

## **Declaration on Cross-Border Cooperation in a Wider Europe**

Cross-border cooperation is vital for stability, growth and development in Europe. Current obstacles to East-West cooperation, stretching geographically from the Barents Sea in the North to the Black Sea in the South, hinder human contacts, curb economic development, restrain political relations, and create new dividing lines.

We, the participants at the European Border Dialogues conference of 2010, propose to authorities on all levels – municipalities, regions, states and the European Union – to facilitate interaction between politicians and officials, NGOs, industry and SME, as well as private individuals, on both sides of the borders, and promote cross-border projects, activities and initiatives within the field of information, culture, capacity building, knowledge transfer and trans-border mobility. The active engagement and support of authorities in all the countries located along the European Union's eastern border is essential for the development of relations.

We, representatives of civil society organizations; institutions of research and education; local, regional and national authorities, from sixteen nations, seek new, joint approaches and coordinated efforts in cross-border affairs.

The European Border Dialogue initiative is developed as a bottom-up support forum to the European Neighborhood Policy and is in line with EU strategies in the field. The initiative promotes the sharing of experiences from a wide range of border regions and will hold annual conferences, the next in the Kaliningrad-Polish region.

Having identified key challenges in current cross-border cooperation in Europe, among which are visa regulations; inefficient border crossing procedures; complicated and conflicting legislation; lack of accurate information and data; corruption; insufficient border crossing infrastructure; lack of political engagement and support; trade restrictions; excessive bureaucracy, we will seek to take the following measures:

- **Develop coordinating information mechanisms which include sophisticated monitoring and analysis tools; index studies for the social-economic mapping of border regions; an advanced web portal with powerful information and visualization tools and a joint European project database**
- **Develop joint models for capacity building programmes, which can be designed and applied in all the respective border regions, and which will include local and regional officials, representatives of NGOs, the mass media, businesses and public institutions.**
- **Institutionalize the European Border Dialogues initiative with the establishment of needed organizational structures.**
- **Promote enhanced flexibility in project financing; donors should make their cross-border financial mechanisms more adjustable to regional specifics and open up for more small grant projects.**

By the participants at the conference "European Border Dialogues. Cross-Border Cooperation in a Wider Europe", Uzhgorod/Kosice 27-29 October 2010