



CONFERENCE OF PERIPHERAL MARITIME REGIONS  
**BALKAN & BLACK SEA  
REGIONAL COMMISSION**



## 2014 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### CPMR BALKAN & BLACK SEA REGIONAL COMMISSION

## MINUTES

# WORKING GROUP ON BUSINESS COOPERATION

### Kick-off meeting

13 June 2014, Edirne (TR)

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**Mr Berkol Alevli**, Adviser to the BBSRC, Coordinator of Sinop Investment Support Office, North Anatolian Development Agency (TR), welcomed the participants to the kick-off meeting of the Working Group (hereinafter WG) on Business Cooperation and gave the floor to the CPMR Secretary General, Mrs Eleni Marianou.

**Mrs Eleni Marianou**, Secretary General of the CPMR, welcomed the participants, highlighting the importance of the Balkan and Black Sea Regional Commission as a bridge between people, cultures and economic development in particular. She stated that the collaboration of the private sector with public authorities is very important and that we will try to achieve it here with the different nationalities and experiences that we all have. The answers retrieved from the released questionnaire as well as the exchange of ideas will help us develop a productive WG and get some proposals that we can possibly promote within the Union and beyond, with the European Institutions and the other international organisations.

**Mr Berkol Alevli**, presented the [terms of reference](#) of the WG on Business Cooperation, led by the Province of Sinop (TR). The issues covered in this WG are economy, business relations, development and investments.

**Mr Recep Zıpkıncı**, President of Edirne Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TR), welcomed the participants and recalled that the European integration of Turkey remains a goal. Mr Zıpkıncı underlined the Turkish interest in collaboration with the EU and the other countries of the Balkans and the Black Sea, in order to promote peace and stability in the region. He also mentioned the need for local and regional cooperation between official authorities and civil society, aiming to foster peace, security, democracy and socioeconomic development. As a supporter of collaboration he stated the need for regional integration, joint projects and enhancement of cultural and economic ties. According to the President of Edirne Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the visa issue is a main obstacle that we should deal with, because “there is no money without trade, which promotes relations, and there is no trade without visit”.

**Mr Berkol Alevli**, presented the [work plan](#) of the WG and the results of the [questionnaire](#) released by the Business Cooperation WG, regretting the fact that it did not receive enthusiastic response. However, he mentioned the desire of the BBSRC WGs to work closely with the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and he highlighted the importance to the BBSRC of following the Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) and Transnational Programmes, in order to prepare concrete proposals for projects.

**Mrs Eleni Marianou** underlined the NGOs that Mr Recep Zipkinkurt mentioned during his speech and wondered what sort of NGOs would be useful for this type of work and to what extent the different partners (public authorities, private sector, SMEs) can collaborate together. Even if a sector is competitive, we still have cooperation elements and thus two types of activities. Ms Marianou raised the issue of the problems of creating economic development at legislative or institutional level, and red tape. Members exchange experience, and define the sectors for collaboration with the BSEC, within the work programmes of the transnational programmes. One can gather experts around a table, but one still needs to be as specific as possible about work activities and the timetable, and then take small steps.

**Mr Apostolos Papafotiou**, Deputy Regional Governor of Peloponnese (GR), thanked for the information and mentioned some obstacles both at national and regional level, such as the “endless bureaucracy.” We have to work to overcome mutual bureaucracy and other obstacles in each country. Overcoming them depends on us, on the way we are working and on the mentality of the people. We have to know how to overcome the stereotypes that follow us.

**Mrs Eleni Marianou** underlined the access to finances for SMEs, because liquidity is missing across Europe. SMEs’ access to finance is an issue and it is important to address this element in your work activities. Entrepreneurship is important, but how does one actually finance these ideas and how does one sustain SMEs in the sectors of interest.

**Mr Recep Zipkinkurt** answered that in Turkey much importance is given to projects concerning youth and women’s associations.

**Mr Berkol Alevli** underlined the importance of macrofinances to SMEs, pointing out the good examples to analyze within this very WG. He expressed the hope that the problems and solutions that we propose will be heard by important institutions in Europe. Finally, he thanked all participants for their attention.