

Regional cooperation on sustainable energy in the Black Sea area

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The essence of sustainable energy consist of promoting energy-saving technologies in all sectors of the economy and producing energy from renewable sources, reducing dependence on fossil fuel resources. Energy sustainability requires changes not only in the way energy is supplied but also in the way it is used, namely energy efficiency, including energy-efficient buildings, appliances, vehicles and industrial processes.

What international organisations in general and regional organisations in particular do in regard to energy sustainability consist essentially of:

- raising awareness in the Member States – governmental sector, business community, academic community and the general public;
- developing international/regional cooperation;
- promoting concrete projects, capable of having multiplying effects in the economies of the Member States.

This presentation will try to address the theme of this session from the perspective of a regional organisation serving a region that, from the energy point of view, is getting increased attention from the international community – the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organisation (BSEC).

BSEC activities. Cooperation in the field of energy is a major area of action of the BSEC, as energy is an essential element for sustainable development of the BSEC Member States and their interdependence in energy is growing.

In April 2010, the *Outline of the BSEC Strategy on Energy until 2020* was finalized. This document offers the Member States strategic options which they may take, as appropriate, in the elaboration and adoption of their energy policies and in strengthening regional cooperation in the field of energy. The Strategy envisages that, in defining their national energy policies, the BSEC Member States will take into account, *inter alia*, such common objectives as:

- respect for the principles of sustainable development;
- ensuring efficient use of domestic energy resources and alternative sources of energy;
- focus on conservation of energy, particularly on energy efficiency;
- integrating energy policy with climate policy, as a major priority;

- focus on environmental protection in order to manage the environmental problems arising from the exploitation and transportation of energy sources, particularly with regard to the Black Sea;
- introduction of cleaner energy systems;
- increased resort to renewable forms of energy.

In their Meeting in Nafplion (Greece) on 12 October 2010, the Ministers of Energy of the BSEC Member States focused on green development and renewable energy sources and, as a consequence, a Task Force of BSEC Organisation is in the process of being set up, with the aim: to identify common aspects of the green growth policies pursued by each Member State and specify relevant issues within which regional cooperation can be most effective; to explore ways to promote green energy investments; to promote innovative green energy projects; and to facilitate the development of a network between administrative bodies in the Member States mandated to promote renewable energy sources and energy efficiency measures.

Thus, a new practical and most promising dimension is being added to the BSEC activities in order to advance regional cooperation in green energy.

As far as concrete projects are concerned, the financial resources available to BSEC as an organisation are rather limited. BSEC has two financial instruments:

- the Project Development Fund, which aims at facilitating the elaboration and promotion of projects with high regional cooperation impact, at the very early stage of their conception, offering grants in the amount of maximum 30,000 Euros per project, usually pre-feasibility studies;
- the Hellenic Development Fund, which became operational in 2010 and is currently examining the project applications submitted in response to its first Call for Proposals, issued in February 2010, with a budget of 400,000 Euros for projects in renewable energy sources and energy efficiency.

At the same time, BSEC has lent its cooperation to a number of regional projects concerning sustainable energy in the Black Sea area with the support of other international organisations and institutions.

One such important energy related project, launched in 2010, is a joint BSEC-GTZ (*Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit* of Germany) aimed at developing the legal framework for a green economy in the BSEC Member States.

A Joint BSEC-Energy Charter Conference on “Promoting Energy Security and Investment in the Black Sea Area: The Role of Multilateral Cooperation”, in cooperation with the *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung*/Ukraine, was organized in Odessa on 27 July 2010, with the participation of decision makers and experts in the region.

A Workshop on energy efficiency in cooperation with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources of the Republic of Turkey and the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) will be organized on 2-4 March 2011, in Ankara and Istanbul.

Need for synergies. Several other international organisations – International Energy Agency, the Energy Charter, the UN Economic Commission for Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe –, as well as several regional organisations – like the Regional Cooperation Council, the Central European Initiative, the South-East Europe Cooperation Process, the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, to mention only some of them – and also the European Union have undertaken action in the same areas.

There are also many initiatives aimed at bringing together key representative of governments, of business and scientific communities and of media with a view to helping the international community to tackle at national, regional and global level the unprecedented challenges it faces like climate change, volatility of fossil fuels prices, and energy poverty.

Referring again to the Black Sea area, three such initiatives are worth mentioning, given their impact on the regional cooperation in the field of sustainable energy.

One of them is the *Black Sea Energy and Economic Forum*, initiated by the Atlantic Council of the United States, aimed at fostering multilateral cooperation between stakeholders in the Euro-Asian space on energy policy issues and at promoting energy security, market based solutions, and an energy industry compatible with sustainable development. Conceived as an annual gathering of world policy leaders, business executives and prominent experts in the energy sector, offering a framework for informal consultations and exchanges on energy issues of regional and global interest, the Forum was launched in Bucharest in 2009, held its second meeting in Istanbul last autumn and envisages its third meeting later this year in Istanbul.

Another one is the *Regional Forum on Renewables in the Black Sea* launched in Bucharest on 8-10 November 2010, organized by the Romanian Association for Renewable Industry, the Romanian Alliance of Employers, the Romanian Federation for Energy, with the support of the Romanian Government, which decided to establish a Black Sea Regional Centre of Excellence on Renewable Energy with the purpose of stimulating measures and innovative mechanisms to promote renewable energy sources, including R&D, and meaningful regional cooperation on renewables.

On 26 November 2010, the *Black Sea Business Forum “The New Era of Green Entrepreneurship”* was organized in Thessaloniki, Greece, by the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises, Federation of Industries of Northern Greece and Enterprise Europe Network, with the support of the Hellenic Government, bringing together enterprises, unions and agencies in green development sector, policy makers, banks, international organisations and donors originating from, or operating in, the Wider Black Sea Region, in order to discuss and exchange views on a broad spectrum of fields – renewable energy sources, wind and solar power, photovoltaics, energy efficiency, biomass and bio-fuels, water management and waste-water treatment, and also sustainable tourism.

Among the initiatives of other regional organisation, a highly topical one is the *Sustainable Energy Development regional Initiative* (SEDRI), launched in Trieste

(Italy) at its first task force meeting held on 7-8 October 2010, co-organized by the Regional Cooperation Initiative and the Central European Initiative, involving six countries which are also members of the BSEC. It aims at promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy sources, as well as contributing to sustainable energy development and mitigating climate change in South-East and Eastern Europe.

The picture of the activities of international organizations and of the initiatives in the field of promoting sustainable energy is much larger and much more complex. BSEC and other regional and international organisations have a great potential in order to meet the energy cooperation needs of their Member States, both individually and jointly. This potential has only to be used, with the political will of the States concerned and based on an effort to identify their real needs and interests. To this effect, three basic principles need to be observed:

- coordinating activities;
- avoiding duplications;
- looking constantly to the general picture of the requirements of the sustainable economic growth.

It is important to create synergies between the activities undertaken in different international organizations. An effort in this direction would be most welcome in order to maximise benefits of available resources for the respective Member States. In this context, the current Preparatory Meeting of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, with the participation of representatives of some of these organisations, may contribute to identifying what each of the organisations can do, individually and together, for ensuring the needs of sustainable energy of their Member States. There is a lot to be learned and achieved by working together and here perhaps an organization like the OSCE could help and play a catalytic role.