

**Union of the Baltic Cities – XIII General Conference „Building Smart Cities in the Baltic Sea Region”**

**Gdynia - Pomorski Park Naukowo Technologiczny – Główna sala konferencyjna  
godz. 9:30**

**Przemówienie otwierające – Mieczysław Struk - Marszałek Województwa Pomorskiego**

Dear Mayor, Mr President, Ms Counsellor, representatives of the European institutions and organisations, representatives of the Baltic Sea Region cities, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure to welcome you to Pomorskie Region. The more so, that the Union of the Baltic Cities was established in 1991 here - in the then Gdańsk region. As you are very well aware, and as your numerous presence today proves, it was a very farsighted decision. Now, you are meeting in Gdynia to discuss a very timely and important subject of smart cities. Earlier this month, in the Amber Expo we had another big international meeting, devoted to the subject of “smart metropolia”. Yesterday in the European Solidarity Centre, I opened a two-day conference “Innovative Europe – Fostering Innovation Ecosystem”. In mid-November, together with the Danish Embassy, we are co-hosting a meeting entitled “Smart Living Project”. All this proves that we have essential issues to discuss and decide and be SMART.

Smart is a new buzzword of the European Union. But it is not just a buzzword. It shows the way both cities, regions and states have to go. It is a new reality. Today, about 70 per cent of people in the European Union live in cities. Both small and big ones. And they live longer and healthier lives, and have bigger and bigger expectations. Therefore, the cities need to reinvent themselves, as you have rightly noticed. And do it in a broad partnership, including public administration of all levels, citizens, NGOs, business, academia and research. To be successful in that, cities need a vision and a long-term goal. As we all know a city is a living organism of complex nature – social, legal, technological, industrial, environmental and communicational. And it has to develop on all of those levels,

to be really sustainable. To develop in the right direction, we have to know true needs of citizens, and work in dialogue with them. And the final goal is to create a friendly and functional space for all. For that, we need a great deal of social capital.

There are various ways to understand the term SMART. I like the broad approach which covers the following categories: smart economy, smart mobility, smart environment, smart people, smart living and smart governance.

The above mentioned conference - “Smart Metropolia” was a good example of such an approach. Its main title was “Metropolis’ Leisure Time” and it covered various subjects including recreation, culture, regional cuisine, education, etc. They all add up to create high quality of life and good living conditions. And that is what people expect.

For me – being the head of the region – it is important to look beyond individual cities, provide conditions for smaller and bigger ones, to develop and be a creative partner of this development. It is also important to see that the cities develop in close link with the surrounding areas. In this context I have to mention:

- Our key strategic document – Pomorskie Development Strategy 2020, which is the basis for long term planning, including the use of the EU funds;
- Identification of Pomorskie Smart Specialisations – which cover the areas of: logistics, port and offshore, ICT, energy, medicine;
- Establishment of the Gdańsk – Gdynia – Sopot Metropolitan Area, with its key strategic documents, including Transport and Mobility Strategy

And what I would like to proudly stress here is, that all our strategic documents and initiatives have been prepared in the bottom up processes.

As you may know, Poland is the biggest beneficiary of the EU funds for the period 2014-2020. Pomorskie – only from the Regional Operational Programme - will have at its disposal more than one billion, eight hundred million euro. It is 46 per cent more than in the former period. Programmes related to the SMART idea are a big portion of that programme. And I have no doubt that we will use it well and with a success.

I am sure that those of you who are in Pomorskie not for the first time, can be sure of it because you can see positive changes both in the cities and around them. To give just a few examples of latest initiatives:

- Pomorskie Metropolitan Railway – modern transportation system linking key parts of the region;
- New tram lines within cities;
- Clean and safe energy related projects like: building thermal insulation or renewable energy installations;
- introduction of e-solutions – a good example here might be a very interesting Gdynia project named Energa livingLab;
- Development of science and research institutions, including some of the most modern laboratories;
- Accus project in Gdańsk - on integration of urban systems like traffic, energy and outdoor lighting.

To support various initiative important for the region, including those SMART ones, we have established - in cooperation with the cities and universities - a specialist for innovation in our Regional Office in Brussels. Her role is to spread information, encourage partnerships and help initiate projects, in order to be able to benefit better from programmes like Horizon 2020 or Innovative Europe. We

also arrange annually, again with the local partners, Pomorskie Energy Days during which we promote clean energy solutions and energy saving behaviour.

In line with our broad understanding of SMART, together with local partners, we have established culture and education institutions, helped clear the environment, etc. And we observe with pride how cities act, building bicycle routes, clean city transport or arranging city space to be more friendly for citizens – often with the use of participatory solutions, such as citizen budget, for instance.

Ladies and gentlemen, during those two days you will, for sure, see some results of our joint work, I have mentioned. You will also have a chance to exchange views and share good practices. I am more than sure that the Union of the Baltic Cities, as a body bringing together cities of this important and well developing part of Europe, is an important partner of the big smart change for the better.

In this connection, I congratulate you on the initiative of establishing the Baltic Sea Region Forum for Smart Cities – implemented together with the Baltic Development Forum. I hope also, that cities and regions, cooperating within Baltic Sea structures, will together be more successful in encouraging our central level, as well as the European Commission, to involve us more into policy development and implementation of documents like the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Pomorskie does it within structures like Euroregion Baltic or the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation. I personally, together with delegates from Gdynia and Gdańsk, do it also within the Committee of the Regions, where we are delegates.

Together, working on all the levels and using all the possible instruments, we will make our cities, regions, countries and Europe, a better place to live. We just have to be SMART.

Thank you.