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REPORT*

“Shaping ecological awareness and behaviour in the BSEC Member States”

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** Text considered and adopted by the Thirty-Third Meeting of the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee in Thessaloniki on 22 October 2009 and approved by the Thirty-Fourth General Assembly in Moscow on 24 November 2009*

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In the 21st century environmental protection is considered an integral part of human welfare and well-being. The BSEC Member States are aware of the fact that the protection of the environment in the Black Sea region and its balanced and harmonious relationship with social needs and economic activity is a necessary precondition for achieving the target of sustainable development.

2. The BSEC region faces a range of global, regional and trans-boundary environmental challenges. Key issues include air and water quality, waste management, nature protection, industrial pollution and pollution of the Black Sea. Since the first years of its operation, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation has placed particular emphasis on environmental issues and adopted relevant Reports and Recommendations, among which : “Black Sea Environmental Health” (5/1994); Black Sea Environmental Protection: New Challenges (49/2001); Economic aspects of resolving environmental problems in the BSEC Member States (81/2005); Global Climate Change: Consequences for the BSEC Member States (99/2007). Furthermore, the PABSEC jointly organized with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe the *Inter-Parliamentary Conference on the Environmental Protection of the Black Sea* (Istanbul, 1996), which constituted an important step in reinforcing awareness on the environmental health of the Black Sea region.

3. Taking into consideration that environmental problems are the results of human behaviour and that social dimensions of these problems such as public participation and people’s attitudes towards environment are increasingly attracting attention of policy makers, the Committee decided to take up the subject of “Shaping ecological awareness and behaviour in the BSEC Member States” as the main agenda item of its 33rd Meeting.

4. The Rapporteur would like to thank the national delegation of Turkey and the Secretariat of the Black Sea Commission for their contribution to the Report. Reference material was also obtained through the PABSEC Secretariat from the official websites of UN agencies, EU institutions and relevant international organizations such as OECD, the Council of Europe, WWF etc.

II. ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS AND BEHAVIOUR IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

5. The wider Black Sea region constitutes one of Europe’s richest regions in natural heritage, hosting species and habitats that have disappeared elsewhere, or that are unique to this area. But the region faces major environmental challenges. The degradation of the Black Sea ecosystems and the unsustainable use of natural resources pose a major threat for the overall development of the region. Notwithstanding the great diversity of the twelve members of the BSEC in terms of natural conditions and socio-economic characteristics, all countries are facing similar ecological problems related to pollution (air, water and soil), nature conservation and biodiversity.

6. Among all common environmental problems of the twelve states, the pollution of the Black Sea itself and its coast has been of primary concern for the BSEC. The problem stretches far beyond the frontiers of the Black Sea itself as heavy pollution is caused by the Danube and other rivers (Dnieper, Dniester and Don) which bring down nutrients, oil, heavy metals etc. Apart from the rivers, pollution from land-based sources, the destruction of habitats, over-exploitation of marine living resources, and introduction of invasive species, together with pollution caused by the transportation of oil and other hazardous substances all adversely

affect ecosystem health and biodiversity in the Black Sea. Moreover, agricultural fertilizers, livestock manure and poorly treated sewage have created the phenomenon of eutrophication, one of the main threats that the Black Sea ecosystem continues to face.

7. Some of the environmental challenges that the region faces are inherited from the past or are due to the socio-economic decline of the 1990s that most of the region's countries underwent. In this context, environmental problems of the BSEC region often came together with economic problems of the transition period i.e. budgetary shortages and shortages on trained staff, in conjunction with low implementation of policy reforms and lack of awareness. Nevertheless, the economic downturn of the 1990s and the decline in industrial production and intensive farming have at the same time contributed to the recent signs of environmental recovery in the Black Sea region.

8. Since the beginning of the decade the BSEC region has been experiencing rapid economic growth with GDP exceeding pre-transition levels in a number of countries. In the future, environmental pressures may grow with increasing wealth. Rapid changes in lifestyle, particularly in urban areas, are already noticeable. This can be seen in increasing ownership of private cars, the growing quantity and variety of available imported goods, and in the increasing quantities of waste generated. At the same time public services, including public transport, district heating and waste and recycling systems established under a central planning system, have significantly deteriorated and declined.

9. The major challenge created by the economic recovery is for all member states to tackle the new pressures on the environment by loosening the link between economic growth and environmental impacts from production and consumption, resource use and waste generation. This requires dramatic changes in the ways societies and citizens manage biodiversity and the wastes and by-products of production and consumption. What is more, it requires changes in the consumption patterns themselves.

10. Enhancing environmental awareness and behaviour is a key to attaining economic growth and social change which improve the quality of life, and not only concentrate on the increasing level of individual consumption, with the related negative environmental impacts.

11. The current world economic crisis bears once again the danger of low prioritisation of nature conservation, resulting in little effort being invested by states in the enforcement of legislation or in providing adequate funding towards conservation. This tendency may be reinforced by the usual perception of environmental quality as a luxury good that becomes of concern only when basic needs have been met.

12. A Eurobarometer survey on Europeans' attitudes towards climate change commissioned by the European Parliament and the European Commission was carried out in January and February 2009. When looking at the total aggregate of respondents' answers to what they consider to be the most serious problems, climate change is still seen as one of the top three most serious problems facing the world today, though the seriousness of this issue (as with many other world problems) has declined in the face of the economic downturn, which dominates public opinion (and perceived concerns).

13. What is the real impact of financial constraints when it comes to ecological awareness and behaviour? Research has shown that, although large scale environmental defensive activities are likely to be influenced by the level of income in a country (e.g. wealthier countries are more likely to have the resources to deal with environmental protection), ecological

awareness and individual involvement in environmental protection might exist independently of the level of economic development. The degree of urbanization, the level of subjective well-being and the level of income equality have direct effects on awareness, while education and population pressure are significantly correlated with environmental behaviour.

14. According to the above mentioned survey, respondents with a longer education feel well informed about climate change (its causes, consequences and the ways of fighting it), consider this phenomenon to be a very serious problem and are more inclined to believe that climate change is serious, that the process of it can be stopped, that alternative fuels should be used to fight it and that fighting climate change would impact the European economy positively than respondents who spent shorter time within education, who rather feel ill-informed about the subject or do not think that climate change is a serious problem. Respondents representing the former groups are also more likely than those in the latter to have taken personal action against climate change or to know that CO₂ emissions do not have a merely marginal impact on climate change.

A. Public perception of environmental status, causes and responsibilities in the Black Sea

15. A more general picture about the levels of awareness - this time in the Black Sea littoral states- is presented by a regional survey of public opinion undertaken on the causes, status and perceived responsibilities for environmental problems of the Black Sea, conducted in July 2006 in the framework of the UNDP-GEF Black Sea Ecosystem Recovery Project (BSREP). Over 400 people were randomly questioned from coastal cities and towns including: Sochi, Novorossiysk and Anapa in Russia; Odessa and Nikolaev in Ukraine; Varna in Bulgaria, Constanza in Romania; Trabzon, Ordu, and Zonguldak in Turkey; and Batumi, Kobuleti, Poti and Grigoleti in Georgia. The survey was organized through regional environmental NGOs.

16. Over 90% of all respondents from coastal towns and cities around the Black Sea said the health of the Black Sea was important to them personally, with almost 70% stating that responsibility for the Sea's problems should be shared by all coastal and Danube countries. Most people felt that protecting the Black Sea was a responsibility that should be shared between national governments (27%) coastal municipalities (26%) and all individuals living along the coast (21%). However, almost a third of people questioned thought the Sea was either completely dead (14%) or the most polluted sea in Europe (19%). Nearly half of respondents (46%) felt it was "only occasionally polluted in certain places", but only 6% of respondents felt it was healthier than it used to be.

17. Nearly a quarter of people thought the main barrier to protecting the Black Sea was still a lack of public awareness of the problems and their impacts. Most people felt the factors having the biggest impact on the health of the Black Sea were: pollution from factories (21%), untreated sewerage (13%), rubbish and litter (13%), and the over development of coastal areas (12%). Only 9% of people felt that poor agricultural practices were having a negative impact on the health of the Black Sea. In the survey only 7% of respondents viewed overfishing as a leading cause of damage to the Black Sea environment and only 13% said they would consider not buy threatened fish species.

18. When asked why they thought the health of the Black Sea was important the highest response was because of the need to protect it for future generations (27%), followed by the need to protect marine species (23%). Another 22% of people felt it was important to protect the Sea because of holiday and recreation opportunities. Most people associated the Black Sea

with holidays/recreation (34%) and fishing (20%) but the next highest factor associated with the Black Sea was ‘pollution and litter’ (19%), ahead of marine life (18%) (See Annex I).

19. The Black Sea Ecosystem Recovery Project also provides us with a comprehensive *stakeholders analysis* which involved conducting quantitative surveys of representatives of 42 stakeholder groups throughout the region. The respondents represented ministries, state agencies, parliamentary committees, non-governmental organizations, scientific institutions, industries, local government and communities, press and media. This analysis aimed at identifying stakeholders of the BSREP and providing insights into the concerns, priorities, capacities and perceptions of stakeholder groups throughout the region in regards to specific transboundary environmental issues.

20. The analysis revealed that 61% of respondents considered the Black Sea to be unhealthy and, surprisingly, over 70% of people thought the environmental health of the Black Sea region to be more important than economic development. The vast majority of respondents agreed that the Sea was polluted and that regional cooperation was important to address this issue. A considerable majority also agreed that preserving endangered fish species was more important than meeting market demand for seafood. Some 80% of respondents thought that if people knew more about the causes of environmental problems they would want to make changes to improve things. The researchers found that the results are encouraging, but reveal that further environmental education is required (See Annex II).

B. From environmental concern to actual environmental behaviour

21. While the above mentioned surveys show positive trends in environmental awareness, at least in terms of acknowledging the danger and the importance of concerted action and cooperation, there is a clear need for more information about the causes of environmental degradation and the concrete ways this could be stopped. Moreover, notwithstanding the general willingness to improve the environment, things are different when it comes to personal environmental involvement and commitment. Citizens are not always ready to translate pro-environmental concerns into acceptance of far-reaching environmental policy measures. In both developed and developing countries people seem to prefer voluntary lifestyle changes. Consistency between ecological consciousness and ecological behaviour is fairly modest since only a minority of the people behaves consistently with their attitudes.

22. Going back to the Eurobarometer survey on climate change, we see that climate change is seen to be particularly serious for respondents in Greece, compared to other EU countries. More than eight in ten (83%) feel that the seriousness of climate change has not been exaggerated (EU average: 65%) and 78% believe that the process of climate change can be stopped (EU average: 62%). As for the question whether they have taken personal measures to fight climate change, only 58% could respond positively.

23. In newer EU members Romania and Bulgaria as well as in Turkey, citizens admit not being well informed about the causes, consequences and ways of combating climate change. This then leads to citizens from these countries either not personally taking action against climate change, or not being able to say whether they are taking any action. At least one in five citizens can not say whether they have taken actions aimed at helping to fight climate change, which is well above the EU average of 7%.

24. While evaluating the above data, it should also be taken into consideration that: a) environmentally relevant behaviours (e.g. transportation, energy use, recycling, household

purchases, political activism) do not form a consistent and coherent pattern. Practice of one type of ecologically conscious behaviour does not predict engagement in another; b) People with a positive environmental consciousness can find themselves in circumstances that do not allow them to behave ecologically, because of lack of, or insufficient infrastructure for ecological behaviour.

C. Environmental Education (EE) or Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)?

25. It is a common ground that educational initiatives can increase awareness and promote environmentally-responsible behaviour. Environmental education is generally included in the policy documents of the education and environment ministries and well established in the education systems of the BSEC Member States. Training of teachers and education specialists on EE as well as methodological guidance on environmental education contributes to a rapid improvement of EE practice. Environmental education is present in all higher education systems, but still needs to be further expanded in primary and secondary schools.

26. A lack of conceptual separation between education for sustainable development and environmental education is the case for a large part of the region. EE still tends to be identified to teaching biology or ecology, which means that it relies mainly on scientific and technical approaches to finding solutions for environmental problems, rather than on active citizen participation, changes in human behaviour, or consumption and production patterns. There is a strong need to promote ESD as a means to form values regarding the key issues of sustainability and the environment as well as new attitudes and skills to live sustainably. Furthermore, rather than being restricted to formal education or to school children and young people, ESD needs to be seen as a continuing education involving broad public awareness-raising and education on environmental management and sustainable development for all ages.

27. In the framework of implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development, hearings, meetings and consultations at the national level, the creation of inter-sectoral structures (councils, commissions) and the organization of sub-regional conferences on education for sustainable development pave the way to a transition to ESD in the BSEC region.

28. In this direction, international projects and NGOs are carrying out non-formal educational activities partly supported by the governments such as awareness-raising campaigns for the public and for policy-makers, summer camps and education tools such as the Green Pack. Introduced by the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe as an innovative multimedia environmental education kit, the Green Pack interprets the political messages on sustainable development adapting them for teachers and students. Its use started from Bulgaria in 2002 and gradually expanded in Albania, Serbia, Russia, Turkey and Azerbaijan.

D. Access to environmental information and public participation in environmental decision-making

29. Environmental information is needed to support policy development and implementation, guide allocation of financial resources, support environmental democracy and raise environmental awareness. Public access to quality environmental information helps to promote accountability of policy-makers and is a key tool for making related public services more responsive to citizens' needs. What is more, information is needed to support

international negotiations and implementation of international agreements dealing with transboundary issues.

30. While collection of environmental data is not a new practice for BSEC countries, institutional co-ordination is often loose, which results in incompatible data. In Armenia, the World Bank has analysed how to promote stronger environmental information sharing with the public, particularly in the area of biodiversity and protected areas, and concluded that the limiting factor is not the lack of raw information. Rather, there are problems with getting the information together (lack of systematisation, information scattered across institutions, restricted information flows) and not knowing what to do with the information (absence of communication strategies, unclear target audiences). These problems are the key barriers to making environmental information work, in this case to promote environmental awareness (Source: UNEP, 2005). Establishment of inter-agency monitoring commissions is a reported policy response in several member states. Furthermore, environment ministries are making increasing use of websites to disseminate information and raise awareness. Communications departments are producing and disseminating many communications materials, using prints, electronic and broadcast media.

31. Public participation in environmental decision-making is not only a necessary precondition for achieving progress in the development and implementation of policies for environmental sustainability, but also a motivation tool for ecological involvement and behaviour. Most BSEC Member States have accepted obligations in this field under the Aarhus Convention, to which reference is made in section III of this report. Most countries have developed structures and instruments to support public participation in decision-making. Environment ministries in all member states have launched advisory boards with NGO participation which operate on a permanent or ad hoc basis.

III. REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

32. *At the global level, the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), spanning from 2005 to 2014, is led by UNESCO. On 22 December 2004, the UN Assembly invited Governments to promote public awareness and wider participation in the DESD, including cooperation with and initiatives engaging civil society and other relevant stakeholders. The DESD aims at changing the approach to education so that it integrates the principles, values and practices of sustainable development. Its primary goal is to: “encourage Governments to consider the inclusion [...] of measures to implement the Decade in their respective education systems [...] and national development plans.” (United Nations General Assembly resolution 59/237). The DESD goals can be broken down into four key objectives:*

- Facilitating networking, and collaboration among stakeholders in ESD;
- Fostering greater quality of teaching and learning of environmental topics;
- Supporting countries in achieving their millennium development goals through ESD efforts;
- Providing countries with new opportunities and tools to reform education.

33. *The International Year of Biodiversity (2010) and the International Year of Forests (2011), proclaimed by the UN General Assembly on 20 December 2006, provide an opportunity for the BSEC Member States to increase awareness of the importance of biodiversity and forest management respectively, by promoting actions at the local, regional and international levels. In this respect, countries are encouraged to promote voluntary partnerships among themselves, international organizations and major groups, including by creating national committees or designating focal points.*

34. *At the regional level, the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention)¹ is based on the principle that the serious environmental, social and economic challenges faced by societies worldwide cannot be addressed by public authorities alone without the involvement and support of a wide range of stakeholders, including individual citizens and civil society organizations. The Convention grants the public rights and imposes on Parties and public authorities obligations regarding access to information and public participation and access to justice. The Aarhus Convention is also forging a new process for public participation in the negotiation and implementation of international agreements. All BSEC Member States except Russia and Turkey are parties to the Aarhus Convention.*

35. Of relevance to the countries covered by the Black Sea Synergy of the EU, the Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme 2007-2013 (Black Sea JOP) is a programme under the European Neighbourhood & Partnership Instrument (ENPI). The overall objective of the Black Sea JOP is to achieve stronger regional partnerships and cooperation by contributing to a stronger and more sustainable economic and social development of the regions of the Black Sea Basin in line with the Black Sea Synergy. The programme's three specific objectives are: 1.Promoting economic and social development in the border areas; 2.Working together to address common challenges; 3.Promoting local, people-to-people cooperation. The projects will be jointly submitted and implemented by partnerships that will always involve partners from one or several EU Member States (Bulgaria, Greece, Romania) and from one or several partner countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine) and/or Turkey.

Among the priorities of the Black Sea JOP is sharing resources and competencies for environmental protection and conservation through the following measures:

- Strengthening the joint knowledge and information base needed to address common challenges in the environmental protection of river and maritime systems
- Promoting research, innovation and awareness in the field of conservation and environmental protection for protected natural areas
- Promoting cooperation initiatives aimed at innovation in technologies and management of solid waste and wastewater management systems

36. The Regional Environmental Center (REC) network covers almost all the BSEC Member States. The REC aims at promoting cooperation among governments, non-governmental organisations, businesses and other environmental stakeholders, and by supporting the free exchange of information and public participation in environmental decision making. Among its ongoing activities, the seminar series: Partnerships for sustainable development – Sustainable public policies and business practices for Black Sea Countries are being developed by the Regional Environmental Center (the REC) together with Venice

¹ The **UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters**, usually known as the **Aarhus Convention**, was signed on 25 June 1998, in the Danish city of Aarhus. It entered into force on 30 October 2001. As of August 2009, it had been signed by 40 (primarily European and Central Asian) countries and the European Community and ratified by 43 countries and the EC. A **Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers** to the Aarhus Convention was adopted at an extra-ordinary meeting of the Parties on 21 May 2003, in Kiev. 38 States and the European Community signed the Protocol. As of August 2009, 19 countries and the European Community had ratified the Protocol. The Protocol will enter into force on 8 October 2009.

International University and Istanbul Bilgi University. The seminar series is intended to bring together different stakeholders in upper management and to enable a platform of sharing and partnerships towards attaining the goal of sustainable development. The seminars will take place in Istanbul in September 2009 and in Venice in October 2009.

37. The Commission for the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution is the body responsible for implementing the Bucharest Convention for the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution signed in 1992 by the six coastal countries. The Black Sea Commission (BSC) works on promoting the collaboration between national governments, non-governmental organizations and other regional projects and organizations. The BSC has been working closely with key partners such as the UNDP/GEF Black Sea Ecosystem Recovery Project (BSERP), which further promoted BSC's role in regional cooperation to protect the Black Sea environment. It is also working with partners such as the Black Sea NGO network to help raising public awareness and understanding of the main environmental issues facing the Black Sea. The BSC is the main supporter of the International Black Sea Action Day, which is celebrated every year on 31 October to mark the signing of the Strategic Action Plan in 1996.

38. Within the BSREP, various communication activities such as production of materials, brochures, media coverage and discussions and contacts with key stakeholders throughout the region enforced the objectives of raising awareness and creating greater support from key decision-makers within national and local governments for regional cooperation to protect the Black Sea from pollution, over-fishing and unsustainable coastal development. The main communication activity of the project has been the celebration of the international Black Sea Day. During 2006 and 2007 major campaigns were initialized at national and regional level through a collaborative effort among all the regional organizations, NGOs, national government agencies and coastal municipalities working together. Regional NGO implementation Teams have assisted BSERP to organize public activities included national and regional events, beach clean-ups, competitions, concerts, media events and public meetings.

39. BSERP and BSC worked together with Television for the Environment to develop and produce a television documentary on environmental threats to the Black Sea and progress on tackling these over the last decade, to be shown on BBC World as part of the 'Earth Report' series. This investigates the changes that have taken place during the intervening period. Filming took place in Bulgaria, Georgia, Turkey and Ukraine in 2007. The documentary that was called 'The Sea that Nearly Died' was broadcasted on BBC World in May 2007.

40. In the field of environmental education, BSERP and BSC cooperated on the development of the Black Sea Environmental Education Study Pack targeted at teachers but also including material that can be distributed to the students. During the period 2002-2008, the Study Pack was gradually updated and designed for sponsorship of a wide educational campaign for children in the Black Sea countries. The second edition of the ESP is available in English and Russian languages. The upcoming project of BSC in this field is an interactive Study Kit that will include interactive educational materials, a teacher's guide, posters, leaflets and related games to attract the attention of school children between 9-12 years of age. The goals of the Kit are to: a) raise awareness about the values of Black Sea; b) develop a tool for the riparian countries translated into national languages; c) support teachers with innovative and well-proven material; d) motivate for responsible behaviour.

The BSEC framework

41. The general framework of cooperation within the BSEC in the sphere of environmental protection is set by the “**BSEC Action Plan for Cooperation in the field of Environmental Protection**” which was adopted in 2006. In the context of the Action Plan, the national programs and measures of the BSEC Member States shall be supplemented by regional cooperation. As far as Environmental Education and Training are concerned, the Action Plan specifies as follows:

“The BSEC Working Group on Environmental Protection shall explore the means to design appropriate joint environmental projects, programs, courses, workshops and scientific conferences, taking into consideration the framework of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development and the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development”.

42. In the field of environmental information, an important development is the adoption by the BSEC Council (Belgrade, 19 April 2007) of a decision regarding the establishment of the **BSEC Information Exchange Mechanism for Environmental Protection**. The Council approved the gradual establishment of a BSEC Information Exchange Mechanism for the Environmental Protection, as an effective instrument for sharing information, experience and best practices among the BSEC Member States. For the implementation of this long-term goal requiring technical and financial national efforts, technical expertise and a sustainable information exchange network, the Council identified the steps to be undertaken:

a) PERMIS shall upgrade its website and create an initial BSEC Information System for the Environmental Protection, based on the contributions of the BSEC Member States with information on:

- Links to governmental organizations, ministries or environmental agencies; national legislation;
- Key/contact persons (expert level) willing to provide necessary information on general issues related to environmental protection;
- Links to the Chamber of Commerce, business and professional associations (private sector) for data and information on best practices, ecological technologies and products;
- Existing national reports on the State of the Environment.

b) Each BSEC Member State shall identify its priority sectors and the information to be included in the BSEC Information Exchange Mechanism for the Environmental Protection, eventually by carrying out feasibility studies, and appoint contact persons in charge of collecting, disseminating, processing and exchanging data and information. Importance will be given to the business and economic approach, as well as to information related to economic activities with environmental impact such as: regional projects with heavy environmental impact; environmental sound business opportunities; innovative environmentally friendly and resource saving technologies.

Based on the contributions of the BSEC Member States provided so far, the Permanent International Secretariat has created the initial “**BSEC Information System for Environmental Protection**”.

43. In September 2007, an event that was the first of its kind marked the beginning of a more active involvement of the BSEC observer states in the enhancement of cooperation in the field of environmental protection. BSEC and the United States government held in the BSEC Headquarters the Joint BSEC-USA Symposium on “BSEC Environmental Protection for Economic Growth: Best Practices Exchange”, bringing together government officials as well

as representatives from the private and non-governmental sectors of the twelve BSEC Member states. The symposium was designed to explore the nexus between environmental protection and economic growth and development in the wider Black Sea region. In the framework of this event, a brochure including electronic material on best practices exchange was published in English and Russian.

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

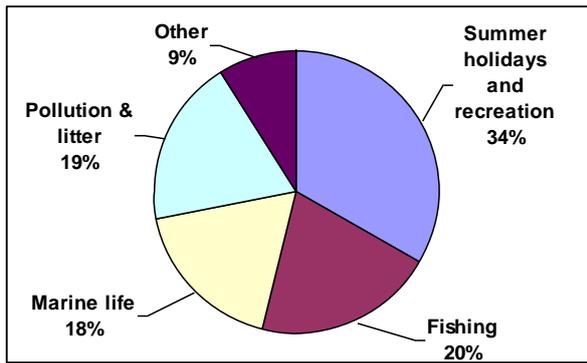
44. In recent years, a growing number of active citizens worldwide is mobilised to participate in the electoral process also on the basis of the positions of political parties on ecological issues. There is an increasing awareness of the fact that the human-induced environmental destruction threatening natural resources is a reality that calls for action in concert and with a sense of urgency. Enhanced awareness which actually translates into ecological behaviour is the key to inverting this destructive process.

45. The economic growth experienced by the BSEC Member States following the economic decline of the 1990s is expected to increasingly add to environmental pressures. It is already intensifying resource consumption, driving land cover change, and generating waste. But rising incomes can also bring investments in environmental improvement. Strategies for strengthening administrative capacity and governance locally and nationally and enforcing legislation cannot succeed without quality environmental education and enhanced public involvement in environmental decision-making.

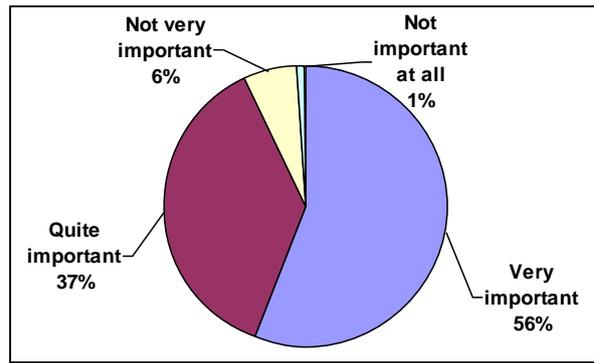
46. More efforts are needed in order to inform the public opinion on the causes of human-engendered environmental degradation and the ways this could be tackled through personal action. In this direction, BSEC Member States could place greater emphasis on promoting Education for Sustainable Development. Promoting ethics and values related to consumerism, human health and the environment, citizens' rights, and responsibility for the earth's future should be targeted to children as much as to adults.

47. Regional cooperation is particularly important when it comes to jointly address environmental issues. Addressing common environmental problems in the BSEC region offers opportunities for fostering regional dialogue and exchange. Involving the public in this process by raising awareness and enhancing participation in solving local and regional environmental problems could contribute to building a strong regional identity. The parliaments of the BSEC Member States are well placed to promote greater understanding of environmental issues among their citizens and mobilise them towards active participation in this unifying purpose.

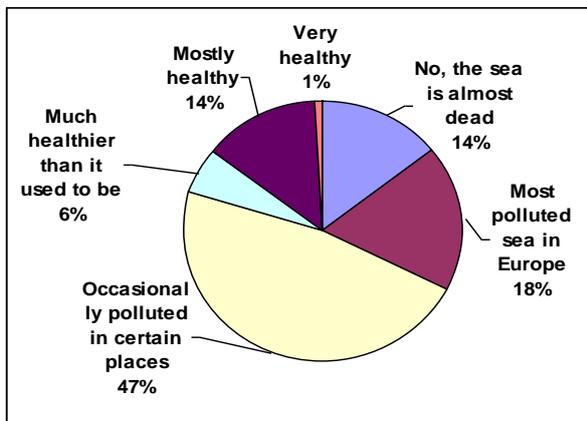
What do you most associate the Black Sea with?



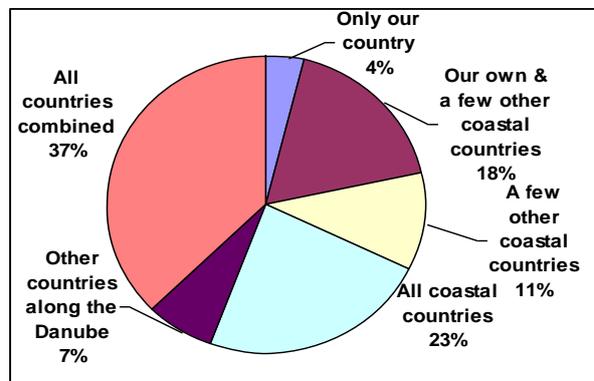
Is the health of the Black Sea important to you?



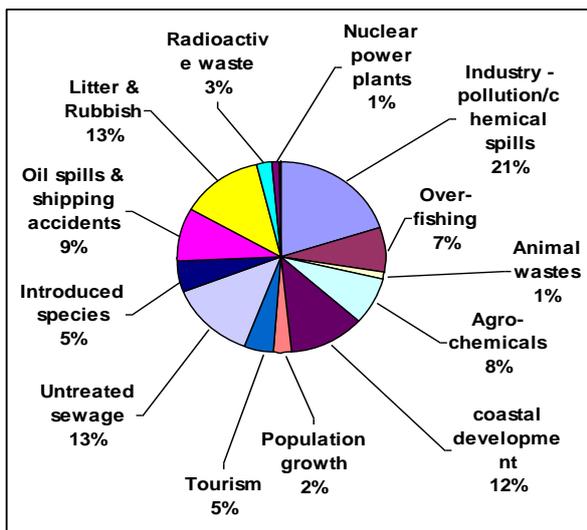
Do you think the Black Sea is healthy?



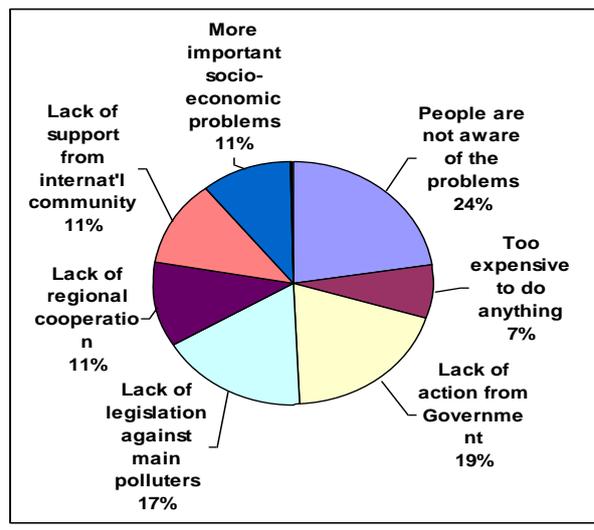
Which countries are the main polluters of the Black Sea?



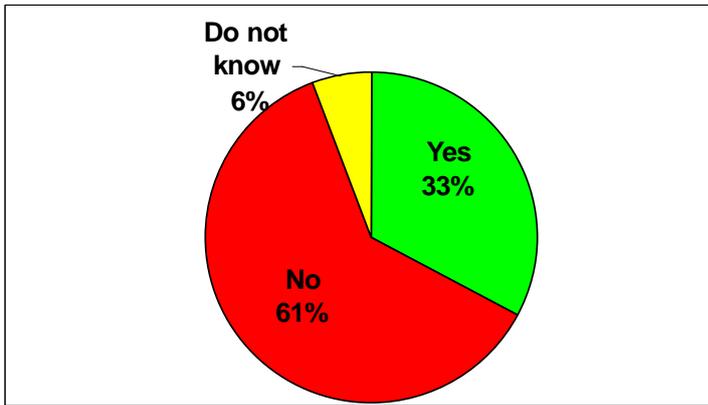
What are the main causes of damage to the Black Sea?



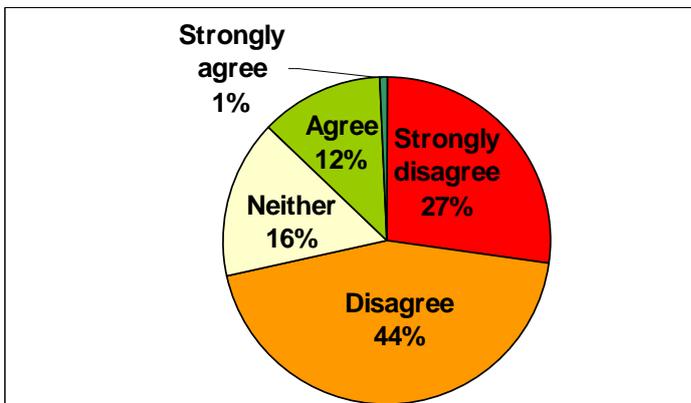
What are the main barriers to protecting the Black Sea?



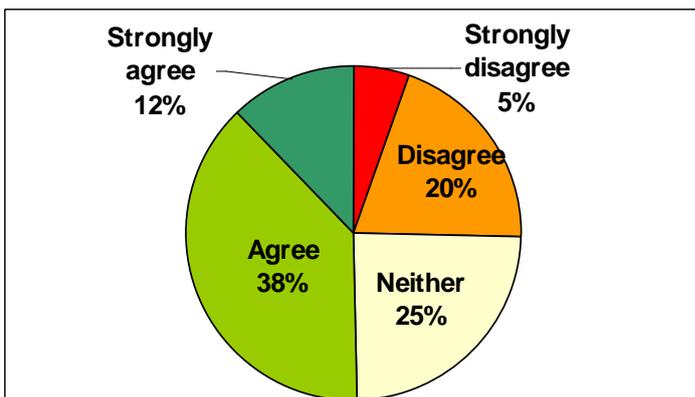
Data source: BSERP, Black Sea Commission (2006)



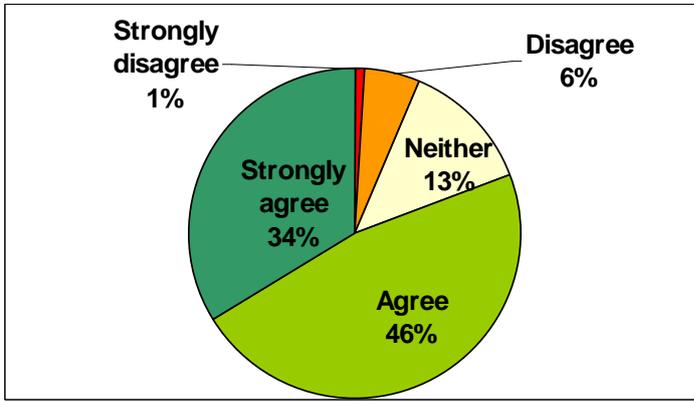
Stakeholders' responses to the question: "Is the Black Sea healthy?"



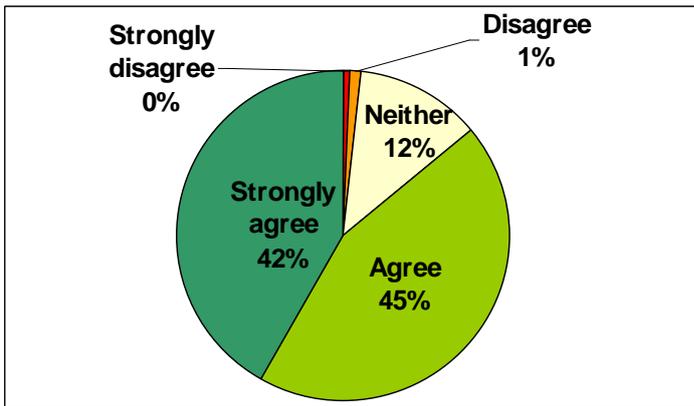
Stakeholders' responses to the statement: "economic development now is more important than the environmental health of the Black Sea region"



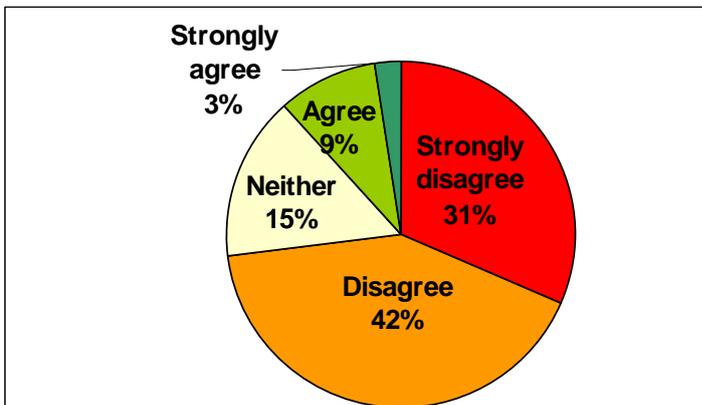
Stakeholders' responses to the statement: "most other people believe that meeting short term economic needs is more important than long term environmental concerns"



Stakeholders' responses to the statement: "if people knew more about the causes of environmental problems they would want to make changes to improve it"



Stakeholders' responses to the statement: "regional cooperation of countries around the Black Sea can improve conditions in my community"



Stakeholders' responses to the statement "meeting market demand for fish now is more important than preserving some species"

Data source: BSERP, Black Sea Commission (2006)