



Network of Associations of Local Authorities from South-East Europe - NALAS

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NALAS is announcing through this info-bulletin the intention to bring into your attention as many as possible general information about its activities, but also about what the member associations are doing at the level of the respective countries. The information from this info-bulletin is submitted by the associations' representatives and by different collaborators. To subscribe or to unsubscribe to this info-bulletin, please send e-mail with your request to nalas.see@gmail.com.

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A. MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS' ACTIVITIES

1. ZELS activities (www.zels.org.mk)

- ZELS marks its 34TH birthday

On 26 April 2006, ZELS celebrated, in a working atmosphere, its 34th birthday. On this date, back in 1972, the Founding Assembly was held to constitute the then Association of Municipalities and Cities of Macedonia. The representatives of the then existing 30 municipalities confirmed their previous consent to found this voluntary association of municipalities and cities in Macedonia. They adopted the Statute of the Association, formed the governing bodies, endorsed the orientation working program and a reached a decision regarding the manner of financing of the Association. Dragoljub Stavrev, the then President of the Assembly of the City of Skopje, was elected the first President of the Association, with Vanco Petrov, President of the Assembly of Gevgelija Municipality, as the Association's Vice-President. Ljubomir Babunski was appointed as its Secretary.



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April 26 is declared as the Day of the Association and of the Municipalities in the Republic of Macedonia in the new Statute as well, Article 4, Point 2. ZELS remains a non-profit organization of 84 municipalities, as the units of local self-government, and the City of Skopje as a separate local self-government unit, which join voluntarily on an equal basis for the purpose of protecting and promoting their common interests.

- 13th session of the ZELS Managing Board

ZELS Managing Board held its 13th session on 7 April 2006, in Mavrovo. There were six points on the session's agenda. Following the adoption of the minutes of the 12th session of the Managing Board, the members were informed about the talks held at the two meetings between the ZELS Representatives and the Manager of the Public Revenue Office, Ms. Petra Miteva. It was said that the Public Revenue Office had agreed to continue to print the property tax and communal tax statements this year too, but had pointed out that the paper and toner expenses should be covered by each municipality in particular. With regard to this issue, the Managing Board considered two possible options. According to the first one, the printing of the statements and their distribution to each tax payer in particular, along with the inserted payment form, should be performed by the Postal Services at the cost of MKD 40 per statement. The second option, which was adopted by the Managing Board, envisaged that the printing would be conducted by the Public Revenue Office, while the municipalities would decide by themselves about the manner of distribution. It was stated that the Managing Board had no right to assign the municipalities with obligatory tasks, stressing the fact that most of the municipalities had already defined the manner of distribution on their territories which they considered the most affordable. It was agreed that the Public Revenue Office should send a notification letter conveying its standpoint and distribute the same to the municipalities.

- Local school management program

On 13 April 2006, a meeting was held in the ZELS premises among representatives of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Macedonia, DAI and ZELS, to discuss, inter alia, the criteria for the selection of municipalities that will be covered by the Local School Management Program (LSMP). This is an 18-month long program financed by the Dutch Embassy and implemented by the DAI – development Alternatives Incorporated. The program will be implemented in two phases, the first of which includes cooperation with eight partner municipalities, with a proposition and implementation of local strategies for improved management of the educational system. During the second phase, the experience gained from the cooperation with the partner municipalities will be transformed into a training program, trainings and a guidebook for the municipal representatives in charge of issues in the educational sphere. The selection of eight municipalities will be preceded by a questionnaire that has already been distributed to the municipalities, and then, on the basis of the previously defined criteria and direct visits to the short-listed municipalities, the final selection will be made. The selected municipalities will be working in pairs (one urban and one rural municipality). In order to define the frameworks of cooperation as part of the Program, ZELS and DAI's Development Alternatives will sign a Memorandum of Understanding. The implementation of the training and the counseling of the eight partner municipalities is planned to commence in June 2006

- Conference on the role of the municipal committees for inter - community relations



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On 28 March 2006, in Skopje, ZELS and OSCE organized a Conference on the Role of the Municipal Committees for Inter-Community Relations. The role of these committees was presented at the Conference, while their significance was discussed by representatives of the local and central governments, political parties, experts and professors attending. Philipp Stiel, Head of the OSCE Public Administration Reform Unit, stated that the biggest motive for forming the committees should come from the municipalities themselves. The participants discussed the status, manner of operation, selection procedure and the object of activity of the committees for inter-community relations. The discussions resulted in the following conclusions: the committees on inter-community relations should be formed as permanent committees within the local governance units. Each committee should be composed of an equal number of representatives of each of the communities living in the local governance unit, in line with the official results of the latest census, or in line with the Preamble of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, with a four-year mandate. The committee should have at least three members, of whom one is the chairman of the committee. The issue of functioning of the committees, the manner of their decision-making, the procedure of summoning the committee and the election of their members will be formulated in a special document in the form of a Proposal for amending and supplementing the existing municipal statutes, harmonized by ZELS and OSCE, and the same will be distributed to the municipalities in the forthcoming period.

2. AKM activities (www.komunat-ks.net)

- Prime minister Mr. Agim Çeku and his Deputy Mr. Lutfi Haziri met with Kosova Municipality Mayors

Two following months are crucial for the fulfillment of standards, considered Agim Çeku, while asking the municipal mayors to undertake maximum dynamic activities in this area. Prime minister Çeku, said that these two months are sufficient for fulfillment of the standards, accompanied by his deputy Lutfi Haziri in a meeting with municipal mayors in Prishtina Municipal Assembly. They informed the heads of municipalities with the priorities and Governments' requirements, the way of cooperation with the mayors and its importance in the fulfillment of the Governments obligation for a more favorable legislation in local government. Prime minister Çeku asked the mayors to pay special attention to the fulfillment of the standards in the next coming months, especially the following one. According to Prime minister the fulfillment of a lot of points of the standards depends on Municipalities, "from the field work, for which they understood the importance of the fulfillment by their side". "The political level, both central and local will become more dynamic. And by this work the government will give a strong fact to the Negotiation Team in the dialog for the status of Kosovo", he said. Deputy Prime minister and minister of Local Government Mr. Lutfi Haziri said that the fulfillment of the standards remains with the motto: work, action and legality. Mayor of Prishtina and President of the Association of Kosovo Municipalities Mr. Ismet Beqiri, put the issue of the fulfillment of standards upon responsibility. "Practical engagement in fulfilling our obligations will make the process successful or stall ", said Beqiri. "We cannot leave things that can be done today for tomorrow ", he continued underlining that this is being done in unusual circumstances and that in normal circumstances much more time would be needed.

- AMK delegation visit in Great Britain



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Association of Kosovo Municipalities Delegation consisting of Mr. Eqrem Kryeziu – Mayor of MA Prizren, Mr. Ali Lajci – Mayor of MA Peja and Mr. Sazan Ibrahimimi – AMK Executive director continues its visit in Great Britain. The AMK delegation met with Great Britain LGIB (Local Government International Bureau) Executive Director Mr. Mike Ashley and discussed the structure and the role of the Local Government Associations. Whereas, during the meeting with Chief Executive of Essex Region Mr. Paul Cohen (future LGIB |Chief Executive) the Kosovo delegation informed him about the challenges and achievements of Kosovo local government.

The delegation also met with Lord Hanningfield – Chairman of Essex Council region also a member of England’s Parliament. Topics discussed in the meeting were local self-government, the situation and developments in Kosovo, known very well by Lord Hanningfield. Mayor Kryeziu informed Lord Hanningfield on the progress achieved in Kosovo, the process of negotiations for Kosovo status, standards fulfillment process. Etc. On the other hand Lord Hanningfield promised England’s support for Kosovo.

It is worth mentioning that Essex region counts 1.5 million inhabitants and has a budget of around 1 billion and 500 million euros, while it consists of 14 districts and it is the most economically developed region.

Further more, in the meeting between Essex Chief Executive Mr. Paul Coen and AMK Executive Director Mr. Sazan Ibrahimimi the possibility of decreasing the unemployment rate in Kosovo was discussed; whereas experience exchange ways were discussed in details with Lord Hanningfield and these initiatives taken from Kosovo local government were supported from his side.

While during the AMK delegation meeting with Mr. Roy Whitehead – Chairman of Chelmsford Borough Council cooperation between two countries both in local economical development and experience exchange field were discussed.

- Association of Kosovo Municipalities signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development and Association of Kosovo Municipalities signed a Memorandum of Understanding for forestry related issues. This memorandum comes after the preceding memorandum of cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural affairs and AMK Committee of Agriculture.

According to the memorandum signed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Affairs and Association of Kosovo Municipalities the municipal level will have more competencies in the field of protecting forests, and 20 percent of the Kosovo Forestry Agency revenues will belong to the respective Kosovo municipalities’ budget.

President of Association of Kosovo Municipalities Mr. Ismet Beqiri, underlined the importance of this memorandum and assessed it as a “positive effect in the cooperation between central institutions, respectively specific ministries and Association of Kosovo Municipalities and as a form of a positive effect in filling the legal gap that existed and unfortunately still exists within the legal infrastructure. Municipalities will do all they can to positively effect on all the issues directly related to citizens and local government”.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Local Government Administration Mr. Lutfi Haziri considered the act of signing the memorandum as a very important moment for the municipalities that does not only shows the Governments’ and Municipalities’ engagement on one side but it also reflects the joint commitment for partnership between the Government and Municipalities for determination of duties and responsibilities towards the law.



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Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development Mr. Tomë Hajdaraj, considered the draft on forestry affairs issued by the AMK Committee for Agriculture, over which a lot of discussions were done in the level of ministers and local government, as an achievement that resulted into a valid document over which the signed persons will have their obligations.

- Municipal Mayors met Kosovo Head of Parliament Mr. Kolë Berisha

Under the organization of Association of Kosovo Municipalities, Kosovo Municipality Mayors were received by Head of Kosovo Parliament, Mr. Kolë Berisha. President of AMK Mr. Ismet Beqiri congratulated Head-parliamentarian for his new duty and presented to head parliamentarian Berisha AMK vision and activities and promised an institutional cooperation in all the segments aiming to the local social and economical development and the application of the laws brought by Kosovo Assembly.

Head-parliamentarian Berisha said that the main burden of activities is done in the level of municipalities; Kosovo's independence also starts in the level of municipalities, because a developed municipality is a very important factor for the resurrection of the country, hence for creation of a stable country that lives on his own human and material resources. This would also be an answer for the voices asking if we can survive as an independent country. Kosovo's Parliament will always be open and close to the concerns faced by the municipalities, because a progressive development can only be achieved jointly. Head-parliamentarian Berisha said that he sees Mayors as non-partisan subjects since the development of the municipalities is a joint responsibility for everyone and cannot have partisan shades.

During the discussion mayors declared that there should be a practice that Parliament after drafting and proceeding laws, would consult municipalities and AMK Committees since they will carry the burden of applying those laws into practice. This would be a kind of public debate on the laws. The participants also considered the debate nature of the Parliament as very fruitful. In this occasion they also mentioned a range of concerns they face in their everyday jobs in creating a better environment for all the citizens. Mayors unanimously declared that they favor a strict application of the laws; hence the undergoing audits are being supported by every municipality, because as it was said it is in favor of eliminating weaknesses. In the end more transparency was asked during the decentralization process.

Further Head-parliamentarian Berisha informed the participants for Parliaments engagement for deriving laws, especially basic ones

3. AMTS activities (www.skupnostobcin.si)

- April session of chairmanship

April session of chairmanship of Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia was near Cerknica lake. Main themes were discussion of proposal of law, concerning spatial planning and the strategic plan in tourism planning in years between 2006-2011. Changing of existent terminology was emphasized concerning proposal of mentioned law and also lack of elements on active land policy. On the area of tourism chairmanship accepted following conclusion: all municipalities should send their proposals and comments by May 4th.

- Workshop »Review of impacts on environment«



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Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia organized a workshop »Review of impacts on environment«. Main purpose of the workshop was to improve quality of municipal plan documents from the aspect of protection of the environment and informing municipal officials with procedures regarding environment. Participants prepared tasks for making the environmental report and to examine the possibilities of alternative solutions.

- Management of municipalities and possibility of collecting European union funds

Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia organized a seminar called »Management of municipalities and possibility of collecting European union funds«. Lecturers at the seminar were two supreme state auditors from the Court of Audit of the Republic of Slovenia. The main emphasis of the seminar were measures, which should be taken under the consideration with regard of bigger possibility of collecting European union funds. It was also warned against key irregularities at managing and incurring debts of local authorities.

- Serbian project Exchange

Some Slovene municipalities signed up on invitation for participating in Serbian project Exchange with purpose for professional cooperation with Serbian municipalities. Coordinators of this project notified us of selected Slovenian municipalities, which will establish mutual collaboration on chosen thematic issues, based on partnership between Municipalities. Municipality of Maribor has been chosen for two projects, namely for cooperation with municipalities Kovin and Pecinci; Lenart municipality got municipality of Arilje for the collaborating partner; and Vodice will link with Kanjiža.

4. AAM activities (www.aam-al.org)

- Albanian Association on Municipalities together with the Association of Municipalities of the German Land Baden – Wurtemberg organised the Workshop “Albanian – German cooperation on the field of Local Government”. At this workshop participated the Executive Director of the German Association. The purpose of this meeting was the discussion of the programs that are helping the Albanian LG and the possibilities of the cooperation on this field. This workshop was one of some workshops, seminars, study visits planed to be organised between these two Local Government Associations.

- From 6-7 April AAM organised a Seminar on “Improvement for the management on the Public Services in the Municipalities”. There were many representatives and a positive aspect of this meeting was that there were representatives for the Ministry of Interior. The most important issues were on: management on cleaning services, water management and there were many discussions on the public lights. During this meeting many other issues were treated such as: deadlines of the contracts signed between the municipalities and different firms that offer services in the municipalities; decrease of the VAT for the service of the cleaning; proper determination of the cost of services etc.

At the end of this two-day meeting were compiled many conclusions which were send to all the interested parties.

- On April the 12th was organized the “National Conference for the Service of Portable Water”. This Conference was organized by different actors be they from central and local Government. During this meeting many Municipalities shared their experiences on this sector. Also the



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representatives from the central government explained the point of view of the policies that are being implemented in national level. The Executive Director of AAM held a speech on the "Role of the Associations of Municipalities on these services". The most important recommendation was that the local units should as soon as possible take into their responsibility the management of the portable water for their citizens. It was made very clear that in order that the Local Units take this responsibility, the Central Government should provide them with the proper funds for covering this service.

- On April the 20th AAM together with CoE and OSCE organised a workshop on "Drafting and Publishing a Manual for Albanian Mayors". The representatives of the CoE proposed the preparation of a Benchmark for an effective local authority and Leadership profile of an elected representative. The Mayors present at this meeting evaluated as positive the preparation of such a publication.

B. OPPORTUNITIES

1. Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative (LGI) – Call for Proposals „Policy Fellowship 2006/2007”

I. Purpose

LGI's fellowship program supports practical policy reform in the region, builds the capacities of talented individuals who are well placed to influence policy, creates networks of multinational experts, and supports the mission of LGI. Each year LGI selects talented professionals from Central, East and South-East Europe and the Newly Independent States to participate in the one-year program. Fellows work in small teams under the guidance of a well-respected mentor to produce policy-oriented studies on a given topic. The completed studies are impact oriented; each contains an advocacy or implementation strategy and concrete policy recommendations. LGI provides its fellows with training on how to write effective, concise, fact-based, practical policy reports. Other training modules LGI offers its fellows are public speaking, presentation skills and advocacy methods. At the conclusion of the program LGI works with its Fellows to determine what steps it can take to support the proposed recommendations in the completed studies. Fellows are generally policy researchers, policy advisors, civil servants and members of NGOs, advocacy groups or professional associations.

To learn more about the Open Society Institute see: <http://www.soros.org/>

To learn more about the Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative see: <http://lgi.osi.hu/index.php>

II. The project

The primary goal of the LGI Policy Fellowship program is to support policy research aimed at stimulating innovative and practical policy reform. Each year broad topics are identified for candidates from different country groups. LGI is currently calling for Fellows for its 2006/2007 program, which will run from October 2006 to October 2007. For more background information about the fellowship program see: http://lgi.osi.hu/documents.php?m_id=81

This year LGI is featuring two topics:



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Topic 1: "Assessing the 'New Public Management' reforms in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union"

Topic 2: "Spatial Analysis in Addressing Concentrations of Vulnerable Groups"

III. Fellowship topics for 2006/7

Topic 1: Assessing the 'New Public Management' reforms in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union

Team Mentor: Professor Guy Peters, University of Pittsburgh.

Governments have been attempting from their inception to make their bureaucracies more efficient and effective. Any number of ideas have been tried to achieve that goal, but during the past several decades the ideas of the New Public Management (NPM) have become a dominant approach to improving performance in the public sector. While the ideas of NPM have been characterized a number of different ways, the basic concept has included greater use of market-type programs to manage personnel and programs, the creation of greater autonomy for public organizations and public managers, greater attention to the “customers” of public services, and the use of alternative forms of service delivery. These reforms also tend to enhance the role of public managers in governance, and to some extent reduce the control of politicians. Not all governments have adopted all of these instruments, but a variety of packages have been adopted.

Topic 2: Spatial Analysis in Addressing Concentrations of Vulnerable Groups

Team Mentor: Katalin Pallai, International Expert and Advisor to Budapest Mayor

Population groups, resources, services, and positive and negative assets are rarely distributed evenly across the territory of a municipality. Neighborhoods with high concentrations of impoverished and/or vulnerable groups often have the weakest endowments of assets and services. Thus, constraints resulting from income poverty and/or social marginalization are sometimes compounded by decisions made in the public domain. This process can constrain social mobility and lead to deteriorating opportunities for already deprived groups. Informed municipal spatial analysis-of population clusters, their respective economic endowments/constraints, and the public services (or lack of) that are provided to them-is one useful tool that can aid policy makers in their approach to ameliorate conditions in deprived areas. Experience shows, however, that often times in East and South East Europe, municipal economic, capital investment, social and environmental development strategies have been formulated without a thorough spatial analysis being considered by the contributing stakeholders (i.e. local government, business community, NGOs, etc.). Fellows interested in this topic would analyze attempts by 2-3 municipal governments in their respective countries to improve public service delivery and economic opportunity. The focus should be on such policies and responses in neighborhoods with a high concentration of poor and/or vulnerable households. Fellows would begin by undertaking a spatial analysis of each selected municipality to reveal the clustering of different population groups, local conditions and services. The results could then be compared with the strategies that have been recently formulated by those municipalities to see if their intended goals and objectives adequately address the needs of impoverished/vulnerable groups. Where formal strategies have not been elaborated, the results of the mapping exercises can be analyzed in the context of municipal expenditure allocations. In doing so, the “undeclared dimension” of governmental decisions, like group interests, affiliations and prejudices may also be exposed, and recommendations to combat those biases can be offered.