By Antònia Sabartés, Secretary General, Euroregión Pirineos Mediterrànea, Former Director of International Relations of the City of Barcelona (2003-2009)

Upon learning of the centenary of the international municipal movement, I felt nauseous as I realised that of these 100 years, I had spent 23 completely immersed in this world. Without any doubt, they have been the best professional years of my life. The story begins for me in 1986 when I arrived in Paris to begin working for United Towns Organization (FMCU-UTO) with the President at that time, Pierre Mauroy.

While in Paris, I witnessed the election of Barcelona as host of the Olympic Games in the summer of 1992 and received a proposal from the Town Hall of Barcelona, member of FMCU, to return to the city and work together with the Mayor, Pasqual Maragall, and Deputy Mayor, Jordi Borja, in the creation of an international strategy and team.
In my view, the key moment in the unification process was the election in 1991 of Pasqual Maragall as President of CCRE. This moment, and the major debate on whether cities should have their own space or should necessarily pass through the filter of associations, marked the beginning of a new stage: a stage that began in 1992 during the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro when, for the first time, a Mayor addressed the United Nations. It was Jean Doré, Mayor of Montreal, thanks to the coordination group that we had created, the G4.

At that moment we understood that we had already superseded the European level and that union would be our strong point, and our objective became to boost the role and voice of cities on the international scene.

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