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The EU and sub-regional multilateralism in Europe's sea basins: neighbourhood, enlargement and multilateral cooperation

Reporting

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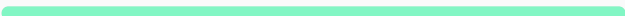
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Final Report Summary - EU4SEAS (The EU and sub-regional multilateralism in Europe's sea basins: neighbourhood, enlargement and multilateral cooperation.)

Executive Summary:

The choice of EU4Seas partners to study the EU's performance in relation to its commitment to 'promote multilateral solutions to common problems', as stated in article 21 of the Treaty on European Union, was never an obvious one. Rather than studying the performance of the EU within global multilateral agreements such as the UN or the WTO, EU4Seas focused on a seldom studied expression of multilateralism: sub-regional cooperation around Europe's seas. Thus, the impact of EU's actions was evaluated in relation not to larger multilateral agreements, nor to similar regional institutions (such as the African Union or the Gulf Cooperation Council), but to smaller, rather loose multilateral arrangements in its closest neighbourhood.

Three years of such research have yielded important results that contribute new insights into the extent to which the EU has proven able and willing to uphold its multilateral commitment but also, more generally, about the way in which the EU relates to its immediate neighbourhood. Additionally, EU4Seas has been the first major research into sub-regional multilateralism in Europe in more than a decade, and an unprecedented one in the scope of the empirical base of the research conducted. EU4Seas papers and the set of 400 interviews in 35 countries form the largest cohesive body of evidence and analysis on Europe's comparative sub-regionalism in a decade.

The research took place in a dynamic environment, with unforeseen change in the general European context and in the four sub-regional scenarios of the project. Scholars and practitioners in all of Europe, and even in the regions, had come to see sub-regionalism as an obsolete remnant of post-Cold War optimism. But, since the submission of EU4Seas proposal in autumn 2007, the political evolutions of the Mediterranean, Baltic, Caspian and Black Sea regions have included transformation, in some cases radical, and have proven that sub-regional approaches are still relevant and may have a role to play in the future.

Sub-regional multilateralism is weak and lowly institutionalised. The EU has supported some of its formal institutions, such as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Council of Baltic Sea States, and generally encouraged sub-regional cooperation. But the EU has not uniformly been a cohesive factor. Enlargement, for instance, diverted the attention of many countries away from their immediate neighbours, created new hard borders in areas like the Black Sea and a sense of exclusion of an important actor like Russia in the Baltic Sea. Differentiation between candidates, neighbours and a strategic partner has increased heterogeneity in the sub-regions. And, in some cases, geopolitical interest has come before the commitment to multilateralism, especially when sensitive issues like securing alternatives to Russian gas supply were at stake. In general terms, EU policies and strategies seem to have mostly either weakened sub-regionalism, rather than reinforce it, or captured it within EU institutional and bureaucratic logics, which results in a significantly decrease in ownership by non-EU states.

These failures are not necessarily policy ones and the EU may just be too large, too institutionalised and too integrated to allow for strong sub-regionalism to flourish on its fringes. The EU and its member states have proven a genuine commitment to at least the most visible forms of sub-regionalism, but the very policies of the EU carry a strong weight, one which witnesses the importance of the EU in the wider European space, but also one which leaves little space to smaller forms of multilateralism.

Project Context and Objectives:

EU4Seas was conceived in 2007, as part of a wider intellectual effort to have a better understanding of the EU's performance in relation to multilateralism. The choice of EU4Seas was to focus on multilateralism at a small scale in Europe's geographical fringes. The context in which the project was designed has significantly evolved in the last four years, and even though the main objective of the project has remained unaltered, the research questions and, in particular, some of the assumptions, had to be reviewed along the process. The project proposal stated that EU4Seas 'attaches great importance to the twin objectives of building a theoretical framework and providing a solid empirical base for the analysis of the relation between the EU and sub-regional multilateralism in Europe's closed sea basins, which can be useful both for further academic research and for policy-makers.' To achieve these two objectives, the research consortium had to take into account the transformations of the EU and its environment that impinged upon the substance of the project, and adapt the research strategy accordingly.

The three main factors altering the equation in which the research took place were the effects of the economic crisis on the EU's international standing, the institutional changes in the EU itself (in particular, in its external relations) and evolution of the neighbourhood of the EU. These three main factors, and the initial results of the research, made it advisable to adjust the focus of the research, in particular in the way of approaching the sub-regions, leaving behind the more institutional aspects that prevailed in the research proposal in favour of a more geopolitical view of the regions.

The EU in the world in times of crisis

EU4Seas started its activities in January 2009. At that time, the developed world had just averted a crisis of major dimensions, which had climaxed in October 2008 with the fall of Lehman Brothers. The EU was deeply involved in the crisis through its banking system, and with time emerged as the main loser in international standing, as the USA tackled the aftermath of that fateful autumn with more determination

and better results and large parts of the developing world emerged by and large unscathed by the global financial turmoil. Thus, the crisis accelerated the decline in relative influence of the European Union in the economic sphere, and that decline would soon find its expression in the political field.

This process became more evident in the following years. The financial crisis gave way to a downturn in the whole of the economy, which in turn put the public finances of the European countries under strain. The sovereign debt crisis that started to unfold in early 2010 holds the economic governance of the EU under unprecedented strain and threatens one of the EU's most admired successes, the Single Currency. Thus, the three years in which the research took place were times of steep decline in the fortunes of the European project, which were felt in its international standing and action.

The first way in which this affected the context of the research is the visible erosion of the attractiveness of the European model. European integration is no longer the paradigm of success and the blueprint for regionalism across the planet. Its weight in international multilateral forums is increasingly challenged, and other international actors are less eager to accept the unique character of the EU amongst regional organisations in the world, as proved by the bumpy road the EU had to follow in order to upgrade its status in the United Nations. The EU has seen its influence eroded by the emergence of groups like the G20 and the progressive transformations of institutions such as the International Monetary Fund. In its close neighbourhood, integration into the EU or close economic links are still attractive, but in public perceptions many have come to see it as the best available alternative, almost a lesser evil, rather than the most desirable outcome.

The second way in which the context has been transformed as a consequence of the EU crisis is the logical consequence of the point above. As the EU becomes less attractive, other alternatives appear more appealing. This means that painful harmonization of legislation and demanding EU conditionality are starting to be weighted against the benefits of looser forms of cooperation. It also implies that countries turn to other powers in the neighbourhood, such as Turkey and Russia, or beyond, China or the Persian Gulf, for investment, political support or inspiration in the modes of governance.

The third effect of the crisis that impinged upon the context of EU4Seas only started to be felt towards the end of the period. The rigid financial programming structure of the EU means that the economic instruments at the disposal of the EU institutions have stayed relatively stable. But the European private sector and some member states' governments have cut substantially their means of projecting their goals through financial means. That, in the short span of three years where the research took place, tended to reinforce the weight of common institutions but to weaken the influence of Europe as a whole.

Institutional changes in the EU

In November 2009 the Treaty of Lisbon entered into place, ending years of institutional debate that started with the Convention on the Future of Europe. One of the main novelties of the Treaty is a complete revamp of the institutional set-up for external relations. The redistribution of competences and the creation of the European External Action Service happened in parallel to the research. However, the four regions that are the object of study of EU4Seas continue to sit in between areas of competence of different institutional structures of the EU, as they include member states, actual or potential candidates, neighbours, a

strategic partner (Russia) and other third countries.

One month before, in October 2009, the same European Council that, under the Swedish Presidency, certified that the Treaty of Lisbon could come into force, had adopted the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, thus putting in place the first Macro Region in Europe. This created a new institutional framework for the Baltic but also a new approach that now brings numerous elements of 'internal' EU policies, such as regional policy and environment policy, under the frame of the European Commission's DG Regio. That example was followed in June 2011 by the Danube Macro-Region, which brought in candidates and potential candidates to EU membership. During this period, therefore, the institutional structures for better integration of internal policies with external ones (such as enlargement and neighbourhood) started to emerge.

A third institutional innovation of these three years with consequences in the research was the creation of two frameworks for dealing separately with the Eastern and the Southern neighbourhood. The Union for the Mediterranean was launched in Paris in July 2008, and came to existence exactly as the research started. In May 2009 the EU launched its Eastern Partnership together with six countries of Eastern Europe, thus acknowledging the need to differentiate them from the southern neighbours and to put in place a specific strategy for them. These novelties were taken into account in the conduct of the research, although their effective implementation has not advanced much, in particular in the case of the Union for the Mediterranean.

Finally, it is worth signalling the integration of two policies, Enlargement and Neighbourhood, under one single EU Commissioner. With the designation of Štefan Füle as EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy in 2010, the European Commission signalled its will to ensure a much stronger political coherence between the two strategies. The position was seen with suspicion by candidates and potential candidates, who feared that the heretofore strict boundary between countries with a European membership perspective and those without one may erode, and it was welcomed, for that very same reason, by neighbours whose European membership perspective had not been acknowledged by the EU (such as Moldova and Ukraine). In the event, Commissioner Füle has emerged as a second strong EU voice for those areas, often acting in tandem with EU High Representative Catherine Ashton in crucial issues such as EU reactions to the Arab Spring or the mediation in the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade. By the same token, though, the hope that a single political representative and a single structure would deal with the region were dashed.

A transformed Neighbourhood

However important the changes have been in the EU, the transformation of its neighbouring regions has been no less significant. As EU4Seas was being designed, the German Russian Nordstream project, envisaging an undersea gas pipeline specifically designed to circumvent Germany's EU Baltic partner's and Russia's western neighbours, arose a new interest in an area that, after the 2004 enlargement, many considered reliably stable and solidly grounded on friendly relations. No sooner had the research of EU4Seas started than another region witnessed a much more open escalation of rivalries culminating in the August 2008 Russo-Georgian war, which highlighted the radical transformation that the Black Sea was undergoing, and the need for new approaches to its governance. Energy and security issues were on the

spotlight, but they did not obscure a substantial increase in sub-regional economic flows of all kind, from tourists to investments, from trade to remittances. In summer 2009 widespread protest after the Iranian presidential election challenged the Caspian sub-regional order but failed to achieve political change. Democratic protestors did succeed in Tunisia in January 2011 and thus started a transformation of the Mediterranean sub-region that is still unfolding, not least as the sovereign debt crisis hits the EU's Mediterranean countries with unprecedented rigour. In the course of three years, the focus has changed from one region to another, each time proving that sub-regional approaches to the neighbourhood of the EU were not only useful, but indispensable to deal with rapid change, challenges and opportunities.

There are three important lessons from the last three years in the neighbouring countries that had to be taken into account. The first one is that progress towards better relations in neither unequivocal nor irreversible, and that countries can and do change course, altering sub-regional balances, as happened in Ukraine with the 2010 Presidential election or in Moldova with the 2009 Legislative election, in opposite directions. The second one is that stability and continuity is not better served by authoritarian regimes, as events in the southern Mediterranean have clearly proven in 2011, a lesson which should not be forgotten in the energy-rich Caspian region. The last one is that sub-regions can be as much as space for cooperation and mutual assistance as one for geopolitical competition and tensions, and that the EU is not necessarily perceived by external actors as contributing to the former and not the latter, as could be witnessed in the Black Sea region in those three years.

Adapting the approach to new realities

EU4Seas had to take into account all the changes outlined above and incorporate them into the topics for research, the seminars and the interviews. In addition to that, and by comparison to the project as it was negotiated and approved in 2008, the partners also had to readjust the focus of their research. The initial project attributed an important weight to the institutions of sub-regional cooperation. As the research proceeded and events unfolded, however, the partners realised that multilateralism at sub-regional level was not confined to the weak sub-regional institutions, and that sub-regional developments were a lot richer and more relevant than the absence of changes in those institutions would suggest.

As a result, the research adopted a sub-regional focus that was less institutional than initially envisaged at the level of the sub-region although the institutional approach remained central in the other part of the equation, the study of the EU and its policies. Such adaptation resulted in more substantive findings and, in particular, in conclusions that were relevant from a policy perspective to the region and to the external action of the EU.

With this exception, the initial design of the research was maintained and the objectives achieved to a satisfactory level. The partners adapted their work to a changing environment and, as a result, the outcomes of EU4Seas offer good elements to interpret not just the past evolution of the EU's impact of small-scale, sub-regional multilateralism on its fringes, but also the present moment, including the strengths and weaknesses of the current modes of engagement, strategic sub-regional approaches and institutional set-up.

Project Results:

The research approach and implementation

EU4Seas studied the relationship between the EU and multilateralism in four sub-regions in its periphery: the Baltic, Black Sea, Caspian and Mediterranean. According to the EU itself, "subregional initiatives could in the future attain an increasing role in the 'new' Europe, in the pursuit of a stable and integrated Europe" (COM(97) 2000 final). However, the effects of EU policies on sub-regionalism are far from homogeneously positive. Studying them is a good test to the EU commitment to promoting multilateralism not just at a global scale, but also in its fringes and its closest neighbourhood.

The collaborative approach that brought together eight centres that are located in all the four sub-regions allowed the EU4Seas team to produce a wealth of evidence that constitutes the basis for the largest study on European sub-regionalism in a decade and an innovative view of the interaction between a number of EU policies and strategies, on the one hand, and sub-regional institutions and looser forms of sub-regional cooperation. The design of the research was relatively straightforward: four thematic areas were chosen, and each area was researched for each of the four basins. The resulting matrix of results allowed for comparison between topics and between regions.

The team work was undertaken in a unified manner, and partners stayed active throughout the three years of the research and undertook similar activities on similar topics at the same time. Even before the start of the research, they put together a panel at the summer 2008 World International Studies Conference in Ljubljana that laid the ground for the project. Three years later, some of the researchers of EU4Seas met again at the following edition of the WISC, this time in Porto, to present some of the main results.

The pace of the research was established by the succession of six seminars. Each seminar had a specific role in the overall project. The first seminar laid the ground for the project with an in depth examination of sub-regional multilateralism and of the ways in which the EU interacts with it. The following four dealt with the four thematic areas of the project:

- political and security issues,
- environment and maritime policy,
- energy and transport, and
- free movement of people, goods, capital and services.

The last seminar of the project served to extract scientific conclusions and to compare the results in a geographical perspective. It was also the opportunity to extract policy conclusions of all the findings.

The seminars became points of reference for the study of sub-regionalism in the last three years. They brought together the researchers of the partnership with other academic researchers specialising in the theme of the seminar and practitioners from sub-regional organisations, EU institutions and national government. In addition to including some of those stakeholders as paper presenters, each seminar included one round table of practitioners that became a way of opening up the relatively narrow and specialised debates. The fact that they were conducted in all the regions meant that involvement of local researchers and national practitioners was direct in Spain, Italy, Iceland, Turkey, Ukraine and Estonia. Two additional dissemination events expanded the benefits of this outreach to stakeholders in Azerbaijan

and in Brussels.

The main product of the seminars was the papers, grouped in one series of EU4Seas working papers. All these working papers put together explore a diversity of topics and provide ample empirical and analytical detail. Some of the papers did not enter that series, as they were included individually or as group in referenced scientific publications. The papers are the main outcome of the project, but they in turn became the basis of two further steps in the research.

The papers and seminars were the basis on which the partners designed a collaborative exercise in interviews. The researchers from the project visited cities in 30 countries and made 400 interviews. They standardised the answers without turning simple questionnaires, and grouped the resulting reports into a single database that is now open and available for all researchers with an interest in sub-regional multilateralism, but also on the external aspects of a number of EU policies such as environment or free movement of people. The interviews served as the empirical material used for the papers produced at the later stage of the process, including working papers and also policy briefs. These policy briefs brought together the policy-relevant conclusions of the whole exercise and grouped them geographically and thematically. The result is a set of insightful views that address some of the main challenges that the EU faces in shaping its closest neighbourhood.

The research has produced a large body of evidence and analysis, and served to link active academics, stakeholders and analysts and bind them in a pan-European community of people interested in sub-regionalism. The EU4Seas webpage, and the newsletter that serves to publicise its new content, have become a valuable resource for all of them, as it groups not only the scientific and policy papers, but also interview reports and even a number of best practices that can be transferable from one sub-region to another. The main findings and conclusions of the project are outlined in the sections that follow.

Sub-regional multilateralism in Europe

Although European sub-regionalism can be traced back to the period right after WWII, with notable examples including the Nordic Council and the Benelux, it was the reconfiguration of the European map that took place after 1989 that provided the perfect opportunity for the emergence of sub-regional multilateralism in the form of agreements, summits and even institutions. Researchers took an interest in the phenomenon from the mid-1990s, and soon linked it to a number of factors: the need to reduce conflicts and rivalries, and avoid the resurgence of old grievances; the conformation of a post-bipolar identity for a number of old and new actors; the overwhelming challenge of globalisation for previously protected economies, and the need to cope with the collapse of the previous system in the Eastern half of the continent; and the creation of intermediate steps towards the ultimate aspiration of European integration.

All of these issues seemed relatively outdated when the EU (like NATO) finalised its big enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe and established a sort of hegemonic presence in the wider European space. As Enlargement brought more Baltic, Mediterranean and Black Sea countries into the EU, and a newly created Neighbourhood policy encompassed the countries around the 27, sub-regional approaches appeared less and less relevant and sub-regional multilateralism seemed on its way to disappearance. But

the decade of 2000 also saw worsening relations between the EU and Russia and the collapse of the Israel Palestine Peace process and the progressive failure of the Barcelona Process that it had made possible. In the second half of the decade tensions grew bigger and the sub-regions around the EU became new spaces of geopolitical competition.

The literature on sub-regionalism is relatively limited: EU4Seas has been the main large-scale project devoted to it in a decade, and the scope of its comparative approach is unprecedented. However, it did not build on a vacuum. The literature about the external action of the EU provided numerous points of reference. The main conceptual problem is where to place the relationship between the EU and sub-regional cooperative schemes in the wider context of the different modes of relationship of the EU with the rest of the world.

Multilateralism is of course one of these modes, and the one which frames not just this project, but the whole research field in which it was inserted together with another two parallel 7th FP projects, EU GRASP and Mercury. But at least four other modes of relation must be taken into account. Bilateralism plays a large role in the EU relations with its neighbourhood, and it takes the shape of a strategic partnership with one of them, Russia, which is a crucial player in 3 of the 4 seas of the project. Relations with sub-regional institutions may also be analysed under the light of Interregionalism, but the undeniably useful insights provided by this literature are only partially applied when the parts of the EU (and even, in some cases, some EU institutions themselves, like the case of the European Commission being an observer member in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation) are also part of the sub-regional organisations. Stabilization as an objective and, at the same time, a mode of engagement needs to be taken into account too, as the EU devises specific tools not just for the improvement of governance and stability of countries, but also for better sub-regional relations, the most obvious case being the Western Balkans. Finally, Enlargement has become a mode of relation of its own, and arguably one of the most powerful in transforming countries and sub-regions.

During the course of the research partners had to establish to what extent those modes were compatible, complementary or competing in one same geographical area, and contradictions resulting from their coexistence became apparent. It was also important to establish whether the choice for these different modes was consistent between the different regions, and it soon emerged that the differences were striking, bilateralism being the almost exclusive one at play in the Caspian, while the other three sea basins witness an uncomfortable combination of all five modes, some times with contradictory effects.

The different modes were not neutral in their impact on sub-regional multilateralism. Enlargement proved to be most divisive on that account with one important exception, the Baltic Sea, where cooperation has become something akin to purely intra-EU dynamics (with the corresponding alienating effects on the Baltic's larger player, Russia). As the most institutionalised and regulated mode of relationship, enlargement is also the least flexible. Sub-regional organisations became passive subjects of a dynamic process that radically alters the sub-regions, suffer from the diversion of trade and political interest towards the EU, and suffer as sub-regionalism becomes a less desirable option once membership seems attainable. Additionally, enlargement pulls the EU into new sub-regions, as happened in the Black Sea after Romania and Bulgaria became member states.

As for the other modes, bilateralism is almost unavoidable given the asymmetry of relations with the different states in each sub-region, but also given the EU's tendency to privilege some states as potential 'swing states' for all the region (such as Ukraine in the Black Sea or Egypt in the Mediterranean), or as benchmarks for others (such as Moldova or Tunisia in the same areas), and to accommodate the tension between thinking regionally and acknowledging the special role of some larger powers such as Russia and Turkey. EU conditionality is an additional factor that results in a preference for bilateralism, despite the existence of regional cooperation clauses.

The semblance of interregionalism with clear asymmetries (between the EU and the institutions of the Baltic Sea and Black Sea) has proven of limited value, and so has multilateralism when interpreted as the creation of institutions that, in the end, responded almost exclusively to the political will of the European Union and its member states, and whose best example are the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and, in particular, its successor, the Union for the Mediterranean.

The rationales and roles (see Reference 1) of sub-regionalism in the wider Europe can be grouped under four headings:

- Bridging, i.e. establishing a political dialogue, creating a joint symbolism and building confidence. If the original function of many organisations was to overcome the Cold War divide, managing the EU enlargement divide (and, to a lesser extent, the NATO enlargement divide) has become more prominent. In the Mediterranean, averting an open rift with the Arab and Islamic world has been an important aim too.
- Integrating or, rather, helping the integration of states into the EU, NATO or simply the wider international scene. In a Europe of small countries, newly independent nations and unsettled territorial claims, the integration onto the international stage remains an important function. Sub-regional groupings like the Visegrad group, the cooperation between the Baltic states and the Adriatic Cooperation, as well as agreements like the Central European Free Trade Area, served as preparatory groups and allowed the participants to show the kind of 'responsible' and conciliatory behaviour towards their neighbours demanded for their Euro-Atlantic integration.
- Cooperating in functional areas, in order to address transnational or shared challenges. Some areas, like environment and transport infrastructure, have been particularly favourable to cooperation. But other functional areas, such as energy, have in fact been a factor of division, rather than cooperation, in places like the Caspian and the Black Sea.
- Reforming the political and economic structures, and doing it in sub-regional context allowing for policy transfer of ideas, practices and models, increasing the attractiveness for technical and financial assistance. Here again, there are exceptions, for example in the Black Sea area, where increase trade opportunities across the sea may result in less focus on the EU markets and, therefore, in the in depth reforms required to access it freely.

Sub-regionalism has often been accused of staying at the level of rhetoric and being unable to deliver real change. That accusation needs to be contrasted with the reality of sub-regionalism, which varies from place to place. In terms of institutionalisation, for instance, there are significant variations both in nature and in degree. In all cases, though, institutions have remained primarily inter-governmental rather than

supra-national, and also in all cases their secretariats or other permanent structures are small in size and lack substantive powers. The availability of resources is also an issue, although here the contrast between northern groupings, such as the Baltic ones, and southern as eastern ones, is stark. Often resources are not raised by the organisation or provided by its members, but obtained from external actors, which could be the European Commission but also other institutions such as the World Bank. The scale of the substantive programmes varies according to the availability of funds. Additionally, many sub-regional groups suffer from being too broad in character and lacking the necessary specialisation to achieve sustained impact in a certain policy area.

Some of the literature on sub-regionalism has focused on trying to create typologies of sub-regionalism. Michael Emerson (see Reference 2), for instance, identifies no less than nine possible species of regionalism: technical, good neighbourliness, security, eclectic, dysfunctional, institutional, transformative, compensatory or geopolitical. This typology mixes objectives, performance and areas of cooperation. As a result, it was neither applicable to the four studied sub-regions nor to concrete institutions such as the Council of Baltic Sea States. EU4Seas developed its own elements of comparison between the sub-regions, which are useful not just for the four sea basins, but more generally for other attempts to study compared sub-regionalism. Thus, it emerged that at least four elements are important when we want to compare sub-regionalism in two or more geographical spaces:

1. Aim: why are countries cooperating? Is it to build confidence with their neighbours, to solve technical issues, as a step towards further integration (into Euro-Atlantic institutions, or into wider global affairs)?
2. Institutionalisation: how institutionalised is sub-regionalism? Are there permanent institutions, joint programmes, agreements, summits, structured political dialogue?
3. Performance: does sub-regionalism make a difference? Is cooperation functional, does it solve real issues, is the use of resources efficient and effective, is there a measurable impact on specific policy areas?
4. Actorness: who is playing a role in sub-regionalism? Is there an external driver (like the EU), is it purely at the hands of national governments, are civil society, business and local and regional authorities genuine stakeholders?

These lines of comparison proved more useful than attempts to categorise or label sub-regionalism, or sub-regional institutions.

The original research proposal for EU4Seas asked the following question: 'What have been the main achievements and failures, and what are the strong and weak points of sub-regional multilateralism, and in which areas has it been most successful?' As the research developed, this institutional focus proved hard to implement in practice. It is relatively easy to follow and explain the political evolution of the Caspian or the Mediterranean, for example, but it is inherently difficult to assess the impact of sub-regional organisations. Sub-regionalism has coexisted with powerful transforming forces such as the consolidation of new states, internal reforms, the enlargement of NATO and the EU or the transformation of the geoeconomics (in particular, those of energy) and the geopolitics of Europe, the Arab World and Asia. Thus, it is difficult to establish clear cause effect relationships, in particular in the absence of detailed impact assessments. The counter-factual question is therefore a challenge: would Europe and its sub-regions be substantially different had there not been multilateral arrangements at the sub-regional scale?

After hundreds of interviews with a sub-regional focus, and with the contributions of papers and seminars,

the picture that emerges is of a positive but limited impact. In the past, sub-regionalism helped the integration of new countries into international relations in difficult times, contributed to bridge some of the Cold War rifts, played a positive role in preparation of states for EU membership, helped manage tensions and divisions resulting from NATO and EU enlargement, made some contributions to the process reform, encouraged economic and personal links and did address some functional challenges and some particularly challenging transnational issues (such as pollution in the Baltic and in the Caspian). None of these can be attributed solely or mainly to sub-regionalism, which has remained since its very onset a secondary phenomenon in the wider European sphere.

Interestingly, however, the research has found little enthusiasm for stopping sub-regional activities altogether, even in times of financial stress for the governments. In addition to some of the roles played in the past, the research has pointed out some new challenges that may highlight again the benefits of sub-regionalism: the need to overcome the 'hard border' effect of some EU policies (in particular, those related to free movement of people), the notable slowdown in the enlargement of both NATO and the EU (with the exceptions of Croatia and maybe Iceland), the sub-regionalisation of the Arab world as a result of its extraordinary transformation in 2011 (with dynamics in the Maghreb, the Mashreq and the Gulf going in separate directions), the need to find new formulas for engagement with Russia and the prospect for an increasing variability in EU integration are amongst them.

The EU and sub-regional multilateralism

The research of EU4Seas answered to a call of the 7th Framework Programme to study 'The EU and multilateralism'. Multilateralism plays a central role in the way the EU intends to act in the international sphere, as shown by the inclusion of a direct reference in the Treaty on European Union: Article 21, which is part of the chapter devoted to the Union's external action, states that the EU 'shall promote multilateral solutions to common problems, in particular in the framework of the United Nations' (Art. 21). A first preoccupation of the research was therefore to test that commitment against the real practice and effects of the EU's external relations. The particularity of EU4Seas was the choice of scale: rather than seeing the EU as a component of a larger form of multilateralism, it studied its impact on smaller, weaker and less institutionalised sub-regional multilateralism. That choice needs to be put in the wider context of other forms of multilateralism.

Multilateralism can happen at different levels (sub-regional, regional and global). This raises the question of whether or not there is tension between the levels. For instance: are closed multilateral agreements compatible with wider multilateral solutions? This is a classic dilemma in trade policy, for instance, where regional agreements hold the potential of restricting global trade governance. There are at least four areas of dissonance in the normative assumptions behind global multilateralism and those behind multilateral solutions restricted to a particular geographical area. We have grouped them in the following table:

Normative assumptions:

Global Multilateralism(Sub)regional multilateralism
Universal solutions are preferable.....Regional problems have regional solutions

Peace is indivisible.....|.....The region as a space of security in a complex, insecure world

Local conflicts should be dealt with within global institutions like the UN...|.....Local conflicts should be framed regionally

Alliances, including regional ones, are a bad thing.....|.....Competing alliances are a bad thing, but the region standing together is not

This kind of tension can be reconciled, but it must not be ignored. The easiest way to combine the two views is to consider that (sub)regional multilateralism is one of the building blocks of global multilateral governance, a view that is sustained by the abundant literature on regionalism and has been explored by one of the parallel 7th FP projects, EU GRASP, that worked under the same heading as EU4Seas. If we apply this vision of regions as building blocks in global multilateral governance to the wider European space, we could conclude that sub-regionalism contributes to a more united Europe, in the long run. This view is clearer in the cases of the Baltic sea and of the Black sea than when dealing with the Mediterranean or, indeed, Caspian region, that are only partly European.

So how did the EU fare in its commitment to support sub-regional multilateralism? And what can this tell us more generally about the EU's commitment to multilateralism? In institutional terms, the EU is a giant compared to the weak multilateral institutions and agreements at sub-regional scale that exist throughout the European space. The application of internal EU rules is extremely inflexible, and it affects not only member states but also candidates and even neighbours. For all these reasons, the declared intention to support multilateralism at a sub-regional scale is not necessarily compatible with the effects of the whole spectrum of EU policies. We could group the observed impacts of the EU and its policies on sub-regional cooperation were organised into five main categories

1. Creation, membership and sustainability of sub-regional institutions. Sub-regionalism around the four closed seas of Europe predates in some cases the very existence of European integration as we know it today, but the EU has played a fundamental role in the creation, the selection of members and the sustainability of many of them. Thus, it is important to examine each of these aspects for all existing sub-regional institutions. For instance, the EU had basically no impact on the creation of GUAM, it did play a role in the basically Italian-led Adriatic Ionian Initiative and the Agadir Agreement would not exist were it not for the insistence of the EU on south south trade agreements. On membership, some institutions like the Central European Free Trade Area have their membership fully defined by relations with the EU (basically, it serves as an antechamber for free trade with the EU), while the Council of the Baltic Sea States member list was impacted by prospects of EU integration, but by no means conditioned by it, and other organizations, such as the Union of Arab Maghreb, have a membership that has no relation to EU choices. Finally, some institutions are sustainable with no EU support, such as the Nordic Council, others have the EU as one of their supporters, like the Caspian Environment Program, and others could simply not function without the current level of EU support, as is the case with the Union for the Mediterranean. The really important column in the table below is the third one: there are institutions and agreements in Europe which would not have been created, would not have the same members or would not be sustainable in their current shape without the EU's action.

Some examples of sub-regional organisations according to the level of EU impact on their creation,

membership and sustainability:

Impact.....| Absent.....| Low.....| High

Creation.....| GUAM (see Reference 3) | Adriatic Ionian Initiative.....| Agadir Agreement

Membership...| Union of Arab Maghreb.....| Council of Baltic Sea States....| Central European Free Trade Area

Sustainability | Nordic Council.....| Caspian Environment Program | Union for the Mediterranean

2. Diversion of exchanges and new division lines. The enlargement of the European Union and its sheer size in relation to the economy of most of its neighbours makes it inevitable that it will become a magnet for economic activity and political attention. The EU membership aspiration of some of the countries in wider Europe, such as Turkey, Ukraine or Moldova, only adds to this power of attraction. The reorientation towards the EU does not necessarily have to be divisive in the sub-regions at its periphery: that largely depends on whether or not the reorientation happens in all the countries in the sub-region and if it does it at the same speed. This is clearly illustrated by the contrast between the Baltic Sea, where the movement went in the same direction with the exception of Russia, and the Black Sea, with a much more mixed picture.

The attraction of the EU may result in divergence at sub-regional level in three main areas:

- Exchanges and mobility: this is the clearest area of impact. Trade reorientation towards the EU alters economic structures and priorities, and may result in a loss of at least relative weight of trade with immediate neighbours. Capitals, and in particular investment, are also intensively affected. But perhaps the effect that citizens can most easily see is people mobility, in particular given the fact that enlargement result in the imposition of visas that previously did not exist, such as visas for Turkish citizens who want to visit Bulgaria, or for Ukrainian citizens who want to visit Romania.
- Norm harmonization: the EU becomes an external point of reference for norm harmonization that is inescapable for candidates and still very influential even for those countries who simply want a limited level of cooperation with the EU. Normative Power Europe (see Reference 4) leaves little space for sub-regional agreements on norm harmonization, pushing a whole area of possible integration outside the scope of sub-regional cooperation.
- Values convergence and regime transformation/preservation: the new phase of sub-regionalism that started with the fall of the Soviet empire put a new emphasis on shared values and the assumption that sub-regional cooperation would be a stimulus for reform and democratisation. The trajectories of the countries around Europe, however, were hardly linear in that direction, and certainly not homogeneous. But heterogeneity has not always been synonymous with lack of sub-regional cooperation. The Baltic region has a general convergence in values (with the exception of Russia) which was partly achieved thanks to sub-regional initiatives; but the Caspian sea, which also witnesses convergence, but in this case in authoritarian forms of governance sustained by high energy prices, has not been able to generate meaningful forms of sub-regionalism beyond small programs and political summits.

3. Effectiveness of sub-regional agreements

As a direct effect of the point above, the EU can have very direct impact on the actual performance of sub-regional organizations, and the implementation of their programmes and agreements: EU policies carry

enough weight to condition the possibility to achieve real progress at sub-regional level. The compatibility of sub-regional agreements with EU norms and models is a first requisite: when it exists, the EU can be a reinforcing factor, when it does not, it will obstruct sub-regionalism, even if it does not particularly intend to. It is not just a question of norms and models, but also of objectives, timing and methods. The EU Country Action Plans, which are part of the European Neighborhood Policy, or the Enlargement negotiations, impose clear sequences, priorities, methods and time frames which simply ignore previous commitments or potential areas for progress at sub-regional level. The diversion of resources towards EU integration should not be overlooked, in particular in those countries preparing to become a member state. EU accession has become an extremely burdensome process that puts unprecedented stress on administrative and political structures, leaving little energy and resources for other policy areas, including sub-regional cooperation.

The research of EU4Seas has provided examples of policy areas where there was an overlap between EU policies and sub-regional agreements. In many of these cases, sub-regionalism appears to have been weakened by the influence of the EU. However, it has proved much harder to empirically pin down the casual link between EU policies and the (in)effectiveness of sub-regional initiatives. One can not assume that the patchy commitment to sub-regionalism is a direct effect of EU integration, nor that ineffectiveness of regional agreements can be blamed solely on their lack of compatibility with EU norms. The casual link needs to be analyzed in each case. And the relationship between EU policies and the effectiveness of multilateralism at a sub-regional scale can take very different forms: mutual reinforcement, convergence, competition, substitution, alibi or mutual exclusion can happen, depending on the issue area.

4. Actorness of sub-regional institutions

Sub-regional institutions have a limited role in Europe's institutional order. Even specialised institutions in Europe such as OSCE, the Council of Europe or OECD are giants compared to the size and resources of the permanent secretariats of the sub-regional organisations. Their financial means are modest and their member states' contributions are limited; the presence of the headquarters often attracts extra funding from the hosting country, a way to overcome the very modest allocations from members. Politically, these institutions do not carry much weight, and socially they are little known to the citizens. Unsurprisingly, therefore, they do not count as important actors in international relations.

Interaction with the European Union has an important impact on actorness of sub-regional institutions. First of all, the very interaction with the EU and its institutions, in particular the Commission, is in itself a reinforcing factor. Each time the Commission consults, involves and simply interacts it acknowledges their role as a partner, but also makes a conscious choice to raise their public profile. Involvement in regional strategies (the Black Sea Synergy, the Baltic Macro-region), in particular, results in continuous interaction and becomes one of the 'reasons d'être' of the institutions themselves. Consultation on specific issues forces the sub-regional organisations to expand their thematic areas of expertise and thus, in a way, shapes them.

In many cases the EU contribution to actorness goes beyond those forms of interaction. The European Institutions at time become members (sometimes under special denomination such as 'observer') of sub-regional institutions (such as the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the Council of

Baltic Sea States or the Union for the Mediterranean), a clear proof of their interest in the work of the sub-regional institutions. In other cases, economic support is provided for the everyday activities of the Secretariat or for some of the organization's programmes, beyond simple membership quotas (as is the case in the three organizations name above).

5. Ownership and the priorities of the states

EU support to sub-regional institutions and agreements, or its predominant role in initiatives such as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, are crucial to their existence, but it carries a heavy price tag in terms of ownership. EU predominance can indeed become an alienating factor, as it has happened with Russia's participation in Baltic initiatives. Russia, in fact, is a crucial player in three of the four areas studied in the project (Baltic, Black Sea and Caspian) and it emerged throughout the research as one of the most likely to become alienated by EU predominance in sub-regional institutions and programmes. The overwhelming pull of EU's gravity makes it particularly vulnerable to accusations of overstepping into areas of sub-regional cooperation.

Additionally, some EU approaches to enlargement have contradictory effects: Enlargement policy demands, and Neighbourhood policy encourages, sub-regional cooperation from countries, as is particularly visible in the Western Balkans but, by so doing, it clouds genuine interest in sub-regional cooperation with the overall feeling of responding to external conditionality. As international and regional agendas of candidates vying for EU approval become more attuned to EU demands and recommendations, as their foreign policy agenda and their internal reform priorities are captured by Brussels' engineered blueprints, there is less space for genuine sub-regional cooperation. At the same time, EU membership offers to some states new instruments and a renewed confidence that they can put at the service of sub-regionalism, as happened with the Baltic States and with Romania after they became EU member states.

The EU and multilateralism

EU4Seas was part of the 7th FP-sponsored effort to have a better understanding of the interaction between the EU and multilateralism together with another two projects: EU Grasp and Mercury. Near the end of all three projects, the research team came together and tried to extract some joint recommendations that would reflect the findings of all three projects but, in particular, project them into possible avenues for action. The resulting Nine recommendations were discussed at a joint seminar in Brussels, which was the final event for EU4Seas, and reflect a shared view from all three teams. These nine recommendations are summarised as follows:

1. The EU must adapt to changing global multilateralism, no longer the exclusive preserve of states, with power redistributed amongst more centres of power and urgent global challenges. In order to seize the new opportunities in a more open system, it must be steady in its promotion of multi-lateralism as an ideal, but extremely flexible in its multi-lateral practice and the choice of partners.
2. The EU must capitalise on its previous efforts to support regional and sub-regional institutions, and maintain them, but it can not stick to the dream of a 'world of regions' modelled on the image of the EU

which may result in a fixation with institutions and a rigid approach. It should not fall into the trap of replacing its unique style with a bad copy of that of state international powers such as the USA and the emerging powers.

3. Internally the EU must tackle the disadvantage that it faces in international negotiations (and therefore in multilateralism) as a result of its internal divisions, so it must expend more effort using the combined capabilities of the EU institutions and of EU national diplomacies to convince third parties, and less time negotiating amongst EU member states.

4. The best way of ensuring this simple voice is often, but not always, to occupy a single, EU chair. There is a strong political resistance in members states, but it is no longer acceptable to consider membership in in-ternational organisations and in smaller multilateral fora (such as contact groups) a crucial issue of sover-eignty when so many decisions that affect both citizens' lives and national politics are already highly integrated, and when the global challenges that require EU effective action are so urgent.

5. Multilateralism is a strategic choice which serves EU interest, if interest is defined in a broad, mid-term perspective: the EU should support norm-based contexts which produce multilateral policies constitute a better en-vironment for the EU than crude power politics, which test its cohesion and almost invariably put the EU at a disadvantage.

6. The EU should not assume that being coherent in its approach, or more integrated, confers it a higher moral ground: the EU has alienated other regional groups by stressing its unique level of integration and demanding special treatment.

7. The Union must make space for other organisations in Europe, in particular sub-regional ones, which in the long run reinforce the objectives of the EU. It is important that the EU learns to support the cooperation emanating from the countries of the region rather than the ones that it would find 'desirable'.

8. The EU must overcome the fragmentation of its power, as it has successfully done in areas related to the Internal Market. From intelligence to pub-lic diplomacy to military force, the EU's multilateral in-volvement is limited by not having its own capabilities, but the member states could easily combine many of their existing capabilities with political will.

9. The EU must look outward and be prepared to listen and to lead, to respond to the growing demand for multilateral policies in the glo-bal and regional arenas for a growing number of issues, for which the EU is particularly well suited.

The external dimension of EU's policies and multi-level governance

The possibility of "Europeanization beyond Europe" has received growing attention from scholars, especially since the EU's development of its European Neighbourhood Policy (see Reference 5). The ENP central offer is summarised as 'everything but institutions' for those neighbouring countries sharing the EU's values and conforming to its broad governance prescriptions, as well as to specific standards and laws in a host of economic and social areas. This offer was based on the assumption, itself a legacy from the success of EU Enlargement, that the most direct and effective road towards transformation as well as peace, prosperity and security in and around the European Union consists on inducing neighbouring countries to harmonise its norms and bring its policies in line with those of the EU.

The extent to which the EU effectively pushes for legislative harmonization, policy convergence and shared institutions as well as its neighbours' response to these demands are all issues for which EU4SEAS has

tried to find empirical evidence. Most of the literature on the impact of the EU upon its neighbourhood assumes that the external performance of the Union as a regional power is based on the very nature of the EU and its specific identity, norms and values, and thus that the purpose of the EU in international relations is the externalization of its internal governance (see Reference 6) . According to this interpretation, the EU would be a "normative", "civilian" power or institutions exporter.

Rather than focus on EU's identity, EU4SEAS has tried to measure the impact of the externalization of internal governance on the emergence of sub-regional governance. The project examined whether the regions were "policy makers" or "policy takers", whether the external dimension of EU policies coexisted with, competed with or complemented sub-regional initiatives. There were numerous policy areas where those effects were visible, even leaving aside the Baltic sub-region, which Enlargement totally transformed. However, a remarkable finding of the research is that sub-regional dynamics are beginning to change. Rather than linear Europeanization of the four basins, we witness instances of globalization of the neighbourhood: not necessarily a disappearance of EU incentives for convergence (indeed, in places like Moldova or Ukraine Europeanization is happening faster now than at any previous period), but the emergence of specific policy areas where alternative models have become more attractive. Where EU policies are particularly restrictive, costly or frustrating to the neighbour countries, the contrast with other powers becomes stark. This is the case, for example, in Visa policies, where Turkey and Russia have gained soft power in view of the EU's inability to put together an attractive offer beyond the Balkans.

EU policies that are conceived internally and then exported are inflexible and have a difficult time competing with other approaches that are available in three of the four seas the Baltic Sea, which has almost become an EU lake, is an exception. Bilateral approaches are a bit more flexible than sub-regional ones (like the Eastern Partnership), but both are greatly constrained by the 'enlargement approach' of exporting EU norms and policies as they are, with little room for adaptation to the specific needs of a particular country.

The EU as a model is still a magnet in its neighbourhood and its soft power is relevant in the four seas. However, where the promise of Enlargement is absent or a distant prospect, and in the current context of crisis the EU will have to find new incentives to preserve its attractiveness. Expectations in the neighbour countries were high, but they are now lowering as they look elsewhere for help and models. Regions such as the Baltic show that they are not marginalized, but rather seen as a model in some policies (energy, environment, maritime, trade). The transfer of governance and decision making to the EU level often comes from sub-regional level (as in the Baltic) influencing EU legislation and the externalization of some parts of EU policies such as security. Some policies are better suited to adaptation for dealing with third partners. A good example is the maritime policy, which is particularly good at integration actors other than EU member states: this includes sub-national and private actors, but also external actors (both governments and even non-governmental).

EU4SEAS has stressed the conflict between externalization of EU policies and EU foreign policy. This conflict does not always operate in the same sense. For some policies, excessive politicisation (and some times, securitisation) is problematic. Energy policy is the clearest case: although the policy declares sustainability, competitiveness and security of supply as its main pillars, geopolitical competition has been a more serious driver. In the neighbourhood, fundamental principles of engagement (such as promoting

EU solidarity or sub-regional cooperation) have been set aside in favour of a crude geopolitical approach to the crucial issue of the pipeline race to bring Caspian and Siberian gas to the EU. Commercial considerations or the interest of promoting a rule-based, cooperative environment have been sidelined, at the cost of a hesitant and ill-conceived policy that has not been able to rally the resources and political will to carry forward one joint EU approach (the Nabucco pipeline from the Caspian to South-East Europe, the main pillar of the geostrategic approach to gas supply, is still not a reality).

Conversely, in other issue areas, there is a need for more decisive integration on the political agenda. Environmental policy or maritime issues are good examples. But perhaps the clearest example is transport. Transport cooperation has proven how hard it is to connect regions if one does not first overcome political constraints. Staying at a purely technical level planning highways of the seas, railways corridors, intermodal nodes and other meta-infrastructure can become a frustrating exercise if the outcomes will not be backed by political arbitration and economic means to ensure that they become a reality.

But there are also cases in which balancing technical and political concerns has been, to a large extent, achieved. One positive example which happened precisely during the course of the project is visa liberalization. Political will was required to break the strong resistance to the idea by many member states (in particular, by the Ministry of Interior structures in many countries), but a strict technical approach ensured that the rules of the game were uniformly and strictly respected both by the countries that aspired to visa liberalization (in this first wave, the Western Balkan countries except Kosovo) and the EU itself. Visa liberalization is therefore a good model of how to combine political will and a strict technical approach to make clear rules and objectives and to ensure a mutually positive outcome. This looks like the way forward: one where political priorities of both sides (EU and third countries) are well defined and convergent, the rules are clear and there is a solid commitment in both sides to bring the process until the end. The outcome of the process is then perceived by both sides as a common good.

This leads to a more general question of how to find the right level of governance for such common goods, in a Europe that has defined the concept of 'subsidiarity'. The choices are most clear-cut when seeking to solve problems by regulation (who should be regulating? EU, sub-regional institutions, nations, sub-state authorities?). But the question of what level is most effective in monitoring, enforcement and performance assessment is no less important. The EU has obvious advantages in comparison to the sub-regional institutions in crucial areas such as resources, legitimacy, institutional consolidation or administrative capacity. In addition to those, at least four reasons would make it advisable to regulate and administer above the sub-regional level: the need for global consistency (including consistent treatment between the 4 regions of issues that are common to all); the need to 'capture' actors who themselves work in a transregional way e.g. large private corporations; the need to reach a critical level of resources; and the need to reach a critical level of authority to 'bang heads together' and achieve decisive change. But there are also factors pushing downwards, which favour solutions at sub-regional level or even lower (role of sub-state actors): objective local variation in challenges and needs, the need for empowerment and ownership, and the role of cross-border cooperation in democracy building, but also in solving everyday issues with cost-efficient solutions. If problems in local relationships are unsolved, the risk is that universal legal instruments will be manipulated by locals as weapons against each other rather than providing a 'neutral' solution, as is the case of the United Nation Convention on the Law of the Sea being used by

different sides in the Caspian Sea against their neighbours.

Can we talk in terms of the evolutionary development of sub-regional cooperation, whereby some of the regions in question have gone further around the cycle than others but also run into new problems? In the Baltic and Mediterranean, there are signs that the organic proliferation of alternative, sometimes overlapping, political networks, and specialized functional solutions, may have approached a limit where people feel a need to either scale down on sub-regional initiatives or move towards 'macro-coordination' or a 'network of networks', not least in order to cover the multi-dimensional chains of causation, such as environmental problems flowing from more basic political, social, economic realities. This is the essence of the macro-regional approach, which was first put into place in the Baltic Sea basin. An extra level of bureaucracy would not be a welcome outcome, but macro-regional coordination does not constitute a new bureaucratic layer but an innovative, cross-disciplinary and multi-level process that holds the promise of reducing duplication and marshalling scarce resources and precious expertise towards the achievement of shared objectives.

One obvious role for the EU could be to promote such macro-coordination in the four areas, and not just the Baltic (which in effect has almost become an intra-EU region) or the Danube (the second macro-regional strategy put in place by the EU). But is it ready to do so in the Mediterranean, Black Sea and Caspian, and indeed elsewhere? During the course of research (in seminars and in interviews) some stakeholders expressed harsh assessments of EU approaches, referring to the EU sub-regional involvement in negative terms such as 'just throwing money', 'top-down', and even 'neo-colonial'. Some of the literature of the 1990s points at a degree of mistrust amongst at least some Brussels officials who feared effective sub-regionalism could create frameworks of regulation conflicting with and complicating the EU's own continent-wide approach. If sub-regions along the EU borders started teaming up too closely, the main EU project for its immediate environment, Enlargement, may have been put at risk. The overwhelming evidence of EU4Seas research has been that this never happened: the pull of Enlargement was always much stronger than the commitment to sub-regionalism. EU4Seas found no evidence of sub-regionalism ever had made enlargement harder, whereas the contrary enlargement made sub-regionalism weaker does hold some truth in specific cases. By and large, all evidence points to conclude that negative effects that EU and its policies did have on sub-regional cooperation were unintended, and not the result of EU's deliberate will of weakening such forms of cooperation. Sub-regionalism may have been at times neglected and downplayed from the EU's main strategies, but we did not find any evidence of sub-regionalism being deliberately targeted as dysfunctional or even as redundant by the EU. Sub-regionalism has a place, albeit a modest one, in the EU's multi-level governance vision.

Conclusion: analysis, policy relevance and the remaining research agenda.

European Integration is more than just multilateralism: the sui generis nature of the EU has created a whole body of studies within political science. But multilateralism and its normative underpinnings are at the core of the ideas that drive integration since the 1950s. Joint action and cooperation are only a part of what brings the 27 member states of the EU together, one which is also fundamental in multilateralism. It is therefore only logical that multilateralism should be at the centre of the EU's identity as a global and regional player. The Treaty of the European Union places multilateralism at the very centre of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. This operates in two ways. The EU aspires to be influential globally, and for

this it needs to be successful in promoting its values and its interests in global multilateralism. But it also benefits from a world where multilateral, norm based solutions are predominant in the search for common goods, because this is the kind of environment for which the EU is best suited, and therefore reinforcing global and regional multilateralism becomes an objective per se. In the wider European region the EU coexists with some important forms of regional multilateralism: the Council of Europe, the OSCE and NATO. The EU has extensive relations with all three of them.

On European soil, however, these are not the sole expressions of multilateralism. Seldom at the centre of international events, and thus often overlooked by analysts, sub-regionalism has been present in Europe even before the start of European integration in its current form, with organizations such as the Nordic Council and the Benelux. The end of the division of Europe brought by the Cold War opened a new space in which a wave of sub-regional agreements were born, hoping to heal old wounds and bridge widening gaps in the Baltic, the Black Sea, the Mediterranean and the Caspian basins, conceptualising the seas as shared spaces rather than obstacles and opening opportunities for the integration of new, relatively weak states onto the wider European and International stage. Sub-regional multilateralism has remained limited in resources and scope, and its outcomes can not be compared to those of the large players of Europe's institutional order.

EU4Seas has been testing the EU's general commitment to multilateralism against its performance in strengthening and supporting sub-regionalism in Europe. The picture that emerges from this wealth of materials is rich and diverse, with good practices and benchmarks, but also with evidence of failure and unintended negative effects. Generalising from such a broad empirical base is not easy and is bound to misrepresent parts of the results. But, with all due caveats, most evidence points to a negative answer to our initial question: EU policies and strategies have mostly either weakened, not reinforced, sub-regionalism, or captured it within EU institutionalism, significantly reducing ownership by non-EU states. However, this never appeared to be a result of deliberately targeting sub-regional multilateralism, but the result of other, much more powerful institutional logics.

The first explanation (see Reference 7) for this result is the overwhelming transformational capacity of enlargement compared to almost any other political strategy at play in Europe in the last two decades. The promise of accession transformed the countries that suffered dictatorship under communist rule beyond recognition in record times thanks to the extraordinary attraction power of the EU. This irresistible pull, however, also meant that aspirant and new members reoriented their priorities towards the EU and away from far less significant forms of cooperation with their other direct neighbours. Trade diversion, new barriers to the free movement of people (such as new visa requirements) or increased difficulties to the free flow of services and capital between Russia and Estonia, Ukraine and Romania or Turkey and Bulgaria did very little to consolidate sub-regionalism. In the Black Sea, renewed activism of countries like Turkey has created a new impetus in exchange and cooperation which is actually built outside the EU, and where member states Romania and Bulgaria, who can no longer offer trade agreements or visa-free travel, might find themselves progressively marginalised precisely as a result of their condition as EU member states.

In the Baltic, enlargement has progressed so as to encompass all but one (Russia) littoral countries and Baltic cooperation is increasingly treated as an almost internal EU matter. The foreign minister of one of the new member states bluntly expressed, under the Chatham House rule, his wish to see Baltic

institutions disappear. He sees them as redundant after enlargement and adding to confusion and excessive summity rather than contributing added value. Enlargement, in his view, rendered the Baltic institutions as superfluous as those of the Benelux or as the (never institutionalised) Visegrad group. The only non-member country is no less than Russia, and thus this country has felt progressively pushed out of the Baltic scene and has focused on the bilateral dialogues (with the EU, but also with Germany and, increasingly, Poland) or in the wider context of the Northern Dimension. Russia never appreciated being treated as one more in the club of Baltic States, so it is debatable whether the main factor for its estrangement from Baltic multilateralism is EU enlargement, but it does emerge from interviews and papers that it did indeed play an important role.

The EU's strategies and instruments for the countries in its geographical vicinity are not homogeneous and, at times, can be divisive or at least competitive. The EU, for example, treats the Black Sea region in a way that differentiates clearly between Turkey (a candidate), the Eastern Partners (considered neighbours) and Russia (a strategic partner). Arguably, this segmentation, in particular between Russia and the Eastern partners, is not just an unintended side effect, but part of a strategy to counter a too close relationship, in particular one between Russia and Ukraine. This is denied by EU officials and absent from official discourse, but perceived in Russia and in the countries of the Eastern neighbourhood that see in the EU a useful counterweight to what they see as excessive dependence on Russia.

Not only grand strategies like enlargement and neighbourhood can have divisive effects. If we take the case of energy, the EU has entered a geopolitical game in which it, in practice, is an actor for division, not cohesion, in the Caspian sea and in the Black Sea. The concerns about security of supply are legitimate, but the EU can not pretend it does not realise that pipeline races in competing constellations of countries are a factor for growing rivalry and enduring tensions in those regions. Perhaps energy is the area where this divisive nature of EU strategies is less hidden: the Nabucco project, for instance, makes no secret of its goal of divesting the flow of Caspian gas so that it reaches the EU via Turkey, rather than via Russia, and the EU openly courts Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan to encourage them to build an alternative route that bypasses both Iran and Russia hardly an example of encouraging good neighbourliness in the Caspian.

Also when it comes to trade EU strategies have not been particularly supportive of sub-regionalism. An example could be the EU's preference for the Agadir trade agreement between Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Egypt above failing but pre-existing agreements such as the GAFTA and the Union of the Arab Maghreb. In the event, his previous support for Agadir will weaken any case the EU might want to present against Morocco and Jordan accepting the offer of membership of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Here, like in the Caspian, pre-existing rivalries and regional tensions pre-dated any EU involvement and the EU has accommodated to them. There are also cases where the EU has encouraged regional trade as a pre-accession strategy, in particular in the cases of the (now extinct) Baltic Free Trade Area and the (still existing) Central European Free Trade Area.

Despite the negative effects that some of its policies had on sub-regional cooperation, it is also important to acknowledge the support that the EU has given to sub-regional institutions, agreements and programmes as different as the Council of Baltic States, the Caspian Environment Programme, the Union for the Mediterranean or the Baltic Sea Economic Cooperation. Ranging from collaborative projects to

direct economic support, this support has been important in keeping the sub-regional structures in function and the communication channels open, even in times of extended tensions such as those lived in the Black Sea basin in summer 2008.

The problem of EU involvement and funding, however, is that sub-regional institutions become asymmetrical and soon non-EU member states can feel pushed into a policy-taker position. Nowhere is this clearer than in the Mediterranean, where the most significant initiatives are EU-led. The Barcelona process, despite its rhetoric of partnership, was led by the European Commission and driven by EU policy initiatives. After an initial French proposal of a Mediterranean Union of littoral states, the European side pushed for the inclusion of EU member states and institutions in the resulting Union for the Mediterranean, thus in effect making it impossible to reach a genuinely sub-regional cooperation. The additional institutional features designed to bring southern Mediterranean co-ownership (such as the north south co-presidency) have contributed to paralysis of the project without solving the issue of asymmetry.

The EU may, in fact, be too large, institutionalised and integrated to interact smoothly with these weak sub-regional arrangements. The overwhelming effect of the in/out dichotomy, being or not being an EU member state, is perhaps just too strong for other forms of lighter integration to have real impact. Despite its attempts to support existing or emerging sub-regional multilateralism, the inertia and effects of its enlargement and neighbourhood strategies, and well as that of its own internal policies, could be too powerful to allow genuine and substantial sub-regional multilateralism in its fringes. This makes it very difficult for the EU to deliver in its promise of supporting multilateralism out of principle beyond its most formal aspects.

If the EU can not support sub-regional multilateralism as effectively as it would wish to, does this mean that sub-regionalism has become irrelevant in the wider European space? This is certainly not the policy conclusion that stems from having applied comparative sub-regional perspectives in a large three year research project. In particular, sub-regional approaches seem to hold the promise to bridge some of the fundamental challenges of the EU in its Neighbourhood. They might offer some elements to bridge the gap between the comprehensive ENP approach for the east and the south, which has shown its limits, and pure individual treatment of each country. But this is only one of the gaps that a sub-regional approach could narrow. There are, in fact, five gaps that sub-regional strategies and approaches of the EU could help bridging (and are doing so where they start to emerge). Those gaps are between:

1. members and non-members of the EU, which has become the most relevant fracture at the sub-regional scale. By adopting sub-regional approaches to areas that include both kinds of countries, the EU can partially counter the 'hard border' effect, which is particularly visible when enlargement happens in the form of diversion of trade, human and other links. The macro-regional strategies in the Baltic and the Danube are steps in this direction. Others are being proposed, for instance in the Adriatic, but they may need additional adjustment when applied to regions with more countries without an EU perspective, such as the Western Mediterranean, for instance.

2. candidates and neighbours, a gap that is already weakening despite the strong resistance of some EU member states to extending the perspective of membership to new states beyond the Balkans. The sub-regional approach in places like the Black Sea bypasses the big stumbling block of the enlargement

perspective and allows for concrete actions and cooperation without solving that fundamental and polemic issue.

3. differentiation and global approach in ENP, providing middle-of-the-road strategies for balancing differentiation with some incentives for cooperation between neighbours. In areas where differentiation has at time been seen as an alternative to solving problems with the direct neighbours, such as the Caucasus, the Maghreb or the Middle East, the EU must make sure it has a sub-regional strategy in order to avoid that differentiation results in further fragmentation of these already divided regions.

4. internal and external policies, in particularly taking into account the unintended divisive effects of some intra-EU policies such as energy or visa policy widely described in EU4Seas research. Accompanying policies and step-by-step agreements can help solve the worst side effects of the external projection of EU policies at the sub-regional level. Thus, for instance, cross-border visa arrangements, visa facilitation, special agreements for long term or specific short-term visa and the perspective of liberalisation can contribute to addressing the negative effects of Schengen regulations. And creating cooperative approaches and transparent energy markets in the neighbour sub-regions may in the end be more efficient than expensive pipeline races.

5. the long term, strategic vision of 'a ring of friendly, prosperous and well-governed countries' and short term, tactical actions to influence the course of political events in favour of pro-EU actors. That the ENP has not made enough progress towards its grand vision is now well established. As the EU focuses in short term crucial issues (stabilising Egypt in its path towards reform, avoiding that Russian influence becomes overwhelming in Ukraine, ensuring the success of the Tunisian transition as a model for other Arab countries, strengthening the pro-EU coalition in Moldova, an so on), the gap between immediate actions and the wider vision can be partially bridged by focusing on smaller sub-regions with interlocking strategies.

The promise of sub-regional strategies is therefore quite substantial. The increasingly problematic division between member states, candidates (and potential candidates) and neighbours; the uneasy link between southern and eastern neighbourhood; and the need to balance differentiation with stimulating cooperation all could benefit from more sub-regional strategies . In the final paper of the project, the main recommendation derived from the research conducted within EU4Seas advocates a vision, that of a chain of interlocking sub-regional strategies going in an arch from the Arctic and the Barents Sea toward the Baltic, Danube, Eastern Europe, Black Sea, Caucasus, Middle East, Eastern Mediterranean, Adriatic and Western Mediterranean. Those strategies would address the practical problems at the geographical fringes of the EU and contribute to the wider and more ambitious visions of a peaceful, democratic and integrated Wider Europe and of an EU surrounded by friends and partners

EU4Seas has addressed sub-regionalism in Europe with a comprehensive study that covered an unprecedented geographical and thematic breadth, thanks to the funding of the 7th Framework Programme. It has thus made a substantial contribution, the largest in a decade, to the study of sub-regionalism, while contributing at the same time to better understanding the EU's performance as tested against its aim to support multilateralism in its external action. But the ground for research and for policy is hard from exhausted. Sub-regionalism had a difficult task when the EU was a sort of unipolar magnet in the

European space, but the weakening of its power of attraction with the Euro-crisis and the emergence of alternative poles threatens to transform the sub-regions at its fringes in new spaces for competition. Evolutions in the Arab world have already led to greater sub-regionalisation. The new dynamism opens the question of how to avoid that the fringes of Europe become new theatres of confrontation in a multipolar global environment. Sub-regional approaches, rich in detail and able to accommodate the fears and aspirations of even the smaller players, offer an opportunity for the EU to regain the initiative in its near abroad. In times of grave internal challenges and growing global pressure, the EU could do worst than seizing the opportunity of gradually shaping its immediate neighbourhood into an arch of stable, loosely integrated sub-regions.

References

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- 2) Emerson, Michael 'The EU's New Black Sea Policy. What kind of regionalism is this?' CEPS Working Document n. 297/July 2008
- 3) The official current denomination is Organisation for Democracy and Economic Development GUAM, but we have kept the acronym (which denominates its four member states, Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova) as it enjoys much wider recognition.
- 4) Manners, Ian (2002) 'Normative Power Europe: a contradiction in terms?' in Journal of Common Market Studies , Vol. 40, No. 2, pp. 235-258.
- 5) For a comprehensive and up-to-date review of the existing literature see in particular Schimmefeling, F. (2012) 'Europeanization beyond Europe' in Living Reviews in European Governance, 7 (1)
- 6) Lavenex, S. (2004), "EU external governance in 'wider Europe'", Journal of European Public Policy, 11(4): 680-700
- 7) This paragraphs and the ones that follow are excerpts from one of the final papers of the project: Vaquer i Fanés, J. (2011), "The EU and Sub-regional Multilateralism", EU4Seas Policy Papers

Potential Impact:

The potential impact of the project

EU4Seas is a collaborative research project which sees itself in the context of excellence in social science; its main impact should be therefore found and evaluated in the scientific community. In addition, the project incorporated the policy relevance dimension from its very conception and envisaged a methodology that allowed for numerous contact points with the stakeholders (in particular, seminars and interviews, but also the newsletter and the dissemination strategies). As a result, the availability of the results to stakeholders has been largely ensured throughout the project. We are attaching to this report a full document about EU4Seas Dissemination plan, which gives a better idea of the specific actions that were conducted in order to ensure that results reached their target audiences (academia, policy makers, civil society and media).

Our point of departure for the project assumed that there was a political logic behind the study: beyond the interest in understanding the EU's performance in relation to multilateralism, there was an assumption that the majority of objectives of sub-regional co-operation coincide with those of the EU for those same sub-regions, and therefore that, by reinforcing sub-regionalism, the EU will in fact be serving its own interest.

Examples of these shared objectives are better relations between neighbour countries, increased exchange and contact between peoples and sustainable economic growth leading to better living standards. Bridging the gap between sub-regional multilateralism and EU integration becomes therefore a desirable outcome not just on its own, but also because it contributes to other policies, in particular the EU Neighbourhood Policy.

In the application we foresaw four kinds of impacts: theoretical, empirical/analytical, on policy and on epistemic communities. Here is an assessment of how we believe those impacts have been achieved:

Theoretical impact

EU4Seas was part of a larger effort to learn more about the interaction between the EU and Multilateralism. A main challenge of our project in particular was to locate the relation with sub-regional multilateral institutions, some of which had EU member states as their own members, in the existing literature on relations between the EU and other multilateral agreements. We believe that the project has made a significant contribution in locating that discussion, relating it to other concepts such as Interregionalism, and better outlining the overall conceptualisation of the relationship. In the course of the research we have outlined the differences between the core assumptions of sub-regional multilateralism and those of global multilateralism. The consortium also categorized the impacts of EU policies on sub-regional agreements into five groups (those related to their creation and existence, exchange flows within sub-regions, effectiveness of agreements, actorness of institutions and ownership of member states, as explained in the results section), thus creating the appropriate analytical framework to proceed with the empirical research.

Additionally, EU4Seas has provided the consortium with the opportunity to revisit sub-regionalism after the main works theorizing it, a decade ago. Here the impact will be less felt, as some of those who participated in those exercises were themselves members of the consortium, and EU4Seas in a way has mainly served to confirm and refine the already existing literature on sub-regionalism, one which was mostly European and which, in these years, has extended to sub-regions elsewhere in the world. It has been, however, a good opportunity to combine it with other existing concepts, for instance that of Europeanization and, in particular, Europeanization outside the EU, in itself a growing strand of analysis. Conceptually, EU4Seas has been a challenging project, dealing with the fringes of some of the concepts used (Multilateralism, Europeanization, Interregionalism), and thus making in the end a good contribution to better delineating their contours.

Analytical and empirical impacts

As we designed the research of EU4Seas, we expected that our main analytical contributions would be better understanding of the impact of EU policies upon its neighbours and the insights provided by comparing between the four sea basins. The first part has indeed been an area of a lot of contribution, and numerous examples and concrete studies. EU4Seas has generated a big breadth of topics covered in specific, specialised papers, and then has done an important (and work intensive) work of relating them to each other in comparative perspective. This has not always been easy, but we believe that there is now an unprecedented body of studies that are interesting both to the specialists of specific thematic areas and to

those of the four geographical areas.

The comparative dimension has been a challenge from the very start of the process. The obvious assertion that each of the four basins is very different from the other three is a truism that has been repeated countless times. But the deliberate effort to build in a comparative dimension has shed light on previously unexplored policy connections and similarities, and has allowed the researchers to focus not so much on what is different, but on why things operate differently in each basin. Analytically, this has led to new insights into sub-regionalism and a substantial contribution to the literatures on each of the four basins.

An additional impact on the community of analysts is the fact that EU4Seas has made available a large dataset of 400 interviews reported in a uniform format that allows for qualitative work to be conducted. It gives access to interviews conducted in a dozen languages though reports in English, and covers stakeholders from Reykjavík to Almaty or Baku, from Tallinn to Rabat or Beirut. This is a vast material that any individual researcher could probably never build her/himself, and that can be used in many different ways in addition to the obvious option of searching and selecting the ones the researcher wants to read, there are a world of additional possibilities using the available scientific software for text and qualitative analysis.

Policy Impacts

The policy and societal impacts of a project like EU4Seas are hard to estimate: the process brings no technological innovation, but it did contribute policy insights that could have some relevance. There is, however, a difficulty to this, and it is the speed to which the EU itself and its neighbourhood are changing. We have described those changes in the section above, but it is certainly true that the foundations of EU attraction are changing. At the same time, EU4Seas captured some long term policy trends which will keep its relevance almost irrespective of the outcome of the current turmoil.

The positive side to all this change is that the final results of EU4Seas became available just as the EU Neighbourhood Policy was being reviewed in depth. The EU4Seas partners made sure that many of those responsible for the ENP review were exposed to the main results, or at least had access to them, and members of the partnership had excellent opportunities to contribute to international debates, in particular on the Mediterranean and on the Caspian. How this will affect policy, if at all, is yet to be seen, but it certainly is the case that EU4Seas results came at a time when contributions were being sought and policies re-examined, and some of the outcomes of these processes coincide to a larger extent with EU4Seas recommendations. The latest example is Enlargement Commissioner's Fuele recent proposal to adopt a more proactive EU Magreb policy, advancing in the sort of sub-regionalisation of approach advocated by EU4Seas.

On a more concrete note, one of the outcomes of EU4Seas is a dataset of Best Practices in sub-regional cooperation, which is and will remain available as a source for inspiration for stakeholders in the different sub-regions of Europe and beyond. There was a larger curiosity than expected from stakeholders for events, developments and practices that happened in other geographical areas than their own, and that encouraged us to expand the effort to identify best practices. We do expect that at least some of those best practices reports will result in specific policy actions.

Impacts on epistemic communities

If there is one set of impacts that has been felt most clearly already during the project and which has exceeded expectations of the partners, it is the impacts on epistemic communities. Those are defined as transnational networks of knowledge-based experts and stakeholders who define for (and together with) decision-makers what the problems they face are, and what they should do about them. Initially the partners estimated that epistemic communities around the four sea basins would be strongest in the Baltic, weakest in the Caspian, and somewhat in the middle on the Mediterranean. That proved to be by and large the case, although the changes in the Mediterranean context and the crisis in at least one of the main regional network, Euromesco, had left the Mediterranean less articulated than it had been in the past and the Black Sea epistemic community more active.

The project had a triple way of reaching the epistemic communities. The seminars became important focal points. In a somewhat unintended manner, but usefully, a group researchers and stakeholders started to gravitate around the project, participating in more than one event, sometimes paying themselves for the costs of participation out of interest. They became the second circle of a wider 'EU4Seas community' and not only revitalised the networks in their own sub-region, but established contacts with the other basins. The fact that the seminars took place in all of the regions (if we include the dissemination event in Baku) meant that an extra layer of experts in the countries of the partners and beyond was added. The second access to epistemic communities was through the interview exercise, which became at the same time a way of connecting hundreds of interested stakeholders to the research. Finally, there was the most conventional way of publications (both in external journals and in our own website), the website and a newsletter with 2.500 readers. These instruments are further explained later in this document.

Sub-regionalism experts had been somewhat closed in their own field, one which is secondary to mainstream international politics in Europe, and often only connected to their peers in their closest areas. EU4Seas had a mobilizing and galvanizing effect on those networks, and has become a recognized name amongst sub-regionalism specialists. Whether that impact will be sustained after the end of the activities is doubtful, but it can safely be stated that EU4Seas has more than fulfilled its goal to impact on reconnecting epistemic communities around the four seas.

Dissemination activities

The dissemination activities followed an Action Plan that had to be adjusted during the course of the three years. We have prepared a detailed document which contains the main elements of this action plan and a complete list of products and events. The following paragraphs are a short summary of the Action Plan, which was conducted throughout the project but, with particular intensity, in 2011, the last year of EU4Seas.

The action plan had four objectives described in the initial proposal for EU4Seas:

- Engaging with external experts and practitioners during the project in order to get permanent feedback on our results
- Make the results of our research known to the International Relations academic community during and after the Project
- Convey proposals and suggestions to policy-makers both in the EU decision-making core and in the four

basins

- Enhance the profile of sub-regional cooperation amongst the specialised and general public, and visualise the impact of EU's action on it

Those objectives were to be attained through targeted outreach strategies, each of them with their specific tools and dissemination actions:

Academia Outreach: Making sure that the results of the project are available to scientific and research community, and that the results of on-going or finished projects on related topics are incorporated into the project, was a constant preoccupation for the partners. The main instruments designed to achieve impact amongst academics were the Working Papers (the series of papers which contains the bulk of the research results and analysis), the Scientific Papers published in external refereed publications, the Seminars and their reports, the participation in Academic Conferences (with specific EU4Seas panels organized) and the final Dataset of Interview reports, made available at the end of the project for future research.

Stakeholders Outreach: The Partners focused on incorporating their views to the analysis and activities of the project, making sure that the outcomes are policy-relevant and their formats policy-oriented, and conveying proposals and policy recommendations both in the EU decision making core and in the four sea basins institutional framework. Stakeholders have been involved in each activity of EU4Seas, and the final policy-makers roundtable became a permanent feature of all EU4Seas events. In addition to this, policy-oriented formats were designed including the 9 EU4Seas Policy Papers, the joint Policy Brief on the EU and multilateralism organized together with the consortiums for two other projects (EU Grasp and Mercury), articles in specialised non-academic publications and a dataset on best practices reports. Finally, partial and global results have been presented at dissemination events and conferences, and even at some private briefings with some of the EU Commission services.

Media and civil society Outreach: A third component of the dissemination strategy was connecting the project with opinion leaders and the wider think-tank community, selecting media-worthy materials. The main tool for this process was the Web Page, which was in turn linked to a Newsletter with 2.500 subscribers, and reinforced by a branding exercise looking at transforming EU4Seas into a recognisable name and image for those in the field. This strategy also included local impact activities, such as speeches, participation in local events and work with local media during EU4Seas events.

Dissemination was integrated through the whole process, with particular accent at the end, and tailored to serve each of the three outreach strategies above. The Dissemination Plan, which is detailed in the annexed document, was not limited to publications (the full list is in the annexed document) but included a website with its Newsletter and activities, a full description and list of which is also annexed. The listed activities include:

- Six scientific seminars, one per work package:
 - o The EU and sub-regional multilateralism, Barcelona, 28-29 January 2009
 - o Political and Security Cooperation in Europe's four sea basins, Rome, 3-4 April 2009
 - o Environmental and Maritime Issues in Europe's four sea basins, Reykjavik, 27-28 May 2009
 - o Energy and Transport Cooperation in Europe's four sea basins, Ankara, 21-22 January 2010
 - o The 4 sea basins and the global community: do the 4 Freedoms work? Kiev, 9-10 June 2010
 - o Stress Test for the EU's Multilateral Approach: Prospects for fostering regional cooperation. Tallin, 2-3 march 2011
- Seven additional dissemination events to present EU4Seas outputs, organized by the Consortium or its partner institutions:

- o A new momentum for maritime governance, Gdansk, 20 May 2011
- o Is the EU a multilateral actor in its Neighbourhood? Turin, 6-7 June 2011
- o Rethinking International Relations: Theory and Practice, Ankara, 15-17 June 2011
- o The EU approach towards the Caspian: Soft Power or Realpolitik? Baku, 7 September 2011
- o Wider Europe Regional Brainstorming, Ankara, 12 September 2011
- o Global Europe Conference on Multilateralism, Brussels, 7 November 2011
- o Multilateralism and regional cooperation in the Baltic, Iceland, 17 November 2011
- Participation in other International Conferences and events in Aberdeen, Barcelona, Istanbul, London, Paris, Porto, Reykjavík, Sevastopol and Vienna.
- A Joint Final Conference was organised jointly by three European 7th Framework projects, EU4Seas, EU-GRASP and MERCURY in Brussels to present the final results of their research projects on Multilateralism and discuss them with a specialised audience of expert and stakeholders. As a conclusion, the joint Policy Brief entitled "The EU and Multilateralism: Nine Recommendations" was presented laying out a set of policy recommendations for policy-makers.

It is not easy to assess what impact EU4Seas will eventually have. The dissemination strategy was implemented successfully and the results have reached a large amount of targeted stakeholders and specialists. It will only become apparent with time how all the contributions of EU4Seas make a real difference in theory, analysis, policy and epistemic communities. But there are encouraging signs that the attention paid throughout the process has been successful in making EU4Seas an open project, not restricted to a small consortium of research centres, but appreciated and sustained by a circle of supportive stakeholders and academics. This makes us confident that we have succeeded in conducting open, connected and relevant collaborative research that will serve the scientific and policy interests of the EU and its citizens.

List of Websites:

www.eu4seas.eu

For further information, please contact Francisco Andrés Pérez (EU4SEAS manager) at fperez@cidob.org

Related documents



[final1-dissemination-action-plan-eu4seas.pdf](#)



[final1-eu4seas-leaflet.pdf](#)

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