

# The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities



## Conference on Practical Approaches Towards Effective European Transfrontier Co-operation

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### Elements for Ludmila Sfirloaga, President of the Chamber of Regions of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe for the

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to be here in Maastricht today to introduce the Black Sea Euroregion as an example of the Congress' initiatives in the field of Euroregional co-operation.

The Congress devotes a particular importance to transfrontier co-operation: establishing forms of direct co-operation between local and regional authorities ensures the specific needs of border populations are better satisfied.

Since the integrated management of local services has repercussions beyond borders, transborder co-operation can have a positive impact in many different areas.

By the setting up of Euroregions, the Congress aimed at supporting this "local co-operation" and permitting the exchange of knowledge and experiences at a European level. Within a euroregion, local and regional authorities can launch concrete co-operation projects (within the limits of their respective competences), ensure their socio-economic development and reinforce local and regional democracy and territorial cohesion.

The first initiative taken by the Congress in this respect was the creation of the Adriatic Euroregion. This Euroregion, which started its activities in June 2006, brings together 23 territorial authorities - of both EU and non-EU member states - . The Adriatic Euroregion aims to bring together the authorities involved in the protection and evolution of the Adriatic region and is a permanent structure for the conception of co-operation projects in policy areas of great importance for the development of the basin. The Euroregion's activities are linked to those of the institutions and organisations which co-ordinate and support co-operation initiatives, which also support sustainable development, economic and political integration, and cultural rapprochement objectives.

On the basis of this first experience and more recently, the Congress took up the challenge of the local and regional authorities of the Black Sea maritime basin which wanted to develop direct inter-municipal and inter-regional co-operation projects.

The high economic, social and environmental stakes represented by this maritime area required much closer co-operation between the cities and regions in order to improve the prosperity, stability and security of their populations.



You know that the Black Sea region has become one of the most sensitive regions in Europe from a political, socio-economic and environmental point of view. It is an area where many different cultures co-exist. Via the Danube and the Mediterranean basin, this area is also closely linked to central and eastern Europe in economic, social and environmental terms.

The underlying idea for this Euroregion was to establish multilateral co-operation between cities and regions which do not necessarily share common borders; co-operation between regions of the European Union and regions outside the Union; co-operation not exclusively territorial, but also 'maritime'.

The Black Sea Euroregion, founded in Varna at the end of last year, has the objective of to develop links and common projects between local and regional authorities and helping them co-operate for a sustainable management of their maritime basin. The Euroregion will operate in very sensitive areas like: the environmental protection; the promotion of sustainable tourism; the development of initiatives on intercultural exchange and social cohesion.

All these are domains in which partnerships between local and regional authorities can contribute to the well-being of their citizens.

Within the Black Sea Euroregion, territorial communities will have a framework for creating synergies, co-ordinating their efforts, exchanging experiences and best practices and developing the competences of local and regional authorities. It will also serve as a launching pad for multilateral initiatives and projects, using existing European and international financial mechanisms to implement them.

Within this Euroregion several projects are under preparation and Mrs Michaela Tudor, representative of the Constanta County Council, will now give you additional information on them and on the present and future challenges of the Euroregion.

Thank you for your attention.