP is mostly driven by the objective of creating an area of stability and security on its neighbourhood which is directly related to the integrity of the Union. In addition, the establishment of effective border control mechanisms would both serve for enhancing security and social stability within the borders of the EU and reducing the risk of "spill-over" of the security threats from the neighbouring regions.

While the Union pursues these goals in its relations with the neighbouring countries, its approach towards them has been shaped through the convergence of

different characteristics. The absence of a membership perspective can be regarded as the main characteristic of the ENP. Because the aim of membership is the most important motivation tool for the non-EU countries in their relationship with the Union, the EU tried to fill this gap through developing a policy that would keep willingness and enthusiasm of its partner countries at best.

Although the ENP does not include a membership perspective, it offers more than the existing cooperation between the EU and the partner countries established through PCAs and Association Agreements. As one of its distinctive characteristics, this “added value” of the policy offers many incentives including (European Commission, 2004a: 8):

- Extension of the internal market and regulatory structures,
- Preferential trading relations and market opening,
- Perspectives for lawful migration and movement of persons,
- Intensified cooperation to prevent and combat common security threats,
- Greater EU political involvement in conflict prevention and crisis management,
- Greater efforts to promote human rights, further cultural cooperation and enhance mutual understanding,
- Integration into transport, energy and telecommunications networks and the European Research Area,
- New instruments for investment promotion and protection,
- Support for integration into the global trading system,
- Enhanced assistance and better tailored to needs,
- New sources of finance (European Commission, 2003b: 10-14).

This also brings about a related feature of the EU’s approach which refers to *positive conditionality*. It means that the partner countries will be rewarded by the EU or benefit from the opportunities of this relationship if they act in compliance with the EU’s norms and principles (Holm, 2005: 18). The main tool of the Union in providing positive conditionality is the use of *benchmarks*. The benchmarks are drawn in line with common and shared values adopted by the EU. The EU would evaluate the performance

of the partner countries in the targeted areas through taking into account their ability in adapting those agreed political and economic benchmarks (European Commission, 2003b: 16) such as “strengthening democracy and the rule of law, the reform of the judiciary, the fight against corruption and organised crime, respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the fight against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, abidance by international law...” (European Commission, 2004a: 13). According to their performance in carrying out those values, the ENP countries become entitled to obtain the incentives provided by the Union which enable them to establish closer institutional and contractual ties with the EU.

It is stated that while the EU would pay attention for the development of a coherent approach presenting the same opportunities and standards of behaviour for its all neighbouring countries, *differentiation* would be the basic principle of its neighbourhood approach (European Commission, 2003b: 15-16). The neighbours’ different starting points in their relations with the Union, their different capacities necessary for adopting the reforms and involving the activities and the programmes of the EU and also the existence of different administrative, institutional and legal structures in those countries make the EU adopt this principle as the basis of the ENP (Ibid.: 16). The Union would carry on its relations with the partner countries within a “differentiated framework” and evaluate their progress in the targeted areas through this framework (Ibid.: 9). Some priorities would be given to the partner countries on the basis of their situations in political and economic reform areas determined through individually prepared country reports (Ibid.: 16).

*Step by step* or *progressive* approach is also one of the characteristics of the EU’s neighbourhood policy. It was stated in the Commission Communication that “engagement should be introduced progressively and be conditional on meeting agreed targets for reform” (European Commission, 2003b: 15). So, if the partner countries did not show any progress in achieving the reforms in the targeted areas, they would not benefit from the opportunities of this relationship. The main aim of this approach is to reinforce political and economic reform process in the ENP countries (Ibid.)

The concept of *joint ownership* is also a significant feature of the ENP, designed to make the use of conditionality more efficient and acceptable for the partner countries (Emerson, Noutcheva, and Popescu, 2006: 6). The term joint ownership is used in order to emphasize that partner countries could *voluntarily* be involved in the policy which is based on the implementation of the Action Plans – bilaterally agreed by both sides through negotiation (Ibid.). This characteristic of the policy makes the ENP countries easily comply with the goals and priorities of the policy which are developed through cooperation of the both sides rather than imposition of the EU.

Another principle of the policy is introduced through stating “the new neighbourhood policy should not override the existing framework for EU relations” with the partner countries and it would “supplement and build on existing policies and arrangements” (European Commission, 2003b: 17). Accordingly, because the ENP was developed through adopting *institutional* and *contractual* bases of Association Agreements and Partnership and Cooperation Agreements, the partner countries would be also responsible for acting in compliance with those agreements and fully implementing their provisions (Ibid.).

### **1.5. Instruments and Methods of the ENP**

The main instruments of the ENP include *Country Reports*, *Action Plans*, *Progress Reports* and *European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument*. In general terms, Country Reports aim to draw a general framework of the existing economic, political and also social situation in the ENP countries in order to determine the priority areas that would be focused in the Action Plans. Through Action Plans, the EU and partner countries determine the priority areas of cooperation on a negotiated basis and also specify the responsibilities of both sides for implementation of the ENP policy. The performance of the partner countries in fulfilling the specified objectives of the cooperation is evaluated by means of the Progress Reports which are introduced periodically by the Commission. Lastly, the European Neighbourhood and Partnership

Instrument provides financial support to the ENP countries in order to make them able to meet the conditions required for the progress of cooperation.

### **1.5.1. Country Reports**

The preparation of the individual *Country Reports* by the Commission configures the starting step of the neighbourhood relationship between the EU and the partner country. Country reports draw a framework for the political, economic and social conditions in the ENP countries in order to define a strategy to deepen relations between the two sides and proceed to the next stage of this process (Baracani, 2004: 46). These reports also include an assessment on the progress showed in implementation of bilateral agreements between the EU and ENP countries and concentrate upon priority areas of ENP (Ibid.). The first seven country reports were published in May 2004 for Israel, Jordan, Moldova, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Tunisia and Ukraine which have existing Association and Partnership Agreements with the EU. The following five country reports for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Egypt and Lebanon were published in March 2005. All of these Country Reports provided guidance in the development of the Action Plans (Baracani, 2004: 50).

### **1.5.2. Action Plans**

The Action Plans are executed by the Commission following the completion of the country reports. All the Action Plans are prepared through taking a set of common values and principles as their basis (European Commission, 2004a: 2-3). Nevertheless, they differ according to the individual countries through reflecting the existing situation of each country determined by the country reports (Ibid.: 3). The areas included in the Action Plans are divided into two as *commitments to specific actions* and *commitments to actions* (Ibid.: 9). The first one aims to increase the countries' dependence on common values in the foreign and security policy area and the second one intends to develop a stronger tie between the EU and partner countries through getting their

commitments for the implementation of a set of priorities which are agreed by both sides through negotiation (Ibid.: 3). These priority areas include “political dialogue and reform; trade and measures for gradually obtaining a stake in the EU’s Internal Market; justice and home affairs; energy, transport, information society, environment and research and innovation; and social policy and people-to-people contacts” (Ibid.). The area of *commitments to actions* includes benchmarks that enable the EU to evaluate the compliance of the ENP countries with those priorities (Ibid.: 9).

The negotiable character of the Action Plans can be regarded as their most important feature (Wissels, 2006: 10). Because, it enables partner countries to clearly set their needs, expectations and objectives in the bilaterally agreed plans (Ibid.). It increases the efficiency of the process through creating a sense of *ownership* on the part of the ENP countries (Ibid.). This makes them more enthusiastic and ambitious in implementing the Action Plans.

The first seven Action Plans for the countries of Israel, Jordan, Moldova, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Tunisia and Ukraine were completed by the Council in early 2005. In March 2005, the Commission proposed the development of Action Plans for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Georgia and Lebanon which were approved by the Council through its conclusions of 25 April (European Commission, 2006a: 141).

### **1.5.3. Progress Reports**

Progress Reports are the monitoring tools of the ENP published by the Commission periodically (European Commission, 2004a: 10). These reports set out the performance of the ENP countries in achieving the targets of the policy and also evaluate the progress on sectoral basis concerning the areas of cooperation through including the assessments made by the ENP country (Ibid.). According to the determined progress in performing the agreed priorities, the Action Plans is reviewed and Council decides whether it will take the contractual relations a step further or the partner country should continue to work on the related area (Ibid.). The Commission

introduced its first periodic progress report in December 2006. This was followed by the second set progress reports on implementation of the ENP in 2007 and a sectoral progress report which were adopted in April 2008. The last round of progress reports on the implementation of ENP in 2008 was issued in April 2009.

#### **1.5.4. European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument**

As mentioned earlier, the financial aspect of the ENP has been carried out by the new instrument of the policy, *the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument* (ENPI), which was developed through Commission Communication on “Paving the way for a New Neighbourhood Instrument”, published in July 2003. Contrary to the existence of the wide range of financial instruments of the Union (INTERREG, PHARE, CARDS, TACIS, MEDA) causing difficulties in coordination and inefficiencies in implementation, the ENPI established a single framework for supporting cooperation on the Union’s external borders through convergence of those instruments (European Commission, 2003a: 3-4). This new instrument was proposed to be adopted in two phases. The first phase of the process would cover 2004- 2006 period in which the coordination of those different instruments within the existing legislative and financial structure would be realized (Ibid.: 8). In the second phase, from 2007 onwards, the ENPI would be adopted with the aim of financing the policy targets agreed by the ENP countries and the member states (Ibid.).

The ENPI was aimed to be adopted more easily through gaining experience by the implementation of the Neighbourhood Programmes developed for the period of 2004-2006 (European Commission, 2004a: 27). The goals to be achieved by means of the ENPI are stated as follow;

- Promoting sustainable development in regions on both sides of common borders;
- Working together through joint actions in fields such as environment,
- Fight against organised crime;
- Promoting local cross-border “people-to-people” type actions (Ibid.).

The ENPI includes two different funding types. The first one finances cross-border cooperation on land and maritime borders; while the other one finances trans-national cooperation of the two sides in order to develop an effective mechanism against common security threats (Ibid.: 27-28). The instrument also finances the joint projects agreed on by both the EU Member states and ENP countries (Ibid.: 27).

The Commission proposal for a Regulation on “laying down general provisions establishing a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument” defined the ENPI as a “policy-driven” instrument working in compliance with the existing agreements and “simplifying assistance programming and management” (European Commission, 2004b: 13). Additionally, through the ENPI, technical assistance in different forms, “Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX), long-term twinning arrangements with EU Member States’ administrations, participation in Community programs and agencies”, would be extended to the ENP countries (Ganzle, 2007a: 19).

## **1.6. Strengthening the ENP**

After eighteen months following the first implementation of the ENP, the Commission published a Communication on “Strengthening the ENP” on 4 December 2006. Through this communication, the Union aimed to encourage the ENP countries in their reform process in order to keep their ambitious and enthusiasm at top level. The EU tried to realize this aim through making the ENP more *attractive* for the partner countries (European Commission, 2006b: 2). So, it both improved the context and the efficiency of the declared incentives and added also the new ones to support the ENP countries in their efforts which would make them benefit from those motives of the policy (Ibid.). The proposals of the EU to strengthen the effect of the ENP include “enhancing the economic and trade component, facilitating mobility and managing migration, promoting people-to-people exchanges, building a thematic dimension to the ENP, strengthening political cooperation, enhancing regional cooperation, strengthening financial cooperation” (Ibid.: 1-14). The Communication also brought about a report introducing the progress made by the partner countries and sectors regarding the



implementation of the ENP until that time. On the same date, the Commission adopted another Communication on “the general approach to enable the ENP partner countries to participate in Community agencies and Community programmes”. Through this communication, the Commission stated its aim as “further strengthening of the ENP” (European Commission, 2006c: 3). According to this communication, in order to take part in Community agencies and programmes, the ENP countries should also perform some *prerequisites* which support the process of reform in the relevant areas and sectors and make the partner countries closer to the EU values and norms (Ibid.: 3-4).

These initiatives were followed by the German Presidency Progress Report adopted in June 2007. The report mentioned the progress made in the implementation of the ENP two years after its adaptation (Council of the European Union, 2007). While it welcomed the continuing process of reform in the ENP countries and the enhanced support provided by the EU, threats to energy security and the environment and increasing illegal migration were pointed out as the areas which the EU should be more concerned about (Ibid.). Through the Report, the strengthened ENP was described as “a security and prosperity policy for Europe’s citizens” and the aim of establishing more improved relationship with the ENP countries was rearticulated (Ibid.). Also, the establishment of a *Governance Facility* and continuing workings of the Commission for the establishment of a *Neighbourhood Investment Fund* were emphasized as the new instruments of the strengthened ENP which would also provide advance financial support for the ENP countries (Ibid.). This report was welcomed by the European Council of 21/22 June 2007.

Following the ENP Conference of September 2007 in which the Ministers and representatives of civil society both from the EU and the ENP countries came together, the Commission introduced another communication on “A Strong ENP” in December 2007. This communication gave an outline of the developments regarding the strengthened ENP since the adoption of the previous communication in December 2006 and also put emphasis on the necessity of further political, social and economic reforms in the ENP countries (European Commission, 2007a: 2). However, the primary objective of the Communication was to recall the responsibilities of the EU and the

ENP countries. It stated that, thereafter, both sides should pay attention to the fulfilment of their existing commitments and required them to show further efforts towards this direction (Ibid.: 2-3). The Communication also called the Member States and the Commission for performing their tasks fully in order to carry the proposals into effect and underlined the importance of cooperation among the Commission, Council, European Parliament and the Member States for the development of a strengthened ENP (Ibid.). Additionally, it proposed further improvements in the areas of “economic integration, mobility, regional conflicts, sectoral reform, participation in Community programmes and agencies and financial cooperation” (Ibid.: 4-11).

Finally, the Council Conclusions of February 2008 welcomed the Commission Communication on “A Strong ENP” and stated that “the Communication provides a useful basis for further reflection by the Council on making the ENP more effective and more attractive to our ENP partners, with the aim of making full use of the ENP's potential” (Council of the European Union, 2008: 1). The Council emphasized the deepened economic integration and free trade as the main catalyst of the strengthened ENP (Ibid.). It restated the significance of cooperation with the civil society and international organisations to develop a fully performed ENP and encouraged the establishment of regional cooperation which would also provide intensified relations with the neighbouring countries (Ibid.: 2-3).

The most important impetus in the development of the ENP was the EU's need for a policy which would make it able to deal with the many security challenges on its neighbourhood. Although the EU has taken concrete steps since adoption of the ENP, its neighbourhood has not been so secure because of the partner countries' continuing transition period in the East, the threat of Russia in the North and also the rise of Islamic terrorism in the South (Emerson, Noutcheva, and Popescu, 2006: 1, 5). This situation stimulated the Commission and the Council who believe that the ENP is not just a “placebo” and it is an indispensable part of the EU's foreign policy so, it should be strengthened (Ibid.: 5). Through development of the strengthened ENP which has been offering more enhanced incentives for the partner countries, the EU planned to make the ENP countries show more effort for the implementation of the neighbourhood policy.

## **1.7. Constraints to the ENP**

Although the ENP was designed through taking lessons from the past experiences of the EU's external policies and taking into account the inefficiencies and breakdowns seen in those policies, there exist several constraints to the implementation of the ENP as projected in the several documents of the EU. The most outstanding constraint may be regarded as the absence of a membership perspective (Emerson, Noutcheva, and Popescu, 2006: 6). The objective of membership became the main driving force of the countries in the enlargement process who engaged in a transformation process in political and economic terms in order to comply with EU *Acquis Communariae* (Ibid.). Because of the aim of eventual membership, conditionality as the main tool of the EU for monitoring the candidate countries in their reform processes would be effective (Ibid.). However, the incentives offered by the EU, rather than membership, make the use of conditionality an inefficient characteristic of the EU's neighbourhood policy (Ibid.).

The pre-conditions that are necessary to implement conditionality as an effective foreign policy tool do not exist in the ENP (Emerson, Noutcheva and Popescu, 2006: 6). Although the process is not about membership, the use of conditionality for providing the adoption of the reforms by the partner countries does not make so much sense in the ENP (Cremona and Hillion, 2006: 17). Moreover, the incentives offered by the EU do not seem to be realizable in the near future (Emerson, Noutcheva and Popescu, 2006: 6). For this reason, the use of "pre-accession techniques" or "enlargement methodology" in carrying out the ENP which has a different context than enlargement strategy is a very much criticized feature of this policy (Cremona and Hillion, 2006: 17).

Another constraint is the fact that the ENP was established through taking the EU's internal dynamics rather than external factors as the base (Del Sarto and Schumacher, 2005: 25). This means that the ENP came out as an EU response mainly to the changing conditions on its neighbourhood as a result of the enlargement (Ibid.). It was designed to make the EU able to adapt this new situation. So, in developing the ENP, the main target of the EU was securing itself rather than supporting socio-

economic transformation of its neighbourhood countries (Ibid.). Although, this transformation may be a “by-product” of the policy, it is not the chief objective (Ibid.: 26). By considering this fact, the EU discourse on the future of the policy and the incentives offered to the ENP countries in the related documents do not seem to be reflecting the truth (Ibid.: 27-28). Since, it is rather doubtful that the ENP has necessary tools and the potential to fulfil all of its promises in case the partner countries fully perform their duties and responsibilities (Ibid.).

Additionally, one of the constraints is the weakness of the ENP countries in institutional and administrative terms which poses an obstacle to their adaptation to many reforms (Lynch, 2005: 4). This is because, in order to benefit from the incentives offered by the ENP, the countries should fulfil the provisions of the policy in order to come into line with the EU Acquis (Tocci, 2005: 30). However, the cost of compliance with those many provisions limits their ability to make the necessary legal and administrative reforms (Ibid.). So, it is clear that the ENP countries may not reach a level required to get incentives introduced by the ENP if they do not receive a high level *financial and technical assistance* (Ibid.).

However, the cost of compliance is not the only problem. It also causes the rise of other constraints to the implementation of the ENP both on the side of the EU and on the side of the ENP countries. On the side of the EU, it was stated that the Union would provide sufficient financial and technical assistance to the ENP countries proportionally with the requirements of the partner countries for the implementation of the policy (Del Sarto and Schumacher, 2005: 31). However, this allocation of development aid to the neighbouring countries has caused discontent on the part of the Member States (especially Central and Eastern European) who had already supported many financial and technical assistance programmes like MEDA, TACIS, PHARE and CARDS for a long time (Ibid.: 31-32). So, it is clear that the financial resources that could be used for supporting the neighbouring countries in the context of the ENP are very limited (Lynch, 2005: 4). This becomes clear when the large number of countries in the geographical scope of the wider Europe waiting for this financial aid is considered (Ibid.).

On the side of the ENP countries, the cost of compliance causes for a different constraint. Because the costs of fulfilling the provisions of the ENP and adopting many reforms are relatively high in the ENP countries who are economically weak, authoritarian states; these high domestic costs lead to the rise of many opponents in the governments and societies of the partner countries who object to the waste of financial resources for the implementation of the such a policy (Emerson, Noutcheva and Popescu, 2006: 6).

Another constraint to the fully-fledged implementation of the ENP is the fact that the incentive of the ENP offering full access to the EU's market does not seem to be achievable. Because, in some sensitive areas like agriculture and fisheries where the partner countries have better competitive capacity, full access to its internal market puts the EU in a disadvantageous position and thus would not be possible (Chilosi, 2006: 8-9). For this reason, the EU's market becomes completely open to a, state only in case of its membership (Ibid.: 8). A stake in the single market mentioned in the ENP does not mean the neighbouring countries' full integration in the internal market of the EU (Ibid.). It means their integration in the European Economic Area (EEA) which is a Free Trade Area rather than a Customs Union (Ibid: 8-9). A free trade area, differently, from a customs union does not comprise some sectors like agriculture and fisheries (Ibid.: 9). So, the ENP would most probably offer an access to the EEA instead of a full access to the EU's market if the partner countries fully implement the policy and comply with its provisions.<sup>2</sup>

By considering the above constraints, it can be said that the implementation of the ENP as it was originally designed and intended is hardly possible. Because, neither the EU has enough capacity and potential to realize all of those incentives offered in the context of the ENP nor the policy was established for serving the demands of the neighbouring countries. Like the other policies of the EU, the ENP is driven by the interests and benefits of the EU which is closely related to the security of its neighbourhood. So, the EU's discourse on the policy seems like its display of power as

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<sup>2</sup> Please note that this is not an official statement. This is only the interpretation of Chilosi.

a global actor as a result of the enlargement which makes it a more powerful and influential actor on the international stage. As a matter of fact, the shortcomings and ineffectiveness of the ENP have pushed the EU to develop regional cooperation initiatives within the framework of the ENP in order to accelerate the Union's efforts driven by the aim of providing security and stability in its neighbourhood. In this sense, the strategic importance of the BSR in different respects and its major role in the European security have brought into prominence the relations between the EU and the region which has also become a part of the ENP.

## II. THE BLACK SEA REGION AND THE EU INVOLVEMENT

Since the end of the Cold War, the BSR has become an area of common interest for the European and Western powers. This has been both related to the involvement of the regional countries in the various European and Euro-Atlantic cooperation structures – OSCE, NATO, and EU – and the internal dynamics of the BSR which have attracted the attention of the many powers in different fields (Hamilton, 2008: 319-320). Because of its geopolitical importance, the region has turned into a stage of contention among those powers including the US, Russia and, partly, the EU. In order to enhance their influence, the great powers have tried to be more actively involved in the region through using different means such as cooperation agreements or pipeline projects (Triantaphyllou and Yannis Tsantoulis, 2008: 2). Moreover, the BSR has also gained much more importance as a buffer zone against the new security threats following the eastward enlargement of the EU and the US initiative of “global war on terror” introduced as a response to 9/11 terrorist attacks (Ibid.: 2-3). So, it can be said that in the post-Cold War era, the BSR has emerged as a “natural geopolitical centre” (Ibid.: 3) which has presented both opportunities and challenges for many actors.

### 2.1. The Black Sea Region

The term *Black Sea Region* denotes the geographical area located at the intersection of the *North-South* and *East-West* crossroads and connects Europe to the Middle East and Central Asia (Ritter, 2006: 3). It includes the littoral states of the Black Sea – Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine – plus Moldova and the countries of the Southern Caucasus – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia (Asmus and Jackson, 2004: 17). Although Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova and Greece do not have a coast on the Black Sea, *history, proximity and close ties* make these countries a part of the BSR (European Commission 2007b: 2). The region is encompassed by western oriented states of Greece and Turkey, ex-Soviet countries and Russia. So, it may be regarded as a mosaic composed of different cultures, societies and languages (Triantaphyllou and

Tsantoulis, 2008: 2) and also as a bridge between Muslim, Western and Orthodox civilizations (Lesser, 2007: 12).

### **2.1.1. Challenges**

The BSR had been a scene of conflict, instability and contention for a long time (Aydm, 2004: 6). In the Cold War era, the region, under the USSR hegemony, had been shaped through the rivalry between the two superpowers which provided the maintenance of stability for a while (Ibid.). However, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union marked the opening of a new era for the region (Ibid.). The removal of the Soviet pressure which resulted in the establishment of newly independent states (NIS) caused the rise of many problems which left the region in a situation dominated by conflict and instability (Ibid.: 6-7).

*Ethnic animosities* may be regarded as one of the main problems frequently seen in the region. Because of the dominance of many different ethnic groups and nationalities living as minorities in the territory of the countries located in this geography; the region is characterized by the territorial disputes and also tensions between those ethnic groups and local population of the countries which may result in use of force or forced displacements (Valinakis, 1999). So, the BSR has witnessed many territorial disputes that emerged through the removal of the Soviet pressure. The breakup of Abkhazia and South Ossetia from Georgia, the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, the rebel region of Transnistria in Moldova and the contention between Russia and Chechnya are the conflicts that could not be solved for many years (Cornell et al., 2006: 44). Although, there has been many international conflict resolution and peacekeeping efforts by UN, OSCE, NATO and EU, these conflicts are still remaining today as *frozen conflicts* (Aydm, 2004: 6).

In addition to ethnic tensions and frozen conflicts, *economic crises* have also made the region vulnerable to all the extremes, threats and risks. Because of their transition to the market economy from the Soviet economic system, nearly all countries of the region experienced economic crises and sharp declines in their economic



indicators (Valinakis, 1999). This economic downfall, together with the decline in the living standards gave rise to societal disturbance which resulted in political turbulence and unrest in those countries (Ibid.). Between 1991 and 1994, the countries of BSR had seen 8% contraction ratio per year (Gültekin-Punsmann and Nikolov, 2008: 110). The countries' average growth rate decreased dramatically (Ibid.). Their real GDP of \$661 billion in the period 1993-1998 fell to \$624 billion at the end of 1998 (Ibid.). In the period 1998-2005, there were more positive developments in the economies of the BSR countries (Ibid.). However, because of the newly established economic infrastructures and unstable economic variables, the countries in the region may be easily hit by global economic downfalls and crisis. Sharp downfalls in their fragile economies necessitate more consistent financial and sectoral reforms.

The security and stability of the region has been also threatened by the *authoritarian regimes* and *bad governance* (Aydın, 2004: 6). Non-transparent state institutions, corruption and lack of reforms have made governments unable to meet the demands of their society and sometimes caused the rise of pro-communist tendencies in those countries which have maintained closer relations with Russia rather than the Western powers (Ban, 2006: 10). Additionally, because the governments have mostly dealt with the internal problems threatening their security and integrity, they could not give necessary attention to their external agenda which limits their ability of developing cooperative state relations (Ibid.).

Also, because of its geostrategic position at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and the Middle East, the BSR has become a transit route for the *migrants* and *asylum seekers* who try to cross into the EU whether legally or illegally (King, 2008: 12). Furthermore, many *refugees* and *displaced persons* freed from the economic and political turmoil in the Caucasus have also created additional problems especially in the neighbouring countries where the situation has been also the same (Ibid.: 12-13). Moreover, as a result of the existence of weak governments unable to exert control over their territories, poor economic conditions and the ongoing conflict and instability, the BSR has provided convenient conditions for the organized crime groups who could comfortably carry out their activities in those areas beyond control (Ibid.: 13).

Another important problem of the region that has worsened day to day is the *environmental degradation* of the Black Sea which has become the most polluted sea of the world (Ragaini, 1999: Ex-1). Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, Georgia, Bulgaria, and Romania are littoral countries in the Black Sea which have provided the distribution of the Caspian oil and gas to the Western countries (Ibid.). However, these littoral countries of the Black Sea could not effectively implement and monitor the existing national or international environmental policies because of their limited economic resources (Ibid.). Additionally, the severe pollution of the Danube, Dniester and Dnieper rivers flowing into the Black Sea has made this environmental deterioration become worsened with the combination of other factors of pollution including the establishment of new pipelines in the region, tourism and oil tanker traffic (Ibid.).

### **2.1.2. Opportunities**

The huge *economic potential* of the BSR may be regarded as the main opportunity offered by the region. In the period of 2000-2006, the region had become “the third fastest growing region” of the world economy after the developing East Asia and Pacific, and South Asia regions (Gültekin-Punsmann and Nikolov, 2008: 110). In the same period, the average annual growth rate of the region was three times more than the rate of Eurozone and two times more than the rate of world economy (Ibid.). In 2005, the share of the region in the world trade volume rose 4% (Ibid.). The BSR has a great potential in terms of natural resources, mainly the energy resources supplied by the Caspian Basin (Özsoy, 2007: 78). The region acts both as a *producer* and *transit area* of energy (Tsantoulis, 2008: 18).

In terms of oil, the BSR has the world’s second largest oil reserves after Persian Gulf (Valinakis, 1999). It has approximately 48 billion bbls recoverable oil reserves which equals to 4% of the proven reserves of the world (Gelb, 2006: 2). In terms of gas, it has a much greater capacity in contribution to the world’s natural gas production than oil production (Ibid.). Nearly, 3.0 trillion cubic feet gas production, 3% of world output, has been utilized from the natural gas reserves of the region (Ibid.).

However, it is anticipated that the region holds larger possible reserves of crude oil and natural gas which means a greater production potential (Ibid.). Because of this potential and especially the unresolved legal status of the Caspian Sea, the region has become direct concern of the many states who is trying to find alternative sources of energy rather than Persian Gulf (Ibid.: 6).

Another opportunity emerges thanks to the strategic position of the BSR which has served as a transit route for energy. “The area is located on the route between the Caspian and central Asian oil and gas producers and the consumers in the West” (Pascu, 2006: 99). For this reason, an advanced infrastructure for oil and gas transportation was established in the region. *Tenghiz-Novorossiisk, Baku-Supsa, Baku-Novorossiisk, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, Odessa-Brodi* are some of the important oil pipelines existing in the region (Ibid.). As with oil, gas transportation has been provided through the *Blue Stream* pipeline between Russia and Turkey, *Central Asia-Centre* pipeline between Turkmenistan and Europe and the *Mozdoc* pipeline between Azerbaijan and Russia (Ibid.: 99-100). There are also many projected oil and gas pipelines that will become operational in the future years (Ibid.: 100). Most importantly, the region provides the transportation of energy resources through bypassing Russia. *Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan* and *Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum* oil and gas pipelines can be given example to this (Tsantoulis, 2008: 19). This means that the BSR has carried very much significance for the western markets as an alternative source to “non-OPEC”, “non-Persian Gulf”, and “non-Russian” oil and gas (Kempe and Klotzle, 2006: 9).

Besides these, the BSR also offers many economic opportunities including other natural resources, *new market opportunities* and *human capital* (Tsereteli, 2008: 13). The internal dynamics have provided advanced market facilities for the European products and services in the region (Ibid.). The BSR with a population of 330 million has arisen as an emerging market especially in the sectors of industry and agriculture with its USD \$300 billion annual foreign trade capacity and enormous domestic capacity (Özsoy, 2007: 78). Along with the energy resources, it also possesses substantial reserves of minerals and metals through which it may also play a primary role as a supplier in the international trade (Ibid.). Additionally, the region has provided

diverse and creative human capital consisting specialists, professionals, qualified and unqualified workers (Ibid.).

The geopolitical position of the region brings another opportunity which has carried very much importance in shaping the foreign policies of the international actors towards Russia. Because some of Russia's territory where population and economic potential is relatively high is located in the BSR, the dominance of the region has carried great importance for Russia's independence (Prevelakis, 2001: 149). So, the control of the region by another power means that this power (may be the US or European powers) will get the opportunity for negotiating with Russia through which it may get some favourable results in terms of its national interests (Ibid.).

## **2.2. Established Cooperation Structures in the Region**

As a result of the fragmented nature of the BSR caused by the historical division between its composing states, the regional cooperation and integration between those countries have hardly been established and very fragile in nature (Aydın, 2004: 20). However, through the end of the Cold War, the countries of the BSR have displayed their enthusiasm for establishing a regional cooperation through developing various initiatives which signal the beginning of a new period full of expectations both for the regional countries and many other external actors (Ibid.). Although the cooperation groupings established in the region have distinct backgrounds and perspectives, they have played a very significant role in the prevention of new conflicts and clashes through developing “a multi-layered, trans-boundary, co-operative network” (Özer, 1997: 78). These cooperation structures have reduced the possibility of the use of violent means for the solution of problems and promoted a sense of confidence by getting joint solutions to common problems (Ibid.).

In these cooperation initiatives, the countries have mainly dealt with the issues threatening their national interests and common security. Regional cooperation has been primarily established on *soft* or *non-military* activities which has also brought along the involvement of the Euro-Atlantic community in the region (Tassinari, 2006: 1). Indeed,

although regional cooperation may not establish concerted ties between the Black Sea countries, it has provided significant contribution in the areas like energy security, prevention of transnational security threats including all kinds of trafficking, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and so on (Pop and Manoleli, 2007: 16).

Various cooperation frameworks were established in the BSR in which the problems and security threats could not be kept under control through the initiatives of the regional states individually. So, the countries of the BSR have taken part in the various regional cooperation organizations that made them more capable of solving the problems in various areas and withstanding the security threats of the post- Cold War era. The BSEC has emerged as the most important and influential actor within the cooperation initiatives established in the BSR. Furthermore, there are also many other ones that have worked for transforming the region into an area characterized by peace and security rather than conflicts and divisions.

### **2.2.1. Black Sea Economic Cooperation**

The BSEC was launched in 1992 under the leadership of Turkey through including the countries of Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Ukraine and Serbia and Montenegro as its members. It is the only institutionalized organization which covers all the countries of the BSR (Cornell et al., 2006: 106). After its establishment, the BSEC had entered in the process of restructuring in which Bucuresti Statement and Moscow Declaration of the heads of state or government came into focus as major developments (Sayan, 2002: 31). In June 1998, the Charter of the Organization was signed in the Yalta Summit of the heads of state or government (Ibid.). The BSEC proceeded to act as a diplomatic conference until approval of its Charter in 1999 (Celac, 2006: 216) when it became a *regional economic organization* through gaining a legal status internationally (Aydın, 2004: 22). Because of its membership coverage and high-level institutionalization, the BSEC has become the most important regional cooperation structure among the many other cooperation initiatives established in the region (Pop and Manoleli, 2007: 17). In the organization,

there are also other thirteen states in observer status consisting of the EU Member States of Austria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Slovakia and also Belarus, Croatia, Egypt, Israel, Tunisia and USA (Ibid.).

The principles of the BSEC were established on the basis of the United Nations Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, the Paris Charter for a New Europe and also through including common values like democracy, fundamental freedoms, human rights, social equity and so on (BCEC, 1992). Additionally, one of the main principles of the organization was stated as to promote economic cooperation in a way “not contravening their obligations and not preventing the promotion of the relations of the Participating States with third parties, including international organizations as well as the EC and the cooperation within the regional initiative” (Ibid.).

The organization has been mainly driven by the aims of promoting peace and security rather than conflict, supporting regionalism and also globalization and preventing the emergence of new divisions in Europe (Aydın, 2004: 22). The BSEC Summit Declaration of 1992 specified the primary objective of the Organization as transforming the Black Sea into a sea of peace, stability and prosperity and to establishing good and cooperative relations between the neighbour countries of the region (BSEC, 1992). Article 5 of the Declaration laid down the economic objective of the organization as “the establishment of a Europe-wide economic area, as well as to the achievement of a higher degree of integration of the Participating States into the world economy” (Ibid.). According to Article 3 of the Declaration, the success of the economic cooperation would come from geographic proximity of the Participating States of the BSEC and from the reform process and structural adjustments existing in those states (Ibid.). Also, Article 10 emphasized that economic cooperation would be established gradually and the priorities of the cooperation would be designated on the basis of the needs and concerns of the member states and especially through taking into consideration their problems in transition to market economies (Ibid.). Furthermore, as stated in Article 14, mutual trade between the countries would be developed through reducing or progressively eliminating all kinds of barriers (Ibid.).

Other objectives of the Organization are stated in Article 3 of its Charter. Some of these objectives include the following:

- to act in a spirit of friendship and good neighbourliness and enhance mutual respect and confidence, dialogue and cooperation among the Member States;
- to further develop and diversify bilateral and multilateral cooperation on the basis of the principles and rules of international law;
- to act for improving the business environment and promoting individual and collective initiative of the enterprises and companies directly involved in the process of economic cooperation;
- to take into account the specific economic conditions and interests of the Member States involved;
- to further encourage the participation in the BSEC process of economic cooperation of other interested states, international economic and financial institutions as well as enterprises and companies (BSEC, 1998).

The Charter also determined a wide range of cooperation areas consisting of “banking and finance; communications; energy; transport; agriculture environmental protection; tourism; science and technology; exchange of statistical data and information; combating organized crime, illicit trafficking of drugs, materials, all acts of terrorism and illegal migration” and many others (BSEC, 1998).

As it is clearly seen in the Articles, the BSEC has a different character from the many other economic cooperation structures. The *geographical proximity*, *traditional ties* and the *similar markets* of the regional countries have become the driving forces of the cooperation in which the participants have intended to satisfy the common needs and expectations in order to make their transition to market economies more easily (Dartan, 1999: 12). As distinct from the other types of regional collaboration, The BSEC has not included strict commitments for harmonisation of the member states’ trading policies against the third countries or offered trade concessions for the participating states (Sayan, 2002: 27-28). Rather, it has provided “lowering of trade barriers” between those countries (Ibid.). Although full economic integration was not stated as an aim of the cooperation at the beginning, the intention for such an objective

came into sight through the approval of the “Declaration of Intent for the Establishment of a BSEC Free Trade Area” in a meeting of foreign and economy ministers in February 1997 (Ibid.: 28).

The Declaration proposed establishment of a free trade area between the members of the BSEC. However, because of Greece’s EU membership and the existence of Association Agreements between some of the BSEC countries and the EU, this aim could not be achieved at that stage (Tsardanidis, 2005: 367). So, with the support of the European Commission, the BSEC chose to follow a more appropriate way which was declared through “BSEC Economic Agenda for the Future Towards a more Consolidated, Effective and Viable BSEC Partnership” (Ibid.). According to this document, a BSEC Free Trade Area should be established *gradually* and *step by step* and also through showing regard to the “the Customs Union, the European Agreements as well as the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements of some Member States” (Ibid.).

The decision-making bodies and institutions of the BSEC are identical with the other intergovernmental organizations (Andreev, 2008: 99). The *Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs* (CMFA) is the main platform of the Organization for decision taking (Ibid.). The *Committee of Senior Officials* (CSO), *BSEC’s Permanent International Secretariat* (BSEC PERMIS), the *Chairmanship in Office* (CiO) and many other working groups made necessary preparations on the basis of the agendas that are held in the meetings of CMFAs (Ibid.). Since its establishment, various institutions were formed within the BSEC including the *Parliamentary Assembly of BSEC* (PABSEC), the *Black Sea Trade and Development Bank* (BSTDB) and the *International Centre for Black Sea Studies* (ICBSS) (Cornell et al., 2006: 107). Additionally, the involvement of the private sector in this regional cooperation was achieved through the establishment of the *Business Council* (BSECBC) and in order to provide cooperation between local governments of the member states, the *International Black Sea Club* (IBSC) was set up (Aydın, 2004: 24).

If the achievements of the BSEC are discussed, it may be said that the organization has accomplished rather modest results until now (Hartwig, 1997: 5). Although, it could not provide trade liberalization among its member countries, it has



significantly contributed to the removal of “structural barriers” imposed by the ex-Soviet economic system (Tsardanidis, 2005: 373). Most importantly, through bringing all the regional states together, the BSEC has achieved the creation of a clement atmosphere in the region which had been characterized by various conflicts for many years (Ibid.). It has provided the rise of a belief that the use of military force has become unthinkable between the member countries of the BSEC (Ibid.). Also, the BSEC has become the main platform which has represented the whole region and cultural and economic interests of the regional countries on the international arena and provided a ground for the establishment of cooperation between regional and international actors in many fields (Prevelakis, 2001: 152). So, although the organization has not met the many economic demands of the participating states and has not obtained tangible results in this field because of the member countries’ differences in economic terms and their limited financial resources, it has importantly contributed to the preservation of peace and security in the region.

### **2.2.2. Other Cooperation Structures**

Besides the BSEC, many other cooperation structures have been established in the region driving by rather the same concerns and objectives with each other. The regional states have tried to organize collective action in different fields through these organizations in order to deal with the security threats more effectively and to keep the region stable.

One of those regional organizations in the BSR is *GUAM* (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova). *GUAM* was established in 1996 by the presidents of the Georgia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan (Hatto and Tomescu, 2008: 5). Moldova took part in the organization in 1997 (Ibid.). The main objective that made those states come together was their desire for diminishing Russia’s political and military pressure (Ibid.). Moreover, the primary economic aim of the member countries was to decrease their dependence on Russian energy supplies (Büyükkakıncı, 2004: 35-36). In terms of political cooperation, *GUAM* had mainly become involved in the activities of OSCE

and tried to develop a closer cooperation with the Euro-Atlantic security frameworks (Ibid.: 36). The GUAM states acted conjointly in order to find solutions to their common problems like separatist movements and economic problems that emerged in their transition to market economies (Ibid.).

In its summit of April 2005, the member countries concentrated on three main issues: “further democratization of the region; cooperation and rapprochement with the EU and NATO; new approaches to conflict resolution including increased international involvement and the so-called frozen conflicts” (Ritter, 2006: 10). In the following summit of May 2006, the organization adopted the name of Organization for Democracy and Economic Development – GUAM (ODED-GUAM) and aimed at the establishment of a free trade area between its members (Pop and Manoleli, 2007: 18). Additionally, the establishment of GUAM Virtual Center on Combating Terrorism, Organized Crime, Drug Trafficking and Other Dangerous Types of Crime in 2005 has also increased its ability in challenging with those common security threats (Ibid.). Also, in the summit of June 2007, the member states of the organization laid down their intention for acting as a single body in the international organizations like the UN, OSCE in order to put forward their interests, demands and concerns more clearly and strongly (Ibid.).

Another organization that has become a significant player of the regional cooperation is the *Community of the Democratic Choice* (CDC). The CDC was established by the presidents of Georgia and Ukraine in January 2005. It also includes non-BSR countries of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Romania, Moldova, Slovenia and Macedonia as its member states (Hatto and Tomescu, 2008: 5). Similar to GUAM, the objectives of the CDC includes the “promotion of democratic values, regional stability and economic prosperity” (Ritter, 2006: 10). It also supports the involvement of all the countries of BSR in the Euro-Atlantic institutions (Ibid). Although the CDC has not become an active player since its establishment; the cooperation of those countries to promote good governance and to support each other in their reform processes (Kulick and Yakobashvili, 2008: 32) has become the display of their commitment to promotion of democracy and shared values.

*Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Force* (BLACKSEAFOR) is also another framework of the Black Sea regional cooperation. Like BSEC, it was also a Turkish initiative established in April 2001. The members of BLACKSEAFOR include littoral states of Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine (Hatto and Tomescu, 2008: 5). The main aim of the organization is to strengthen the military dimension of the Black Sea cooperation (Ibid.). The functions of BLACKSEAFOR contain humanitarian aid, search and rescue operations and environmental protection (Baran, 2008: 89). Additionally, in order to deal with the security threats of post-9/11 era effectively, the organization has expanded the sphere of its duties to the fight against terrorism, organized crime, and the trafficking of WMD throughout the region (Ibid.).

Also, in March 2004, Turkey called the members of the BLACKSEAFOR to participate in Operation Black Sea Harmony which is an effort for enhancing the member states' capability in dealing with the risks that threaten the security of the Black Sea (Ibid.). The six member states of BLACKSEAFOR also provided the establishment of Black Sea Border Coordination and Information Centre in Bulgaria in 2003 (Ibid.). The Centre would provide exchange of information between the member states against illegal activities in the BSR through establishing direct communication between the Coastguards and Border Police of its participants (Pop and Manoleli, 2007: 19).

There is also the *Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership* which is a rather significant regional cooperation initiative firstly held by Romania in June 2006. The Forum would be in the form of a "regular political event" (Emerson, 2008: 262) through which the BSEC and its member countries would explain their concerns and ideas and also introduce projects in the interest of the whole region (Ritter, 2006: 13). They also hoped to get the support of the EU and the US in realizing this (Ibid.). The Forum would also include other regional and international organizations and "representatives of NGOs, think-tanks, academic and research institutions, the civil society and business associations and companies from the region and the Euro-Atlantic community" (Pop and Manoleli, 2007: 75). Through providing a platform of interaction between the actors from different levels, the Forum was expected to provide significant contribution to the development of other cooperative initiatives in the BSR and

interdependencies with the international organizations which would directly produce enhanced security and stability throughout the BSR (Ibid.).

Lastly, the *Commonwealth of Independent States* (CIS) was established under the leadership of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus in 1991. Later, it has included all of the former Soviet republics, except three Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania). Following the military conflict between Georgia and Russia over South Ossetia in August 2008, Georgia withdrew from the CIS (Grotzky and Isic, 2008: 8). The major objective of the CIS has been to provide security and economic cooperation on the territory of the former Soviet Union (Ibid.). Although Russia has aimed to establish an economic alliance between the members of the CIS, this intention could not be realized because of lack of support from the other member states (Ibid.).

### **2.3. EU Involvement in the Region**

Although the EU has established many regional cooperation frameworks complementary to its bilateral relations with the neighbouring countries – such as the Northern Dimension, the Barcelona Process and the Stability and Association Process – for a long period of time, it had not developed a policy directly covering the BSR (Aydın, 2005: 58-59). This is because, in the 1990s, the region which was largely under the influence of Russia had not been regarded as part of the EU's sphere of interest (Tsantoulis, 2008: 14). There was not mention of an EU strategy towards the conflicts and clashes ongoing in the region (Ibid). Additionally, the internal restructuring process of the EU, its other regional priorities towards Central and Eastern Europe and also the failure of the CFSP in determining common targets and interests in the region may be regarded as the other reasons of the EU's remaining in the background concerning the BSR (Valinakis, 1999). Also, the lack of common identity and the lack of cohesiveness between the states of the BSR were thought to be as an obstacle for the implementation of an effective regional policy (Ban, 2006: 15).

For these reasons, rather than developing a policy, the EU preferred to establish “regional sectoral initiatives and programmes in key areas of regional cooperation in the

region” (Vahl, 2005: 52). In terms of conflict prevention and conflict management, rather than developing direct strategies, it had mainly supported the activities of the OSCE and the UN for solving the regional conflicts (Triantaphyllou and Tsantoulis, 2008: 9). This means that the EU had remained in the background in the BSR since the change of its external priorities with the changing external environment after 1999 (Ibid.).

In this sense, regarding the BSR, the early initiatives of the EU had been mainly in the form of “economic cooperation and technical assistance” (Tsantoulis, 2008: 14-15). Because of the absence of a coherent regional policy, the Union had coordinated the national foreign policy concerns of its member states towards the region “on a case by case basis” (Ibid.). In the following years, the EU’s foreign policy with regard to BSR has evolved mainly around three strategies: “enlargement to South East Europe and Turkey, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) towards its Eastern (and also its Southern) neighbours and the four ‘common spaces’ with Russia” (Vahl, 2005: 51). However, the changed internal dynamics and international conjecture and also the growing strategic importance of the region have pushed the EU to take more concrete steps towards the region.

### **2.3.1. Early EU Initiatives**

The EU’s initial contacts with the BSR started in the early 1990s when it began to provide financial and technical assistance to the ex-Soviet countries in their transition period (Ban, 2006: 13). In this process, the *Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States* (TACIS) and the *European Bank of Restructuring and Development* (EBRD) had been used as the main EU assistance instruments (Ritter, 2005: 5). The TACIS had supported “the institutional, legal and administrative reforms” and also “private sector and economic development” in those countries (Ibid.). The EBRD had mainly offered technical assistance and supported the establishment of the countries’ energy infrastructures (Ibid.). It had also provided additional aid programmes supporting “the development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the financial

sector, environmental infrastructural development as well as telecommunications” (Ibid.).

Increasing EU concern towards the BSR became more visible through its involvement in some regional cooperation projects especially in the areas of transport and energy. One of these projects was the *Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia* (TRACECA) launched in 1993. The project aimed at the establishment of “a network of roads, railroads and ferry connections” connecting Europe and Central Asia via Turkey and the Caucasus (Cornell et al., 2006: 112). Through including fourteen countries of the BSR, it has provided the development of many continental trade opportunities throughout the region (Ibid.).

Furthermore, at the third European Conference of Ministers of Transport in 1997, the Black Sea was declared as one of the four *Pan-European Transport Areas* (PETRAS), “the maritime complement to the Pan-European Transport Corridors” (Emerson and Vahl, 2002: 6). A *Steering Group* which included the EU Commission and the six littoral states of the Black Sea plus Moldova and Greece was established in 1999 (Ibid.). Also, four working groups in different sectoral fields and a technical secretariat have been developed within the framework of the Black Sea Petra (Ibid.). In 2004, the EU launched a multilateral dialogue “on the extension of major Trans-European transport axes to neighbouring countries and regions” (Vahl and Celac, 2006: 183). Then, a *High Level Group* (HLG) included representatives from the EU Member States and neighbouring countries was set up which would work on projects regarding transport axes (Ibid.). The HLG introduced its report in 2005 which listed some priorities including “extension of the Mediterranean ‘motorways of the seas’ to the Black Sea, a ‘central axis’ linking the EU through Ukraine, the Black Sea, the Caucasus to Central Asia, and a ‘southeastern axis’ from the EU through the Balkans and Turkey to the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea” (Ibid.).

Another regional project supported by the EU was the *Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe* (INOGATE) launched in 1995. INOGATE aimed to reconstruct oil and gas pipelines in Central Asia, the South Caucasus, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova for providing transportation of Caspian oil and gas to Central and Eastern Europe (Ban,

2006: 15). At its first summit meeting of 1999, the Umbrella Agreement was signed for supporting the establishment of “hydrocarbon transportation networks” between the Caspian Basin and Europe throughout the Black Sea region (Ibid.). The secretariat of INOGATE was established in 2000 in Kyiv.

The EU had also made a major contribution to the strengthening of state sovereignty and the adaptation of shared values and principles such as democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights in the newly independent states of the region through the PCAs concluded with those countries (Aydın, 2005: 75). PCAs have provided a “road map” for the countries and supported them in dealing with many problems and issues regarding different areas through getting their compliance with the EU legislation and policies (Ritter, 2006: 5). The Agreements were signed with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova in 1999, Ukraine in 1998 and Russia in 1997. The EU also established Common Strategies with Ukraine and Russia in 1999 which also displayed the increasing strategic importance of the region for the Union (Aydın, 2004: 12).

The EU’s desire to establish a “more regionally defined cooperation” came into view openly through the adaptation of Commission Communication on “Regional co-operation in the Black Sea area: State of play, perspectives for EU action encouraging its further development” in 1997 (Ban, 2006: 16). The Communication made mention of the “growing strategic importance” of the region for the EU and stated the Union’s intention for the establishment of a “regional cooperation strategy” which would take into account the common interests of the BSR (Ibid.) “Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova in the west; Ukraine and Russia in the north; Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in the east and Turkey in the South” would be the participant countries of this regional strategy (Aydın, 2005: 78). The document listed the long-term objectives of the EU in the region such as “the promotion of political stability, the strengthening of human rights and democracy, the development of the region’s transport, energy and telecommunications networks, the creation of favourable conditions to attract EU and other foreign investment” (Tsardanidis, 2008: 14). It also purposed the development of institutional ties with the BSEC including an observer status for the EU in the

Organization (Emerson and Vahl, 2002: 21). However, rather than granting an observer status, the BSEC responded through establishing a *Platform for Cooperation between BSEC and EU* in 1999 in order to support the development of more cooperative relations between the two organizations (Pop and Manoleli, 2007: 21). The areas of cooperation have included “development of infrastructure networks, commercial cooperation and creation of favourable conditions for foreign direct investments, sustainable development and protection of the environment, including nuclear safety, struggle against different forms of organised crime” (Hajiyev, 2005: 37). In addition, one of the other objectives of the Platform was the progressive establishment of an *EU-BSEC Economic Area* which is believed to be very advantageous for the both sides with its huge economic potential (Ibid.).

In this period, although the EU and the BSEC had been closely linked with various contractual relations including membership (Greece), PCAs, Common Strategies, Customs Union (Turkey) and pre-accession negotiations (Bulgaria and Romania); cooperation between the two organizations had remained limited with the EU’s funding of some projects, including the establishment of the Black Sea Regional Energy Centre in Sofia and some Black Sea environmental projects (Valinakis, 1999).

The environmental problems resulting from the pollution of the Black Sea have pushed the EU to take some measures in this regard through establishing cooperative arrangements in the BSR. One of these initiatives was the adaptation of the Commission Communication on “Environmental Cooperation in the Danube-Black Sea Region”. The Communication technically defined the main environmental problems faced within the Danube-Black Sea Region and purposed some measures and instruments to deal with these issues (Mee, 2002: 136-137). The document also suggested the establishment of an “operational framework for cooperation”, handling of the regional priorities in this cooperation framework and also enhanced financial aid in this process (Ibid.). As a next step, the Commission launched *Danube-Black Sea Task Force* (DABLAS) in 2001 in order to establish a more effective and coherent region-wide environmental cooperation. DABLAS aims at coordinating the activities of “the Black Sea and Danube Commissions, Black Sea and Danube countries, bilateral donors, and international



financial institutions: EBRD, EIB, and World Bank” (Tassinari, 2006: 6). Nearly 30 projects related to the “protection of water and water related eco systems” in the BSR have been carried out within the framework of DABLAS (Aydm, 2004: 14). Also, in 2003, the Commission organized the *International Conference on the Sustainable Development of the Mediterranean and Black Sea Environment* (IASON) in order to establish a “transnational cooperation network” which aims at preventing the pollution of the Mediterranean and Black Sea as much as possible (Ibid.).

### **2.3.2. Current EU Presence in the Region**

Since 2003, the launch of the ENP addressing the Eastern and Southern neighbours of the EU in 2003, and then, the expansion of the policy to the countries of the Southern Caucasus in 2004 have become the major developments denoting the increased EU interest and presence in the BSR (Ritter, 2006: 6). The Action Plans bilaterally concluded between the EU and the countries of the BSR including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have aimed at the action of a privileged relationship on the basis “a mutual commitment to democracy and human rights, the rule of law, good governance, market economy principles and sustainable development” (Cornell et al., 2006: 24). In this regard, the ENP has offered an enhanced political and economic cooperation between the EU and the partner countries that had not been granted through the existing cooperation frameworks (Ibid). Furthermore, through giving a significant place to Justice and Home Affairs in the ENP Action Plans, the EU has provided a set of more concrete steps throughout the region (Tassinari, 2006: 9). The areas of cooperation have mostly included “dealing with illegal migration from third countries, trafficking in human beings, drugs and arms, asylum, visa policies, measures to combat terrorism, organized crime, money laundering” (Vahl and Celac, 2006: 185). Because the existing BSEC Conventions and Protocols have established a legal basis for regional cooperation in that area, the EU institutions have worked in close cooperation with the related bodies of the BSEC (Ibid.).

Within the framework of the ENP, the EU has also mainly contributed to the promotion of human rights and democratization and also supported conflict prevention and crisis management in the region (Ban, 2006: 18). Additionally, it has become more actively involved in the efforts aimed at the resolution of the frozen conflicts that were mentioned as major threats to the regional security in 2003 European Security Strategy (Ibid.). In line with this purpose, the EU also assigned an *EU Special Representative to the Southern Caucasus* in 2004 in order to strengthen its role of peacemaking in dealing with the frozen conflicts (Ritter, 2006: 6). Also, in 2007, an *EU Special Representative for Moldova* was appointed to give support and contribute to the targeted policy aims of the Union in this country (Triantaphyllou and Tsantoulis, 2008: 9). Another initiative of the EU regarding the Southern Caucasus was the development of the *EU Rule of Law Mission to Georgia* (EUJUST THEMIS) in July 2004 which accomplished its mission in July 2005 (Ibid.). In November 2005, it also launched a *Border Assistance Mission* (EUBAM) in Moldova and Ukraine to provide more effective management of the Moldova-Ukraine border and the border between Ukraine and Transnistrian region of Moldova (Ibid.). The EU has also given particular attention for carrying out reforms in legal and regulatory systems, establishing truly functioning institutional and administrative structures, and reorganizing the established decision-making procedures (Vahl and Celac, 2006: 185). These efforts of the EU have also been welcomed by the BSEC and a special chapter in this field was devoted in the BSEC Economic Agenda for the Future (Ibid.).

One of the main motives behind the establishment of the ENP has been “extending the aspects of the internal market policy” and bringing European standards to the partner countries of the EU (Gültekin-Punsmann and Nikolov, 2008: 110). In line with this objective, FTAs have become the major instruments of the Union to provide integration of the ENP countries into the EU’s internal market (Ibid.). FTAs bilaterally concluded between the EU and the ENP countries would provide “deeper economic integration” through promoting movement of good, capital and services more easily throughout the ENP area (Ibid.). For instance, one of the objectives set in the EU-Ukraine Action Plan is the establishment of a free trade area between the EU and Ukraine (Ibid.).

Besides these, the launch of the ENP also signs the beginning of a closer relationship between the EU and the BSEC. For some time, cooperation between the two organizations had been maintained within a limited scope especially on the basis of sectoral cooperation regarding energy and transportation (Tsardanidis, 2005: 386). The EU had preferred to establish its relations “on an ad hoc basis, without institutional links” (Ibid.). However, the change in this strategy of the Union towards the BSEC came out through the introduction of the ENP strategy paper by the Commission in 2004 (Ibid.: 387). The ENP strategy paper states that “The Council of Europe, the Baltic Sea Council, the Central European Initiative (CEI), the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the Stability Pact have an important part to play, together with Euroregions and cross-border cooperation at the local level” (European Commission, 2004a: 21). This statement clearly displays the Union’s intention to recognize the BSEC as its *regional partner* (Manoli, 2005: 168). Following this development, as a first step, the EU positively responded the BSEC’s long dated call for granting an observer status and established direct links between executive and technical branches of the two organizations (Ibid.: 168-169). As a second step, the EU decided to integrate a *Black Sea dimension* into its strategies within the framework of the ENP in order to establish a more coherent approach towards the region and settled on the financial instruments that would support *joint programming* and *cross-border cooperation* in this process (Ibid.: 169). The established cooperation mechanisms within the structure of the BSEC concerning the policy areas mentioned in the ENP Action Plans have been thought to provide significant support to the EU’s activities in the region (Celac and Manoli, 2006: 200). In addition, the EU has proposed that if it becomes successful in cooperating with the BSEC, this would also create a spill over effect for its relations with the other countries of the ENP (Ibid.).

### III. BLACK SEA SYNERGY

Despite the EU's substantial efforts in implementing the ENP and its success in carrying out the determined objectives and priorities within the framework of the ENP, the policy could not meet the expectations of the neighbouring countries of the BSR on a large scale. These countries regard the ENP as an "insufficient alternative" that was designed to suppress the expectations of membership (Tsantoulis, 2008: 23). It is clear that because the ENP includes *politically, strategically* and *culturally* different eastern and Mediterranean neighbours of the EU within the same structure without offering different perspectives for them, it could not respond the needs and priorities of these countries and has become unable to serve these regions sufficiently (Ibid.). Furthermore, although the policy includes many *sticks* which the ENP countries are obliged to fulfil, it has not offered equal *carrots* as a response to their intensified efforts in this process. (Kempe and Klotzle, 2006: 12). As a result of these shortcomings, the ENP has mainly caused dissatisfaction on the part of the BSR countries, especially Georgia and Ukraine (Gültekin-Punsmann and Nikolov, 2008: 115).

#### 3.1. Rationale for the Synergy

The 2004 enlargement of the Union raised hopes in many countries of the Eastern Europe and South Caucasus for becoming a part of the EU which brought along colour revolutions and "pro-European reorientation" in Georgia and Ukraine in the period of 2003-2005 (Gültekin-Punsmann and Nikolov, 2008: 115). Following these developments, "democratic, reform-minded and western-leaning administrations" of these two countries have declared their intention to become EU member states in the long term (Tassinari, 2006: 1-2). However, their intention for membership was put aside depending on the unavailability of the various conditions in the countries that was required to fulfil necessary criteria in this process. So, the launch of the ENP was thought to become a remedy for Georgia's and Ukraine's search for closer ties with the EU. But, contrary to the expectations, the countries, in particular Ukraine, have responded negatively to their inclusion within the framework of the ENP, "implying a

status of definitive exclusion from the EU” (Emerson, Noutcheva and Popescu, 2006: 13). Although, an *Enhanced Agreement* was signed between the EU and Ukraine at a later time, this initiative has not satisfied Ukraine which has expected more from the EU (Ibid.).

In this regard, through establishment of a BSS initiative, the EU has aimed to “compensate” the disappointed countries of the BSR which could not find what they expected from the ENP and feel excluded because of their long-term aim for membership (Emerson, 2008: 258). Because the Union has noticed that exclusion of such states from getting membership prospect might result in deterioration of relations between the two parties (Aydin, 2004: 12-13). Under such a condition, the EU becomes unable to maintain imposing reforms, sanctions and standards on these countries which do not want to adopt such requirements anymore because of their negative attitude towards the Union (Ibid.: 13). So, in order to prevent the emergence of such a situation in the ENP countries of the BSR, the EU has realized the necessity of developing a regional strategy through which it might continue to make them adopt European norms and standards (Ibid.). Through taking into account its growing interest, the EU has targeted “to formulate clear objectives and a coherent strategy towards the whole Black Sea region” by this way (Tsantoulis, 2008: 24). In this sense, it may be said that the EU has sought to “keep the door open” for the BSR countries without offering a membership perspective for them (Asmus, 2006: 24). The Black Sea initiative of the EU may be regarded as a regional strategy that has been designed to make the ENP a more effective strategy through adding a regional dimension to it.

Another shortcoming of the ENP regarding the BSR is related to the nature of the security threats existing in the region. As Ban (2006: 17) states, the security threats seen in the region such as international crime, all kinds of trafficking, existence of authoritarian leaders and weak states can be resisted effectively through organizing collective action on the regional basis, which necessitates the establishment of regional integration throughout the BSR. So, the Black Sea initiative of the EU has also been established to make this regional cooperation possible for confronting common security threats and providing enhanced security within the borders of the Union.

Besides various external factors, the internal dynamics of the region have also played a crucial role in shaping the EU's approach and oblige it to adopt a more coherent attitude towards the region rather than producing ad hoc solutions. The eastward enlargement of the EU was completed through accession of the other remaining candidate countries, Bulgaria and Romania, in 2007, by which the Union has truly become a *Black Sea power* (Gültekin-Punsmann and Nikolov, 2008: 115). Additionally, the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey in 2005 has become a major development affecting the shape of the EU's future relations with the BSR and necessitated the review of the Union's strategy towards the region (Yannis, 2008: 3). Because, the possible membership of Turkey in the EU means that the EU will integrate 50% of the Black Sea coastline and population into its territory (Tsantoulis, 2008: 15). Therefore, "neglecting the Black Sea region is not an option anymore for the EU" (Ibid.).

Besides the Union's enlargement, the year 2004 also witnessed the NATO's enlargement in the BSR through including Bulgaria and Romania. The expansion of the NATO in the region also demonstrates the changing "security architecture" and "political geography" of Europe which has been reshaped through disappearance of divisions inherited from the Cold War (Cornell et al., 2006: 13). In the post-Cold War era, the strategic importance of the BSR for producing security and stability in the wider Europe and also Greater Middle East has come out explicitly and made the region a focal point of the external actors who are trying to keep their countries safe against many risks and dangers of the new century (Asmus and Jakson, 2004: 22). Correspondingly, the long-term mission of the NATO in Afghanistan, its many other efforts in Southern Caucasus, Balkans and the Central Asia have showed the fact that rather than "a point on the periphery of the European landmass" the BSR has become "a core component" of the Euro-Atlantic security structures (Ibid.). Besides the NATO, Russia has also possessed a strong military stance in the South Caucasus. The positions and activities of these regional and "extra-regional" actors have pushed the EU to restructure "a reinforced political role in the region" (Triantaphyllou and Tsantoulis, 2008: 6). In this regard, the EU as a "Black Sea power" has felt the necessity of exerting

its authority more strongly in the region where it has established different types of relationships with the regional states on a bilateral basis until that time.

Another factor behind the EU's Black Sea initiative has been Russia's assertive policies towards the BSR under Putin's prime ministry and its growing opposition to the EU's increased interest and presence in the region (Gültekin-Punsmann and Nikolov, 2008: 115). The BSR composes a major component of Russian foreign policy due to its location on "Russia's near abroad" and its strategic importance as a route for energy transition (Triantaphyllou, 2009: 3). As a consequence, Russia has followed policies that aim to increase its dominance when compared to many other actors interested in the region such as US/NATO, the EU and Turkey, and, tried to keep its position as "one of the main stakeholders" in the BSR (Ibid.). For this reason, it has worked against the emergence of new dividing lines in the region and adopted a negative attitude towards all kinds of alliances that does not include Russia as a full member (Ibid.). Russia has also claimed that the ENP could not become successful in bringing security and stability to the region because it has not been driven by this objective (Ibid.). It has regarded the ENP one of the revisionist policies of the EU which aims to undermine Russia's influence and dominance on the region (Ibid.). As Moshes (2006: 24) stated:

Brussels cannot ignore a consolidated push of EU new members to be more active on the eastern periphery. As long as it denies membership perspective for its neighbours, the policy of Wider Europe that it pursues, (however palliative it may look) nevertheless stimulates their search for alternatives to staying within the same geopolitical and geo-economic space as Russia. Moscow, in this situation, starts viewing the EU not so much as a partner, but rather a systemic rival to its foreign policy goals in the Western NIS and the Caucasus; a revisionist power; and is instinctively inclined to get involved in a "zero-sum game" type of relationship with the EU.

The presence of an authoritarian and nationalistic Russia which aims to re-gain its control over the ex-Soviet space has caused the rise of fears in Europe because of the growing dependence on Russian energy resources (Smith, 2008a: 1-2). The Putin presidency has clearly announced its intention to re-establish Russia's control in Central Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia through using its monopolistic control over Gazprom (natural gas) and Transneft (oil) pipelines in export of energy (Ibid.: 6). The concerns of Europe and also the US were justified when Gazprom cut the flow of natural gas and oil to Ukraine and Georgia in the period of 2006-2007 in order to

penalize these newly established democracies which declared their intention for becoming EU member states (Ibid.: 1-3). Another crisis emerged in 2008 through Russia's partial cut down of oil supply to the Czech Republic, which was "clearly an act of political retaliation to a fellow member state in the heart of Europe" (Smith, 2008b: 5). Russia's tendency to use its energy resources as a tool to realize its political objectives has seriously threatened energy security of the EU importing more than 30 % of its oil and 50 % of its natural gas from Russia (Baran, 2007: 132). As a result of this situation, the EU has tried to decrease its dependence on Russian energy supply by "diversifying oil and gas supplies" which can be possible through building direct pipelines from the Caucasus and Central Asia to Europe (Ibid.: 135-136). In line with this purpose, the EU and the US have been supporting two pipeline projects including TGI (Turkey-Greece-Italy) and Nabucco (from Turkey to Austria across Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary) which will reach Europe through bypassing Russia (Ibid.: 138).

As it is clearly seen, the control of the BSR has carried great importance for insuring the EU's energy security. The region is the direct transit route of energy supplied by the Caspian Basin, Caucasus and the Central Asia to Europe, through which almost half of European energy imports are expected to be carried in the near future (Tassinari, 2006: 8). Additionally, the EU's candidate countries in the region such as Turkey and Azerbaijan have significant energy supply potentials (Ibid.). So, through establishing a Black Sea synergy in the energy sector, the Union could establish more coordinated action on the regional basis for the diversification of energy transit routes (Ibid.). This action of the EU would both increase the energy security of the EU and its partner countries located in the BSR, who have been exposed to threats of Russia for their choices and activities in the political field.

One of the other motives paving the way for the establishment of a Black Sea synergy is the attempts of the regional countries within the framework of the BSEC for establishing closer links and institutional ties with the EU (Gültekin-Punsmann and Nikolov, 2008: 115). This objective of the BSEC member states was clearly introduced in the period of Hellenic Chairmanship-in-Office of the BSEC in 2005 (Vahl and Celac, 2006: 176). A special meeting was convened in Brussels through participation of



representatives from the EU institutions and the Member State together with the senior officials of the BSEC in April 2005 (BSEC, 2007a). In the wake of this meeting, the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs decided to establish an ad hoc committee who would be responsible for preparing a working paper on the *EU-BSEC interaction* (Ibid.). In October 2005, under the Moldovan Chairmanship-in Office, the BSEC Council introduced “Declaration on the Enhancement of Cooperation with the European Union” (Ibid.). Through this initiative, the BSEC aimed to strengthen the consultations with the EU institutions while encouraging the EU Council to adapt a declaration on enhanced BSEC-EU and insert a regional dimension into the EU’s policies regarding the BSR (Ibid.). These positive developments in favour of the EU in the region have also increased its beliefs in the potential success of establishing a synergy in the region. As Emerson (2005: 6) stated: “the moment for a new impetus for Black Sea regionalism seems to have come.”

### **3.2. Development of the Synergy and Key Features**

Taking into consideration the above mentioned rationale, the EU’s intention to develop a *fully-fledged* and *comprehensive* Black Sea policy resulted in the establishment of the Black Sea Synergy, which added a new dimension to its external relations. However, the Black Sea Synergy was not put forward suddenly. Several reports had been prepared by several think-tanks such as the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) and the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) (Andreev, 2008: 101). The studies mainly focused on the question of “how to promote the interests of the EU in its neighbourhood without being obliged to offer full membership to the participating states” (Ibid.). Also, the combination of the EU’s political and economic objectives in the region, promotion of multilateralism in the EU’s foreign policy and differentiation between the regional countries and organizations have been taken as the main grounds of the studies (Ibid.). The studies focused on the finding that “despite the big variety of tools through which EU is involved in the Black Sea Region, a strategic or holistic approach of this involvement is missing” (Pop and Manoleli, 2007: 24). All of these ideas took a more clear shape through the launch of the Commission

Communication on “Black Sea Synergy – a New Regional Cooperation Initiative” in April 2007 as a result of the intensive efforts of the German Presidency and the member countries, especially Greece, Bulgaria and Romania (Gültekin-Punsmann and Nikolov, 2008: 120).

Through the Communication, the launch of a new EU policy for the Black Sea Region was declared. Like the other regional policies – Barcelona process, the Stability Pact for the Balkans and the Northern Dimension – the Synergy has also aimed to establish a regional identity in the new neighbourhood of the enlarged EU through inserting a “multilateral regional dimension” to the Eastern ENP which has developed a bilateral relationship between the EU and Moldova, Ukraine and also the countries of the Southern Caucasus (Emerson, 2008: 253-254).

As stated in the Communication, the Black Sea Synergy (BSS) has not been developed as an independent EU policy towards the BSR. Because, the EU has already had three policies towards the region including “the pre-accession process in the case of Turkey, the European Neighbourhood Policy (with five eastern ENP partners also being active in Black Sea cooperation) and the Strategic Partnership with the Russian Federation”, which will continue to be implemented on a bilateral basis (European Commission, 2007b: 2). Therefore, the BSS has been introduced as a complementary strategy to these existing EU policies in order to support cooperation at the regional level (Ibid.: 3). *Transparency* and *inclusiveness* have been determined as the main characteristics of the Synergy which has aimed to get results in the common interest of the EU and BSR by means of consultation between the two sides (Ibid.). Additionally, the BSS would also support and work in compliance with the existing regional cooperation initiatives formerly introduced by the Union such as the Danube Process or other international organizations and third parties (Ibid.). One of the significant characteristics of the BSS is *flexibility* (Ibid.). The Communication stated that the flexible framework of the Synergy would bring “greater coherence” and “policy guidance” through providing active involvement of the countries and regional bodies in the process (Ibid.). Thus, The Union has intended to complete and contribute to the existing policies and cooperation programmes in the region through establishing an

*intensified dialogue* and *cross-border cooperation* among the regional actors (Pop and Manoleli, 2007: 26). Another characteristic of the BSS is related with its *scope of actions* (European Commission, 2007b: 3). Because various activities and initiatives of the Union in the region would be closely linked to neighbouring regions, especially to the Caspian Sea, to Central Asia and to South-Eastern Europe, “the scope of actions could extend beyond the region itself” (Ibid.). Therefore, the BSS enjoys significant *inter-regional* elements (Ibid.).

After the issuing of the Communication, another event which has a symbolic importance took place in Kyiv on February 14, 2008. It was the first Black Sea Synergy Ministerial meeting where all the regional political actors came together for the first time in order to shape the destiny of the BSR (Yannis, 2008: 4). Foreign Ministers tried to agree on the priorities of the countries that would be taken into consideration in future projects (The EU-Ukraine Business Council, 2008: 4). They also stated their opinions about the possibilities of enhanced EU involvement in the countries and the place of the regional organizations and cooperation initiatives in the process (Ibid.). In the meeting, Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, expressed his ideas by saying that “Black Sea Synergy is designed to attract political attention to Black Sea region and provide new opportunities through increased cooperation with the EU. It also provides opportunities for increased cooperation with Turkey and Russia” (Ibid.). In fact, on 14 February 2008, two ministerial meetings were held under the title of the first Black Sea Synergy Ministerial meeting (Emerson, 2008: 266). At the first meeting, the EU Presidency and the Commission took part in a meeting of the BSEC ministers, in which a declaration “on a BSEC-EU enhanced relationship” was introduced by the ministers of the BSEC (Ibid.). The second meeting was held through involvement of both the EU and BSEC member states, at which “the Joint Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the countries of the EU and of the wider Black Sea area” was adopted as a result of a negotiation process between the two sides (Ibid.). In the Joint Statement, it was stated: “the participants agreed that the primary task of the Black Sea Synergy is the development of cooperation within the Black Sea region and also between the region as a whole and the European Union [...] the Black Sea Synergy will benefit from the

European Neighbourhood Policy and other EU policies applied in the relationship with countries of the region” (European Commission, 2008a: 1). Also, the last paragraph of the joint statement expressed the hopes about the future of the synergy by saying, “Participants considered that this Black Sea Synergy Meeting is the beginning of a long-term regional cooperation endeavour offering new opportunities and increased stability and prosperity to citizens in the wider Black Sea area and the whole of Europe” (Ibid.). In general, the First Black Sea Synergy Ministerial Meeting reconfirmed the Commission’s proposals introduced by the Communication on “Black Sea Synergy” (Andreev, 2008: 101-102).

Some other proposals were also made with the aiming establishing closer relationship with the Black Sea countries. One of them was the proposal brought forward by the Members of European Parliament (MEPs). In April 2008, the MEPs Hannes Swoboda and Jan Marinus Wiersma made a joint call for a “Union for the Black Sea” (Fritz-Vannahme et al., 2008: 5). The MEPs stated that the Union would establish deeper relationship between the EU and states of the BSR and go beyond the existing cooperation frameworks through building a ground for multilateral cooperation (Ibid.). They proposed a flexible institutional structure for the Union but supported the maintenance of the membership prospect for the countries of the Union in order to strengthen the process of Europeanization in the region (Ibid.: 5-6). The proposal also emphasized the importance of establishing close cooperation with Turkey and Russia as major regional powers (Ibid.: 6). However, it was not supported by the EU member states because of the inclusion of membership prospect for the countries of the BSR (Ibid.).

In sum, if the key features of the BSS are analyzed, it may be said that the Synergy has brought major innovations to the Union’s approach towards the BSR. First of all, through the Synergy, the BSR has been regarded as “a single distinct policy area [...] not a vague geographic space” (Tsantoulis, 2009: 2). Also, it has provided the involvement of the leading political actors and other stakeholders (national governments, international and regional organizations, business sector, etc.) in the process and brought the principle of inclusiveness (Ibid.). And, most importantly, the

BSS has produced the “concept of regional cooperation” which is not available in the ENP (Ibid.). However, as mentioned before, many challenges threatening the security of the countries of the region could not be dealt with through the individual efforts of the countries or cooperation between the EU (Yannis, 2008: 5). So, through building a regional cooperation mechanism, the Union has compensated a significant shortcoming of the ENP for the BSR countries.

### **3.3. Objectives and Main Cooperation Areas**

As mentioned before, the Commission Communication stated the primary objective of the BSS as “establishing cooperation within the Black Sea region and also between the region as a whole and the European Union” (European Commission, 2007b: 2). In the Communication, the BSR is defined as an expanding market and a significant hub for energy and transport, which also encounters many challenges such as frozen conflicts, environmental problems, illegal migration and organised crime (Ibid.). The document continues by stating that all these opportunities and challenges necessitate coordinated action at the regional level through which enhanced prosperity, stability and security would be provided not only for the BSR but also for Europe (Ibid.). Therefore, within the context the BSS, the EU has mainly targeted to “stimulate democratic and economic reforms, project stability and support development in the Black Sea area” (Ibid.). In order to achieve these objectives and overcome the mentioned challenges, the EU has determined a variety of sectors based on common priorities and taking into consideration the areas where the presence and support of the EU is essential (Ibid.: 3). As a result, the Commission listed thirteen topics that would constitute the subjects of this regional cooperation initiative. These subjects were<sup>3</sup>

- *Democracy, respect for human rights and good governance*: The EU has maintained a strong support for the efforts of the regional organizations which

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<sup>3</sup> Please note that this is my summary of the provisions stated in the European Commission Communication on BSS.

have made strong commitments to establish democratic institutions, good governance and rule of law. It would also contribute to the promotion of democratic values through organizing training and exchange programmes and supporting regional dialogue with civil society.

- *Managing movement and improving security:* The EU has aimed to establish an effective border management and customs cooperation mechanism at regional level in order to fight against organised crime and manage irregular immigration effectively. The EU has also supported the countries' initiatives aiming to develop cooperation practices, common standards and training skills, and intended to bring enhanced national law enforcement to the countries of the region in this field.
- *The "frozen" conflicts:* A more active EU involvement in the existing initiatives designed to manage frozen conflicts was proposed by the Commission. The EU would also attach great importance to establish confidence building measures and develop cooperation programmes in the affected regions.
- *Energy:* Because of the importance of the region in energy supply diversification, the EU would maintain its efforts for developing enhanced relations with energy producers, transit countries and consumers in order to provide clear, transparent and non-discriminatory framework for production, transport and transit. The EU has worked in close cooperation with the partner countries for promoting energy efficiency and energy saving and also for building new energy infrastructures in the region such as "a new trans-Caspian trans-Black Sea energy corridor."
- *Transport:* Efforts would be maintained with the aim of building transportation axes between the EU and the partner countries of the BSS and promoting regulatory approximation through policy dialogue. The EU would also support and work in coordination with the ongoing transport cooperation initiatives such as the TRACECA Strategy in order to increase the efficiency, security and safety of the transport operations in the region.
- *Environment:* One of the main priorities in the field of environmental protection would be adoption of "the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against

Pollution” by the EU Member States, which is required by the EU Marine Strategy. Also, the EU would encourage the partner countries to implement multilateral environmental agreements and develop regional cooperatives initiatives against common environmental threats such as climate change, industrial or air pollution.

- *Maritime policy*: BSS would provide development of a holistic maritime policy targeting to provide sustainable growth, job creation, security of shipping and environmental protection in the sea related sectors and coastal regions.
- *Fisheries*: The EU has aimed at providing sustainable and responsible use of fisheries sources through fisheries management, research, data collection and stock assessment in the BSR.
- *Trade*: The accession of the all BSR countries in the WTO would be the primary objective of the EU’s trade policy within the context of the BSS. Besides, the approximation of the countries’ legislations with the EU trade-related acquis through implementation of the ENP Action Plans has been supported by this process. The EU would also encourage regional free trade initiatives unless these efforts do not undermine the Member States’ responsibilities in the EU’s customs union.
- *Research and educational networks*: The Commission aims to encourage interconnection of all countries to pan-European research backbone. Therefore, the synergy would bring increased connectivity between research and education communities and provide legal and regulatory harmonisation of the BSS countries’ frameworks with the EU framework.
- *Science and technology*: Enhanced science and technology dialogue between the EU and the BSS countries would be promoted by means of the new instruments carried out by the 7<sup>th</sup> Research Framework Programme.
- *Employment and social affairs*: Integration of ethnic minorities, fight against discrimination, unemployment and informal economy would be the priorities of the synergy under employment and social affairs policy which would also include awareness-raising initiatives, social dialogue, training and technical assistance programmes, and exchange of information.

- *Regional development:* European Union Regional Policy funding has made available for the Black Sea coastline through the EU membership of Bulgaria and Romania and aimed to provide enhanced competitiveness and better environmental situation in the region (European Commission 2007b: 3-8).

It is seen that the proposals of the EU are highly *eclectic* and designed to address a wide range of areas except hard security and military issues (Emerson, 2008: 264). The BSS has aimed to promote good neighbourly relations between the countries of the BSR and to carry out a positive atmosphere in the region through introducing several cross-border cooperation programmes and sectoral partnerships which could also make the establishment of improved relations between the EU and key regional actors possible (Tsantoulis, 2009: 3). The Synergy has also been expected to create further opportunities for providing “inclusiveness over divisions” in the BSR and between the region and the EU (Ibid.). This means that the BSS could become an effective tool in overcoming the renewed divisions on the EU’s eastern frontiers (Ibid.).

Another primary objective of the BSS is to strengthen the *Europeanisation process* in the region (Yannis, 2008: 4). Although the Union has already implemented three strategies which are covering the region, it did not have an independent policy towards the BSR (Ibid.). Therefore, through development of the synergy, the BSR has emerged as a new separate policy area of the EU. The BSS has not created new institutions and new instruments for implementation (Ibid.). However, it has promoted closer relations and enhanced cooperation between the EU and regional actors; and thus, accelerated the Europeanisation process in the BSR by carrying out a more coherent EU strategy together with complementary means to the ongoing policies towards the region (Ibid.).

The European Commission states that the *cross-border cooperation* and *local and civil society actors* have carried great importance in realization of the objectives stated in the BSS (European Commission 2007b: 8). For this reason, a *Black Sea Cross Border Cooperation* (CBC) programme was established under the ENPI. This programme aims at strengthening the civil society and local level cooperation in the



coastal areas of the Black Sea through “further development of contacts between Black Sea towns and communities, universities, cultural operators and civil society organisations, including consumer organisations” (European Commission 2007b: 8). The programme aims at providing significant contribution to the progress of resolution efforts in the areas of frozen conflicts where civil society actors have played various roles (Ibid.). The objectives of the programme include:

- giving assistance to excluded and affected groups including prisoners of war, internally displaced persons and refugees in conflict areas;
- contributing to the development of conflict resolution initiatives and governmental policies through participation in the relevant processes;
- providing information to the external audiences and general public about the situations of the frozen conflicts;
- supporting confidence-building efforts through second track diplomacy, business and media programmes (The Black Sea Forum, 2007: 15).

The CBC programme has been managed locally by representatives of the BSR countries and an authority from Romania (The Black Sea Forum, 2007: 26). Other objectives of the programme include “favouring economic and social development in border areas, addressing common challenges (most notably, protected, secure and efficient borders) and promoting people-to people cooperation” (Ibid.). Within the framework of the programme, 17 million EURO fund has been targeted to be made available for the local actors (local administration, civil society organizations, education and cultural institutions) in the period of 2007-2013 (Ibid.). Additionally, new CBC programmes would be established between Romania and Bulgaria and between Bulgaria and Turkey in order to encourage cooperation in maritime and coastal activities of these countries (European Commission 2007b: 8).

Another objective of the BSS introduced through the Commission Communication is *strengthening of the ENP* (European Commission 2007b: 8). Because five countries of the BSR (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) are included within the framework of the ENP, the synergy could also contribute to the

effective implementation of the ENP. Therefore, developing a new thematic dimension to the ENP, gradual development of Free Trade Agreements, removal of obstacles to legitimate travel and enhanced cooperation between universities constitute other objectives of the Synergy initiative (Ibid.).

In terms of financial support, *co-financing* principle would be applied to the BSS (European Commission 2007b: 9). The main financial instruments of the initiative include national, regional and cross-border programmes under the ENPI, the European Regional Development Fund, European Investment Bank (EIB), EBDR funds and the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (Ibid.). In January 2008, the European Parliament accepted a proposal made by one of its members for setting concrete proposals in order establish a truly functioning regional cooperation and creating an “authentic partnership” in the BSR (Mocanu, 2007: 56). As a part of this proposal, the EP agreed on doubling of the funds that would be made available under the ENPI (Ibid.).

### **3.4. Cooperation with Regional Organizations**

In its communication on Black Sea Synergy, the European Commission emphasized the importance of building close relations between the EU and regional organizations by stating that although the Black Sea countries would become the main interlocutors of the EU in this regional cooperation process, the EU should strengthen its relations with regional organizations (European Commission, 2007b: 9). As mentioned before, the Commission clearly expressed its intention for not creating new institutions within the framework of the BSS (Ibid.). Rather, the synergy would benefit from the institutional framework of the already existing cooperation initiatives (Ibid.). Therefore, particular emphasis was put on the BSEC which is the sole organization consisting all the countries of the BSR within its framework (Mocanu, 2007: 56). In the Communication, it was stated that the wide membership coverage of the BSEC in which two significant regional players, Russia and Turkey, are founding member states would contribute to the effective implementation of the BSS (European Commission, 2007b:

9). On that account, it may be said that through the establishment of the BSS, an important step was taken towards the development of more concrete and closer relations between the EU and the BSEC.

It can be contended that, the relations between the EU and BSEC have evolved in different phases. The process of reinforcing enhanced cooperation between the two organizations had mainly two peaks (Gültekin-Punsmann and Nikolov, 2008: 117). In the first phase, between the years 1996 and 2000, the BSEC had shown intensive efforts in order to establish closer relations with the EU (Ibid.). At that stage, although most attempts of the BSEC remained inconclusive, the policy papers prepared by both the EU and the BSEC (Commission, 1997; BSEC, 1999) was significantly contributed to the shaping of the content and institutional framework of the relations between two sides and served “as benchmarks of progress” in this process (Ibid.). The second phase of the relations started in 2004, as a result of the Union’s eastern enlargement (Ibid.). At that stage, diplomatic and administrative level dialogues have been strengthened (Ibid.). Also, throughout 2005-2006, Greece had played an active role in rapprochement between the two organizations (Ibid.). The EU’s search for developing more intensive relations with the BSEC in accordance with the aim of adding a regional dimension to its ENP came into view openly through adoption of the Commission’s communication on strengthening the ENP in 2006 (Ibid.). The Communication declared the intention of the EU by stating:

The Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organisation provides a useful platform for our dialogue and cooperation with the region as a whole. The Commission is currently examining the possibility of establishing closer contacts with BSEC, including observer status. In addition, and building on these closer contacts, it will be useful to establish a regular dialogue with BSEC at Foreign Minister level, which would help implement and develop further the Union’s Black Sea regional policy. Back-to-back with these BSEC meetings, it would be useful to have gatherings between ministers of EU and Eastern ENP countries for political dialogue and discussions on ENP-related matters (European Commission, 2006b: 10-11).

The following document consolidating this process of rapprochement between the EU and BSEC was the BSEC Working Paper on EU–BSEC interaction introduced in 2007. One of the objectives of this Working Paper was “to suggest a possible framework for continuous policy dialogue and cooperative action between BSEC and

EU institutions in an evolving regional and global context” (BSEC, 2007a: 3). The document also specified the priority sectors where enhanced BSEC-EU interaction could foster further development and added that “the establishment of BSEC-EU partnership through synergies in specific priority sectors in terms of values and objectives could be based on the EU existing regional approach, complementing the bilateral approach with the involvement of the Organisation of BSEC” (Ibid.: 4). The latest and the most significant document introduced at that stage is the Commission’s communication on BSS.

The Communication stated that cooperation between the EU and the BSEC would aim to provide regional level dialogue which could be realized through organizing meetings between senior officials of both sides (European Commission, 2007b: 9). Additionally, it stated that high-level political events would strengthen the standing of the BSS in this process (Ibid.). Therefore, “in the light of tangible progress”, regular ministerial meetings could be conducted, including participants from the EU and BSEC countries (Ibid.). The BSS would also benefit from the existing contacts established between the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of BSEC (Ibid.). Besides, in its communication, the Commission declared its intention for getting an observer status in the BSEC and also enounced that it would give support for EU Member States’ search for holding observer status in the organization in which seven EU Member States – the Czech Republic, Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Poland and Slovakia – have already had observer status (Ibid.). Then, the European Commission was granted Observer Status of the BSEC at the Fifteenth Anniversary Summit of the BSEC held in İstanbul on 25 June 2007. In the Summit Declaration, it was stated:

We welcome the granting of Observer status to the Commission of the European Communities. This will facilitate a closer BSEC-EU interaction that may establish new partnerships and lead to the creation of appropriate instruments for the implementation of agreed projects and activities in a regional format. We invite the EU to jointly hold with BSEC a Ministerial Meeting, which would mark the official start of the Black Sea Synergy process. We also agree that, without prejudice to specific EU programmes applying to individual States or sub-regions, the joint BSEC-EU action in the wider Black Sea area should be comprehensive and inclusive so that its benefits encompass all BSEC Member States. (BSEC, 2007b: 4-5)

Moreover, in the Declaration “on a BSEC-EU enhanced relationship” introduced by the ministers of the BSEC on 14 February 2008, it was stressed that the EU-BSEC relationship should be comprehensive, inclusive, further institutionalized and result-oriented (BSEC, 2008). An *enhanced BSEC-EU* relationship would also include Ministerial Meetings in different forms (Ibid.). The Declaration also set the priority areas of the cooperation and provided for the development a road map and establishment of ad hoc joint working groups for its implementation (Ibid.).

However, there was also another important point referred in the Commission’s communication and Joint Statement of 14 February 2008. Both of the documents underlined the important role of the BSEC in the BSS initiative. But, they also added that “the BSS will at the same time remain open to all appropriate cooperation possibilities provided by other regional bodies and initiatives, including those in the Danube region” (European Commission, 2008a: 2). Thus, the BSEC was regarded as the main but not *exclusive* partner of the EU in this regional cooperation process in accordance with the principle of *joint ownership* in the ENP (Gültekin-Punsmann and Nikolov, 2008: 121). Additionally, the Commission’s communication referred to the Black Sea Forum as a platform through which participation of civil society in the BSS initiative could be provided (Ibid.). This also means that the Communication has given way to the involvement of other regional cooperation structures such as GUAM in this process (Ibid.).

### **3.5. Report on the First Year of Implementation of the Black Sea Synergy**

The report on the first year of the BSS aimed to lay out the progress made in performing the tasks and achieving the objectives set in the 2007 BSS Communication in its first year (European Commission, 2008b: 2). The Report also introduced the goals and tasks determined in the priority sectors for the coming years and made a number of proposals in order to provide more effective and ambitious implementation of this regional cooperation initiative (Ibid.). One of the sources formed the basis of this progress report is the Report on the BSS adopted by the European Parliament (Ibid.). In

general, the Parliament emphasized that the EU has to determine “a limited set of priority objectives” and proceed consistently in this process (Ibid.). The document also underlined the important roles of Bulgaria, Greece and Romania as EU Member States in reinforcing enhanced cooperation with and within the BSR (Ibid.). In addition to the Parliament’s report, the opinions of the Committee of the Regions and Economic and Social Committee were also adopted as the other sources of this progress report (Ibid.). The Report outlined the progress made in the priority sectors as follows<sup>4</sup>:

- *Environment*: The Commission has maintained its efforts for fulfilling the conditions required for European Community accession to the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution. In line with this target, the Ministerial Conference of the Convention was held in Kyiv in October 2008. Moreover, a new project has been introduced by the Commission in order to increase the efficiency of the work of the DABLAS Task Force. The Commission has also targeted to launch a climate change technical assistance project for the BSR in the future years.
- *Maritime Policy and fisheries*: Through adaptation of Integrated Maritime Policy for the EU, better coordination of the national maritime policies, including the countries of the Western BSR, has been provided. In this period, the countries of the BSR have established Exclusive Economic Zones and worked for developing a regional Strategy for Integrated Coastal Zones Management. The Commission has also started to work for establishing a European Marine Observation Data Network for all sea basins.
- *Energy*: The Republic of Moldova, Turkey and Ukraine have maintained formal negotiations to participate in the Energy Community Treaty, which provides their adaptation to Community acquis in the electricity and gas sectors. As to energy infrastructure, the Commission has financed a feasibility study on a Trans-Caspian-Black Sea Gas Corridor.

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<sup>4</sup> This is a brief summary of the basic points stated in the Commission Communication on Report on the First Year of Implementation of the BSS.

- *Transport:* The Commission has opened exploratory talks with the partner countries to negotiate on extension of the trans-European transport networks. Maritime safety and security in the Black Sea has come into prominence on the Commission's agenda. Also, the implementation of the Motorways of the Sea concept in the Black Sea has started in this period.
- *Managing movement and improving security:* Through adaptation of the Conclusions on the Global Approach to Migration by the European Council in June 2007, the establishment of a Cooperation Platform on Migration in the Black Sea region was approved. Besides, the workings have continued to support the further development of the Burgas Black Sea Coordination Centre which would receive information from the national centres established in the Black Sea countries.
- *Research, science and education networks:* The regional cooperation in higher education would be supported by the new phase of the Tempus programme. The Black Sea Interconnection (BSI) project would also establish a regional research and education network connected to pan-European research network. Additionally, the projects of the INCONet and EECA have been started in January 2008 in order to support regional scientific cooperation.
- *Employment and social affairs:* Regional level activities, such as seminars on specific issues of the BSR or thematic subjects, have gained speed in this period.
- *Trade:* The EU has supported the efforts of the Black Sea countries for joining the WTO and worked for regional trade liberalisation.
- *Democracy, respect for human rights and good governance:* A number of BSS civil society seminars were held in Moldova in May 2008, through which principles on "freedom of expression in a civil society perspective" were adopted.
- *The "frozen conflicts":* The EU has placed emphasis on establishing confidence-building measures, including cooperation programmes aimed to get conflicting sides together on the same platform (European Commission, 2008b: 2-6).

In terms of cross-border cooperation, the Black Sea CBC Programme has been in the process of establishment. A “Joint Operational Programme” has been also developed by the parties with an allocation of € 17.5 million. Moreover, the Black Sea Forum has organized its first civil society activities in this period and a position paper on “Greening the Black Sea Synergy” was introduced by an alliance of environmental NGOs in February 2008 (European Commission, 2008b: 6).

In the Report, the Commission also put forward some proposals in order to give a new impetus to the Synergy and transform this regional cooperation process into a long-term endeavour<sup>5</sup>:

- *Long-term, measurable objectives* should be set in the cooperation sectors in order to provide more concerted action in the related fields. A *lead country and/or organisation* previously designated for each cooperation sector should be responsible for coordination of national and regional level activities carried by the other partner countries.
- *Sectoral partnerships* might facilitate implementation of the projects through providing co-financing of operations and involvement of international financial institutions in the process.
- *Ministers’ meetings* should articulate concrete needs of the Synergy. The meetings might be hold in the established sectoral frameworks such as TRACECA or Baku Initiative or might follow Kyiv model (“back-to-back with BSEC meetings, with full EU participation or involving an open troika”) (European Commission 2008b: 7).

The Report also listed some other proposals that need further study including, “involvement of Belarus in some of the sectoral activities, related to the Synergy, creation of a Black Sea Civil Society Forum, strengthening of academic and student

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<sup>5</sup> Please note that these points are my summary of the provisions stated in the Commission Communication on Report on the First Year of Implementation of the BSS.



networks, establishment of an Institute of European Studies in the Black Sea Region” (Ibid.).

As understood from the Report, the BSS has failed to deal with a wide range of cooperation areas determined through the Commission Communication on the BSS. Therefore, the Report suggested that the Synergy initiative had concentrated upon more specified and limited cooperation sectors in order to get favourable results for both sides. Because the BSS was introduced as a complementary policy to the EU’s existing strategies towards the region, its main target is to create a region-wide incentive to act in concert with the EU to promote regional security, stability and prosperity. However, if the countries of the BSR cannot obtain tangible results from this relationship, the BSS might turn into a failed EU initiative rather than a long-term cooperation endeavour. In such a case, the discontent on the part of the BSR countries might again cause the rise of tension in their relations with the EU relating to their exclusion for getting membership prospect. So, in order to prevent the emergence of such a situation, the Report made new proposals with the aim of providing a new impetus for the Synergy. However, it is rather doubtful that whether these proposals can be put into effect and become effective in bringing the success of the Synergy initiative.

## CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to show that the BSS is an initiative created to overcome the shortcomings of the ENP. It has become apparent that, the ENP, in its initial form, could not effectively tackle the security threats and many other problems existing in the BSR. Moreover, if the weaknesses of the BSR countries in economic and administrative terms and also the limited financial aid capacity of the EU are taken into consideration, it is also seen unrealistic both for the EU and the BSR countries to carry out all the incentives and to fulfil the various reforms proposed by the ENP respectively. This is why, the EU established the BSS initiative not only for increasing the ambition of the BSR countries to go on with their reforms but also for protecting the Union's image on the international stage against the possibility of the failure of its neighbourhood policy.

For many years, the BSR had not taken an important place in the EU's foreign policy agenda. Rather than establishing a direct policy, the EU has adopted temporary solutions and sectoral initiatives towards the region because of various factors including the existence of Russian hegemony on the BSR and the divided character of the region which became an obstacle to the establishment of a coherent EU strategy. The launch of the ENP in 2003 through covering the countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine demonstrates the increased EU interest and presence in the BSR since the policy has offered a deepened economic and political cooperation between the EU and these countries. By this way, the EU has intended to give a sense of unity and belonging to its neighbouring countries even though they are not members of the Union. However, because of the absence of membership perspective, the ENP did not satisfy the expectations of the BSR countries which declared their aim for becoming EU member states in the long term. Additionally, because the policy has established bilateral relations with these countries, it has become ineffective in overcoming regional difficulties such as illegal immigration, all kinds of human trafficking, organized crime and environmental degradation. All of these factors showed the inability of the ENP in dealing with the BSR and explained the reasons of an urgent need for the development of a policy that could enable the EU to exert its control over the region.

Contrary to its indifferent attitude towards the region in the previous years, the BSR has become a significant part of the EU's foreign policy agenda. First, through participation of two coastal Black Sea countries – Romania and Bulgaria – into the Union and ongoing accession process of Turkey, the EU has given its attention to the BSR more than ever. Now, the Union has direct neighbourhood with the states located in this region, for which the EU has defined and followed different approaches – Partnership and Cooperation Agreements with the countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Russia which are now included in the ENP except Russia and a Strategic Partnership with Russia instead of its inclusion in the ENP – for many years. However, the problem is that although the EU has established various bilateral ties with the countries of the BSR, it did not establish a strategy for dealing with the region as a whole and thus could not respond the demands and expectation of those countries on a large scale. This situation has mainly threatened the security of the EU, when it is considered that the BSR is mainly characterized by religious and ethnic tensions, frozen conflicts and cross border threats that could only be kept under control through organizing collective action on a regional basis. Second, the strategic importance of the region in supply and transportation of energy has become another significant factor in the Union's search for establishing enhanced control over the BSR. Russian hegemony in energy supply and its assertive policies towards the countries of the BSR through using this power have also increased the importance of the BSR in providing the European energy security. These points also demonstrate the fact that the BSR is an indispensable part of European security and the EU has to find a coherent and effective strategy which covers the whole BSR as a single geographical area.

In view of the above mentioned factors, it can be stated that without providing the security and stability of the BSR, the EU could not ensure its own security within its borders. For this reason, the EU could not remain unresponsive to the emergence of such a discontent on the part of the BSR countries caused by the failure of its ENP. Therefore, while developing the BSS, the EU mainly focused on the shortcomings of its previous policies in dealing with the region and tried to overcome the deficiencies of these existing strategies. This is why, the BSS was developed as a complementary policy to the EU's existing policies. The synergy is designed to reinforce the

effectiveness of the cooperation structures established in the region. Through adding a regional dimension to the EU's existing approaches towards the region, the BSS has targeted to support both cooperation among the states located in the region and also between the Union and the region entirely. This is because, for both sides – the EU and the Black Sea states – it would be more effective and beneficial to cooperate on a regional basis for achieving the common objectives.

In this regard, the Commission has stated many areas of cooperation – energy, transport, environment, the frozen conflicts, trade, democracy, internal security – for providing a new incentive to its relations with the BSR countries in order to secure their acting in concert with the EU. Most importantly, through establishing cooperation on a regional level, the BSS has aimed to overcome one of the most important shortcomings of the ENP in the BSR: a regional dimension. Because of the nature of the security threats existing in BSR, only regional level cooperation can become an effective strategy in tackling with those challenges. Furthermore, if the EU gains a tangible success in the achievement of the objectives established within the framework of the BSS, it can also get the chance of being recognized as an influential foreign policy actor in the region. Through establishing enhanced control on the region, it would also take a stronger position against Russia in terms of energy security and protect itself against criticisms that may emerge as a result of the ineffectiveness of the ENP in BSR.

The important place given to the establishment of closer relations with the BSEC is also another point confirming the argument that the BSS was developed in order to overcome the shortcomings of the ENP. This is because, although the BSEC as the most important regional organization has significantly contributed to development of various regional cooperation initiatives for many years, the relations between the EU and the BSEC had been maintained within a very limited scope since the launch of the BSS. The BSS has emphasized the significance of the BSEC with its wide membership coverage with its potential for supporting the activities of the Synergy. Most importantly, rather than establishing a new institutional framework, the BSS would benefit from the existing institutional structures of not only the BSEC but also other regional bodies. In this regard, it might be said that through establishing closer relations

and direct links between the EU and the BSEC and the other regional cooperation structures, the BSS has filled the gap in the relations between the EU and the cooperation frameworks established in the BSR.

To conclude, it can be stated that, first, the ENP which has brought eastern and Mediterranean neighbours of the Union under the same policy framework could not effectively deal with the regional security threats and it also failed to meet the demands and expectations of the countries located in the BSR. Second, the BSR gained a significant importance in European security in the new century and had to be tackled with new instruments. Third, the EU had to provide a new incentive in its relations with the BSR countries in order to motivate them to continue with their reform processes and comply with EU norms and standards. Fourth, the BSS has been established in order to overcome the shortcomings of the ENP in the BSR. Nevertheless, although the BSS has been believed to respond the expectations of both the EU and the BSR countries, it remains to be seen whether it could become successful in fulfilling all of those declared promises in the following years.

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