



PRESS RELEASE
ON THE EXPERT PANEL EVENT
“REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE WIDER BLACK SEA AREA:
OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES”
(Carlton University, Ottawa, 2 December 2019)

An expert panel event dedicated to *Regional Cooperation in the Wider Black Sea Area* was hosted by the Carleton University in Ottawa, on 2 December 2019. The panel was organized on the initiative of **Dr. Mukhtar Hajizada** of the *Institute of European, Russian and Eurasian Studies* (EURUS) with the support of the BSEC PERMIS, in order to discuss integration possibilities in the wider Black Sea area, including issues of economic development and security. The event brought together prominent representatives from BSEC Member States, authoritative regional experts and students.

General views were shared on the establishment and activities of various regional intergovernmental organizations in the wider Black Sea area (WBSA), especially those of the *Black Sea Economic Cooperation* (BSEC) Organization, which led to realistic expectations that peaceful change was possible in the region. Participants, however, were of the common opinion that the security situation in the wider Black Sea area still remains complex and unstable, constituting a major challenge for establishing genuine regional integration.

EURUS faculty members discussed the causes and the results of regional cooperation in this part of the world, as well as the significance of the integration model the above efforts represent.

Keynote speakers representing Greece, Moldova, Serbia, and Turkey informed the audience about their BSEC priorities and the importance of the region for Canada.

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General, Ambassador Michael B. Christides, video addressed the panel, providing general information on the BSEC Organization and emphasizing the geostrategic value of the region. He underlined that BSEC serves as a platform for promoting initiatives and projects of shared interest and benefit for its Member States, as well as for establishing better networks of coordination and for encouraging people to come together for finding solutions to the many trans-border challenges facing the region. He concluded saying that BSEC is a first-level confidence building mechanism functioning in an area that certainly needs such a mechanism today.