

ICPS newsletter®

Four Seas: Different policies – common future

The last expansions of the European Union, which involved mostly Central European countries, not only created a broader Europe geographically. They have also had a considerable impact on a slew of strategic relations and politically affiliated regions. One of the main strategic outcomes for the EU has been access to the Black Sea and, along with that, becoming neighbor to new countries, the new opportunities that this entails—as well as new problems and challenges that need to be faced

Many seas, too many policies

The EU has no consistent policy regarding the Black, Baltic, Mediterranean and Caspian Seas. In order to institute more effective policy in the European Union, the first step has to be to analyze existing policies that extend to these four seas and other EU regional policies that have a distinct impact on neighboring countries. Preliminary analysis of policies and strategies related to these seas, like those related to the countries that border on them, shows that the **EU lacks a coordinated policy approach in these areas and a distinct, clear vision of the way its relations with these regions should evolve.**

Meanwhile, at the sub-regional level, intergovernment, interstate and non-government initiatives keep cropping up that, with time, as a rule, transform themselves into sub-regional organizations, such as the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the Center for European Initiatives. As time passes and they become full-fledged organizations, these initiatives take on various goals and objectives, such as strengthening democracy and security, increasing cross-border cooperation, and protecting the environment. In line with this, slews of new sub-regional policies are formulated that are generally directed at the same goals, and thus echo or even duplicate each other.

The European Union really needs to and wants to coordinate these policies and initiatives, as this would strengthen

and entrench its role around the Baltic, Mediterranean, Caspian and Black Seas.

Until now, EU policies and decisions have had an impact at the sub-regional level and on bilateral and multilateral relations in the various regions. However, they did not necessarily foster the development of new sub-regional initiatives. On the contrary, they sometimes even had a negative impact on such initiatives. Thus, the EU and all the marine states need to become aware of the needs, opportunities and challenges in the regions around their seas.

Four seas, four studies

After coming to an understanding of these problems, a group of 7 leading policy think-tanks formed a consortium: CIDOB (Barcelona), the Center for European Studies at the Middle East Technical University (Ankara), the International Center for Defense Studies (Tallinn), the International Centre for Policy Studies (Kyiv), the Istituto Affari Internazionali (Rome), the Institute of International Affairs and the Centre for Small State Studies at the University of Iceland (Reykjavik), and the General Secretariat of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (Renn). The consortium launched a project called “Four Seas” or EU4SEAS, in the context of which each of the four seas will be researched separately and a comparative analysis carried out.

Under the Four Seas project, both instituted and planned policies at the EU level and in marine countries will be examined closely. Project analysts will

apply comparative analysis to the four seas as well. Finally, the activities of sub-regional organizations in the four seas regions and their effectiveness will also be analyzed. Over the project, research will be carried out both geographically, that is, in relation to a given sea basin, and thematically across all four seas simultaneously. A set of views and understandings will be formulated during the course of the project in relation to all four seas on such issues as:

- political cooperation and security issues,
- the environment and marine problems,
- fossil fuels and transportation,
- the four freedoms (the free movement of people, goods, capital and services).

The project will involve professional analysts as well as representatives of governments of marine nations on the four seas. These will participate in round-tables and seminars and in discussions of the results of the studies. This should help orient policy recommendations for the seas to be oriented on dealing with real current needs.

The project has been divided into five parts:

- 1. The EU and Sub-regional Multilateralism** (CIDOB, Barcelona). In this part, interactions between the EU and sub-regional organizations will be examined. On 28–29 January, a discussion took place in Barcelona involving participants from partner organizations, outside experts and government officials. For the first time, representatives from all four marine basin countries got together around a single table. This allowed them to share their opinions of practice in the regions of their respective seas and the challenges that are being faced there.

2. Political Cooperation and Security issues

(Institute of International Relations, Rome). The theme of this part and of the seminar that will take place on 3–4 April in Rome is policy and security. Particular focus will be placed on the opportunities sub-regional organizations have to support peace in the four regions and to foster the development of better understanding among the countries in each basin. Attention will also be paid to the role of sub-regional organizations in supporting the carrying out of reforms and democratizing the regions, and their role in conflict resolution. The consequences of expanding the EU, strategies for candidate countries, and the neighborhood policy will be studied in detail and analyzed in the context of this section.

3. The Environment and Problems in the Seas

(Center for Small State Studies at the University of Iceland, Reykjavik). Analysis in all four seas is based more-or-less on the same agreements and specific practical programs, most of which have been operating for decades. On this issue, specific key EU policies operate in the four seas, with different effects on those basins. This part will analyze the concept and approach to each of the basins and undertake a comparative analysis of their actual states. This analysis should help discover best practice in carrying out environmental programs and policies in the four seas. A seminar and presentation of the story and best practice will take place in Reykjavik 27–28 May 2009.

4. Fossil Fuels and Transportation

(The Center for European Studies at the Middle East Technical University, Ankara). Fuel and transportation are at the center of considerable political tension in all four regions. Clearly, cooperation in these areas is extremely important for the EU. Fossil fuel reserves, especially those in the Caspian Sea, as well as transportation routes have a key role

in sub-regional cooperation when infrastructure for both fuels and transport has the potential to become a real consolidating factor and a spur to cooperate among countries in this region. Since there are already a number of clear documents already prepared on this issue, this study will raise clear, but also controversial questions. The results of the research will be presented at an expert round-table in Ankara in January 2010.

5. The Four Freedoms

(The International Centre for Policy Studies, Kyiv). Barriers that restrict the movement of people, such as visa requirements, have a direct impact on citizens. Barriers to economic exchange create gaps between the agreements different countries have made and their ability to carry such agreements out. This gets in the way of the successful integration of other countries at the sub-regional level. An assessment of EU regulations of internal markets, as well as additional regulation such as the Schengen Accord that have a considerable impact on the exercise of personal freedoms. For that reason, this part will analyze, firstly, the impact of trade and economic ties on integration and interaction among countries, and, secondly, the movement of people (including visa policy and border controls). Different situations in each of the basins, starting with the Baltics where all but one nation is a member of the EU and going to the Caspian, where there is not a single EU candidate country, will make it possible to study and determine different levels of integration into EU structures among the four marine regions. Discussions of this part and the results of research will take place in Kyiv in Summer 2010.

The consortium's experts will broadly disseminate the analytical reports they prepare under this project. Shortly, the project will launch a site on which all the analyses and final documents will be posted, as well as a schedule of the

project's milestones. All interested experts, government representatives, NGOs and academic professionals will be able to get these materials via electronic mail and to actively participate in the work during the discussion of research results or in seminars.

What does this offer Ukraine?

The consolidation of initiatives is strategically important for the Black Sea region. Ukraine has indicated its desire to take on a leadership role. After joining the EU, Rumania has also begun to take active part in the region. In addition, Russia and the EU have their policies and have been launching initiatives regarding this region. At this time, however, there is no understanding of the impact of all these various initiatives on the region and on its future.

At the same time, it makes sense to study, and possibly to learn something from, other seas. For instance, the Baltic Sea has been successful and effective in environmental issues, and has even been able to get Russia to go along. In the Mediterranean, there has been a huge number of initiatives from the EU and bordering countries that, while not effective, offer interesting institutional know-how.

No less important is the Caspian Sea, where cooperation shows that when there are common interests and goals, it is possible to instigate serious changes in cooperation in a short period of time. Last, but not least, it is important to evaluate what is actually going on in the Black Sea: how do sub-regional organizations operate, what is their impact, and how effective are they compared to public spending in support of their activities. Still, the real value of this project for Ukraine will be not just in the quality of the research, but in the ability of the Government to make use of these studies to develop public policy regarding the Black Sea region. ■

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