

DECLARATION ON THE BALKAN AND BLACK SEA REGIONAL COMMISSION STRATEGY

Tulcea County Council has been a member of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe since 2001, being a trustworthy partner and working consistently for regional cooperation and dialogue. We believe that our goal of a united Europe could only be achieved through regional cooperation, dialogue and concrete projects.

Historically speaking, the Balkans and Black Sea Region has confronted many challenges, due to its strategic position. Therefore, this region is less economically developed than Central and Western Europe. We must try to use every transnational programme, every instrument provided by the European Union to reduce disparities and to annihilate this historical inertia. For our Commission, the Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme is one of the most important instruments to work on. Romania has the managing authority of this programme and, if I am elected, establishing a direct link with the Managing Authority will be one priority. Moreover, cooperation with the Managing Authority of the Balkan-Mediterranean Transnational Programme would be another priority in this field.

Other EU-funded regional cooperation instruments to boost economic development are the Cross Border Cooperation Romania-Ukraine Programme 2014-2020 and Cross Border Cooperation Romania-Bulgaria Programme 2014-2020, where also, Romania has the managing authority. Unfortunately, the situation in Ukraine is not facilitating cross border cooperation but we do hope that further developments will not rule out all the chances to work together with Ukrainian Regions. On the other hand, we have all the right conditions for a perfect collaboration with Bulgarian Regions within the Cross Border Cooperation Romania-Bulgaria Programme. This could constitute a great chance to increase the number of the Romanian and Bulgarian regions in the Balkan and Black Sea Regional Commission and we must take advantage of every opportunity to increase our membership.

As I already affirmed, every European instrument provided by the European Union to reduce disparities and to increase regional cooperation must be used. Contributing to the implementation of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region and helping the current Black Sea Synergy to become a real ambitious Strategy should also be our targets.

The Balkans and Black Sea Commission should continue cooperation with the BSEC (Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation) of which the CPMR is a sectoral dialogue partner, to identify common economic issues and to find proper solutions in the area.

To attract new members, we need to set and implement concrete projects, to have an effective and pragmatic approach.

The two Working Groups on Tourism and Business Cooperation should constitute priorities. The economy of regions from Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania is dependent on tourism. These Working Groups should be the incubators for ideas and concept notes for concrete projects.

The member regions should contribute more with their ideas and expectations even with concept notes. An important goal to reach is to reactivate the member regions: one axis would be encouraging our member Regions to represent our area in the CPMR Working Groups which prepare the political work of this Organization (*Cohesion Policy indicators Task Force, Working Group on Transport, Working Groups on Maritime Policies, etc.*); when relevant, our Commission could also launch specific Working Groups, provided that our Regions can bring the necessary support to their running (organization, expertise).

The enlargement of the Balkan and Black Sea Regional Commission should be taken into account, over the long term. For instance, no regions from Georgia are represented in our Commission and we should consider inviting a peripheral maritime region to join us. And in the short run, interest shown by Turkish Provinces over the last years should be encouraged: together with the CPMR, we should develop our relationship with potential new Turkish members.

Our General Assembly, to be held on 29 May in Brussels, will be coupled with a major event co-organised with the European Committee of the Regions. This opportunity will be seized to promote our Commission within the EU institutions, and play a role in shaping the future EU Neighbourhood Policy, at a time when it is being discussed in the European Parliament and the European Commission. Taking into account the growing role of this institution, our Commission should establish closer links with the European Parliament. This objective can be reached with the help of our EU members getting in touch with their MEPs.

As I mentioned above, the Black Sea Basin and the Balkan Peninsula have confronted big challenges in the past. Some of these challenges have remained over time and our role is to change challenges into opportunities, into win-win situations for every member. I hope that together we will achieve this goal.

Mr. Mircea Stoian

County Councillor

Tulcea County Council

