



## Regional Seminar of Local and Regional Authorities - The Balkans “Methods and tools for the development of territories”

*Sarajevo, 25 & 26 May 2009*

### CONCLUSIONS

Several obstacles were identified through the analysis of current decentralization trends in the Balkans (Round table 1), but proposals were also made to move forward in the implementation of the process that local authorities regard as a true tool for the revival of territories.

- Setting up a **legal framework** that will make local autonomy possible and a better organization of local authorities. Extended powers must be devolved locally (subsidiarity) according to the relevance of the level/tier of decentralization. Looking forward to the second Forum of Local and Regional Authorities of the Mediterranean, a suggestion was made for the elaboration of a charter on the scope of decentralization and local development in the Mediterranean.
- Reinforcing **fiscal decentralization** to give local authorities the financial means that will allow them to exercise efficiently those powers that have been decentralized.
- Implementing **coordination and interaction mechanisms** between the different levels of local authorities for improved coordination and linkages between interventions.

Exchanges on the approach in terms of territory marketing and tourism policy (Round table 2) highlighted the important tourism potential and showed new possibilities to enhance the potentialities of the territories of the Balkans within a sustainable development perspective and in a unified bottom-up approach originating in the territories.

- **Identification and development of “products” and services** specific to the region—essentially in eco-tourism and cultural tourism, in particular, the diversity of the historical, natural, and cultural heritage, hospitality, etc.—that yield tourism and economic potentialities while adopting a creative and innovative approach.
- **Development of regional polycentrism** for a more balanced development of territories, both in urban and in rural areas.
- **Political and financial support of State institutions** for local tourism development and promotion: defining national priorities jointly with all the actors involved; setting up tools like tourist offices/information centers; implementing the adequate infrastructure; making traveling easier (visa requirements); assessment and control of investments, etc.
- **Setting up a national, regional, and local strategic framework** including a program and a partnership between the State and different administrative tiers.

## DRAFT

- **Citizen involvement in all stages** (identification of needs, elaboration of the strategy, implementation of projects, evaluation, etc.) in a participative approach. The pertinent role of local authorities in the effective commitment of citizens to the development of their territory was highlighted.

Decentralized and multilateral cooperation between territories and the opportunities it offers for political relations and technical exchanges were underscored in Round table 3, as a tool that would allow to bridge divides and set aside stereotypes in the Balkans and as one of the solutions that would benefit local development.

The following areas for improvement were highlighted:

- The need to give new impetus by **reinforcing and diversifying relations** in decentralized cooperation.
- Framing initiatives within a **unified approach**: coordination between several thematic sectors (environment, economy, social approach, etc.); interactive relations between different local levels and actors; and coordinating time frames.
- Going beyond the protocol approach by **expanding the scope of sectors of intervention, strengthening human resources and building capacity of local personnel by fostering closer relations with the private sector and with associations.**
- Greater **diversity of decentralized cooperation tools** particularly through European programs that offer opportunities for actions on a much larger scale than bilateral or decentralized cooperation.
- Reinforcing the **dissemination of knowledge and experience by consolidating the network approach.**
- Soliciting States for support in decentralized cooperation through the implementation of an **adequate legal framework and financial support.**