

MARUF 2025
"On the Shore of All Possibilities"
International urban forum organised
by Marmara Municipalities Union (1-3 October 2025)

Panel discussion co-organised with the Congress on
"Resilience in Action: Local Preparedness for Environmental
Challenges"

Istanbul, 1 October 2025

Speaking points for Mr Tamara Snofl, Mayor of Kungota, Slovenia

Introduction (4 minutes)

- As the Mayor of Kungota in Slovenia, a border municipality closely tied to nature and agriculture, I know how much local life depends on our ability to live with the environment and adapt to change.
- Slovenia, like many European countries, has recently faced devastating floods, droughts, and wildfires. These events are no longer exceptional, they are recurring. They remind us that crisis management is not a single moment but a cycle: preparation before, immediate response during, coordinated reconstruction just after, and long-term resilience well after the crisis
- The Congress has clearly highlighted this in its recent report on local and regional responses to natural disasters and climate hazards.

- For local leaders, this means acting not only as administrators, but as crisis managers and resilience builders, balancing urgent responsibilities with long-term vision.
- **Before the crisis**, preparedness begins with identifying risks, carrying out prevention measures, and raising awareness. Building a culture of risk is essential, where citizens, associations and businesses must all take part.
- **During the crisis**, response capacity depends on strong coordination, volunteers, and civil protection units. Maintaining clear communication with citizens is vital to ensure trust and avoid misinformation.
- **Just after the crisis**, reconstruction requires rapid mobilisation of resources and smooth cooperation between local, regional, and national levels. This phase is not only about repairing damage but also about integrating resilience into new infrastructure.
- **Well after the crisis**, recovery can serve as a laboratory for innovation. Municipalities can integrate lessons learned, engage citizens, and design long-term strategies for adapting to climate risks.
- **Preparedness requires a cultural shift.** We must build a **culture of risk and anticipation**, where citizens, civil society, and businesses work together on resilience. Small municipalities can lead the way here, as they are closer to their people and can mobilize them more directly. But they cannot succeed without support; especially adequate financial means and access to international funding mechanisms.
- Examples from Europe show the importance of **solidarity**: Belgium after floods, Spain facing wildfires, Türkiye responding to earthquakes. Each case

demonstrates that while risks differ, the principles of preparedness, coordination, and resilience are universal.

- Congress initiatives such as the **Reykjavik Principles for Democracy** and the **New Democracy Pact** also highlight that resilience is not only technical, but also democratic: ensuring participation, accountability, and solidarity throughout the crisis cycle.
- Natural disasters and climate hazards will continue to affect us all. The next crisis is inevitable. What matters is whether we are ready; not only to respond, but to use each crisis as an opportunity to strengthen resilience and rebuild trust in democratic governance.
- By empowering local and regional authorities with resources, partnerships and knowledge, we also strengthen the resilience of our societies as a whole.

Points for the discussion

- how can national risk systems better draw on the daily experience of municipalities? Preparedness begins with **risk assessments** that reflect both scientific data and local realities. National and regional plans often provide the framework, but municipalities are the places where risks are most visible. A stronger integration of local knowledge into wider risk mapping could prevent blind spots.
- Local resilience depends heavily on **volunteers and community networks**. Volunteer fire brigades, rescue units, and civil protection groups form the backbone of local response capacity. Their strength lies in community trust and close ties with citizens. Yet their sustainability requires regular training, adequate equipment, and recognition. We should probably consider new

frameworks to support volunteers across Europe, ensuring they remain motivated and prepared for increasingly complex disasters

- Disasters highlight how **local budgets are insufficient when extraordinary damage occurs**. Recent floods in Slovenia and earthquakes in Türkiye show that national and European solidarity mechanisms are indispensable. But they often arrive after the crisis. We must ensure that municipalities have predictable and accessible support before disasters strike, so that resilience is strengthened in advance, not only repaired afterwards.
- **Disasters do not respect administrative boundaries**. Floods, wildfires, and storms can cross territories within hours. Yet cross-border mechanisms are often slow and bureaucratic. Border municipalities could serve as laboratories for cooperation, sharing risk data, response resources, and early-warning systems. European frameworks can better facilitate rapid, practical cross-border solidarity
- The key question is: **how do we turn moments of crisis into opportunities** for structural transformation, instead of simply replacing what was lost? **Recovery** should be more than a return to normal. Reconstruction can be a laboratory for innovation; to build back better with climate-proof infrastructure, sustainable land use, and more inclusive governance. For example, post-crisis rebuilding can integrate green energy, nature-based solutions, and stronger public participation.