

**CONGRES DES POUVOIRS LOCAUX ET REGIONAUX DE L'EUROPE**  
**CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE**



4 November 2001

CG/Forum Turquie (8) 10

**FORUM OF CITIES AND REGIONS OF SOUTH-EAST EUROPE**  
**8<sup>th</sup> ECONOMIC FORUM**

*Promoting partnerships with cities and regions of South-East Europe*

**ISTANBUL, TURKEY, 2 - 3 NOVEMBER 2001**

**ISTANBUL DECLARATION**

**Unanimously adopted on 3 November 2001**

1. We, mayors of capital cities and local and regional elected representatives of south-east Europe, mayors and political leaders of European cities and regions, representatives of governments and intergovernmental organisations, international and national NGOs, experts and participants in various sectors of economic activity, meeting in Istanbul on 2 and 3 November 2001 at the invitation of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and on the initiative of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) within the framework of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, in co-operation with the European Foundation for the Economy and Sustainable Development of the Regions of Europe (FEDRE);

Thanking the Lord Mayor of Istanbul for his warm hospitality and his contribution;

On the political level:

- 1.1. express the hope that the political changes in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Bosnia and Herzegovina will enable both countries to accede to the Council of Europe in the near future;
- 1.2. consider that the forthcoming elections in Kosovo represent both a challenge and a major step in the consolidation of democratic structures and call on all the population of Kosovo, in particular the Serbian community, to take part in these elections;
- 1.3. give our support to the Framework Agreement on "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" concluded in Skopje on 13 August 2001 and wish its implementation in the best conditions ;
- 1.4. reaffirm that our main objective, as stated in the Skopje Declaration adopted on 18 November 2000, is to "help restore a multiethnic society and to promote democratic citizenship in south-east Europe, to promote human rights and tolerance and respect for cultural and religious diversity";
- 1.5. undertake to strive to improve the political climate, the conditions for stability and economic development in south-east Europe and, in particular, to create a conducive environment for closer co-operation between local and regional authorities in south-east Europe;
- 1.6. assert that our municipalities and regions play an appreciable political and economic role in securing peace and stability in south-east Europe;
- 1.7. consider it necessary to take due account of the experience already acquired by the countries in transition to encourage future developments in south-east Europe;
- 1.8. reaffirm our commitment to the activities of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe in the field of local democracy and are convinced of the importance of these activities for stability in this part of Europe;
- 1.9. welcome the support given by non-governmental organisations, the European Union, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, the FEDRE, the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) and the Stability Pact in order to promote partnerships with cities in south-east Europe;
- 1.10. stress the role of the Szeged process, particularly in the field of training for local and regional elected representatives in south-east Europe;
- 1.11. reaffirm our commitment to application of the subsidiarity principle, with a view to decentralisation of powers at local and regional level, and to transfrontier and inter-territorial co-operation;

On the economic level:

- 1.12. are convinced that the creation of better economic conditions in south-east Europe is a key factor for the development of democratic institutions in the region;
- 1.13. stress the fundamental role which small and medium-sized enterprises can play in developing the local and regional economy, while pointing out that they do not benefit as much as they ought from the Stability Pact. The Stability Pact, in addition to infrastructure projects, should also finance small projects and "soft measures" that help local initiatives and Euroregions;
- 1.14. highlight the vital role of representatives of civil society in democratic developments in south-east Europe;
- 1.15. affirm our determination to fight against corruption in the administration of local and regional authorities in order to restore the trust of citizens;
2. Undertake to:
  - 2.1. step up interregional and transfrontier co-operation between local and regional authorities in south-east Europe in order to foster good neighbourly relations and reduce possible tensions on both sides of the borders in the spirit of the Stability Pact;
  - 2.2. increase exchanges of experience, know-how and technical skills between local government leaders in south-east Europe;
3. consider essential the activities and programmes of national governments, international financial organisations and European organisations in support of south-east Europe, in particular in the key sector of infrastructure, energy, economic development, etc;
4. renew our Skopje appeal to all European cities and regions to conclude partnerships with cities in south-east Europe. Such partnerships should provide an appropriate response to the actual needs and priorities for administering cities in south-east Europe, and chiefly the following fields:
  - transport management,
  - environment: water management, waste processing,
  - training of elected representatives and local and regional government staff,
  - development of local and regional media and new communication technologies,
  - transfrontier co-operation;
  - endogenous growth and co-operation at the level of small and medium-sized enterprises;
5. underline the importance of strengthening the training of young leaders and youth exchanges;
6. emphasise the importance of providing training for elected representatives and municipal and regional staff and therefore call on the ENTO network, set up under the auspices of the Council of Europe, to provide assistance and expertise as part of a programme in response to the needs of associations of local authorities in south-east Europe;
7. thank those governments which have made financial contributions to the implementation of activity programmes to promote local democracy in south-east Europe;
8. earnestly call on:
  - 8.1. the relevant governments participating in the Stability Pact, European and international organisations, in particular the European Union and the Council of Europe, to increase their financial and logistical support to any European cities and regions which develop plans for technical partnerships with cities or regions in south-east Europe;

- 8.2. the European Union to support, via its CARDS, INTERREG III and PHARE programmes, the proposed technical partnerships between cities and regions in south-east Europe and European Union member states and to extend the programme of assistance for twinnings to all countries of south-east Europe;
- 8.3. European and international financial organs, in particular the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Council of Europe Development Bank to intensify their activities in favour of local and regional authorities of south-east Europe;
- 8.4. the associations of local and regional authorities of south-east Europe to pursue, under a basic general agreement, their initiative to set up a network, making it possible to implement practical co-operation projects, and ultimately leading to a union between associations;
- 8.5. the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs), currently comprising 10 agencies in 4 countries (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Federation and Republika Srpska), the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia") to continue its activities, and to open a Local Democracy Agency in Kosovo;
- 8.6. more European cities and regions to become involved in the Association of Local Democracy Agencies and the partnerships set up by these agencies, bearing in mind the role they play in promoting local democracy, civil society and intercultural dialogue by providing appropriate training;
9. solemnly call on all governments participating in the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe to:
  - lend their support to the initiatives aimed at developing democratic and efficient local and regional authorities;
  - step up transfrontier and interregional co-operation in south-east Europe;
10. recommend that a channel for dialogue be set up for the representatives of associations of local and regional authorities of south-east Europe, taking account of the experience already acquired on 1 June 2001 in Strasbourg and 1 November 2001 in Istanbul, making it possible to bring together on a regular basis the principal leaders of local and regional authorities in countries of South-East Europe which are members of the CLRAE, who could act as points of contact for not only the Council of Europe but also the Stability Pact;
11. request that an outline programme be developed, essentially through this ad hoc structure (see paragraph 10), to reinforce the training of elected representatives and local and regional government staff in south-east Europe, which could be submitted for funding by the governments participating in the Stability Pact.
12. recall the proposal to hold the 8<sup>th</sup> European Conference of frontier Regions in Edirne (Turkey);
13. request that the CLRAE - with the support of the FEDRE - pursue the initiative begun in Skopje and further built on in Istanbul in order to provide follow-up to the numerous projects and initiatives, in particular by:
  - 13.1. continuing its role as a focal point for partnerships between cities and regions of south-east Europe, as a complement to and not in place of the action taken by European associations specialising in this field;

- 13.2. pursuing its activities to prepare a multilateral agreement on transfrontier co-operation between local and regional authorities in south-east Europe, based on the principles set out in the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities and its two additional protocols;
- 13.3. developing transfrontier co-operation in south-east Europe, in particular by encouraging the creation of new "Euroregions";
- 13.4. developing the network of Local and Regional Authorities of South-East Europe to set up a Union of these Associations;
- 13.5. organising in 2002 an information seminar on the aid granted by the European Union for the development of trans-European and interregional co-operation between local and regional authorities under its assistance programmes such as INTERREG III C and its programmes for the countries in transition;
- 13.6. organising in Novi Sad (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), at the same time as the Economic Fair, the next Forum of Cities and Regions of South-East Europe – 9<sup>th</sup> Economic Forum – from 18 to 20 April 2002;