



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

Info-bulletin no.15 – August-September 2006

E-mail address: nalas.see@gmail.com

Web: www.nalas-see.org

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.

Summary:

A. Members associations' activities

- Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities from Serbia - [SCTM](#)
- Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia – [AMTS](#)
- Association of Municipalities and Towns of Republic of Srpska – [ALVRS](#)
- Association of Kosovo Municipalities - [AKM](#)

A. MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS' ACTIVITIES

1. SCTM activities (www.skgo.org)

- Conference "Best Practice Award"

The Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, in co-operation with Association of Netherlands municipalities - VNG, organised Conference "Best Practice Award", which took place on **29 September 2006** in Belgrade Sava Centre.

The conference was organised within the framework of the project named "Best Practice Award", which Standing Conference implements with the support of the Association of Netherlands municipalities. Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides implementation funds for this project through the Programme "Association Building for Good Local Governance 2003-2006".

While there has been quite a large number of projects implemented in the area of local governance in Serbia in the past years, financed by international donors, a large number of municipalities has not directly benefited from them. Launching "Best Practice Award" project gave the opportunity to all municipalities to present their projects and share their results with others.



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

Over 70 Best Practice projects have been submitted. Evaluation Committee had a difficult task to choose the most successful projects which were presented at the Final Conference. Representatives of local self-government voted in order to select 3 best practice projects which were awarded at the Award Session.

The winners are the Municipality of Arilje and the Municipality of Koceljeva (share the first place). "Union of Small Municipalities of Western Serbia" was the project prepared by the Municipality of Koceljeva, while the Municipality of Arilje presented its project "**School of Healthy Living and Youth Centre**" within the project "Prevention of addiction diseases". The Municipality of Palilula (Nis) was on the third place with the project "**Informative Bulletin of the Municipality of Palilula**".

2. AMTS activities (www.skupnostobcin.si)

- *Summer session of chairmanship in Gornja Radgona*

Since Government office for local self-government and regional policy interposed the proposal of the most significant law for municipalities, *Financing of Municipalities Act*, during summer holidays, the chairmanship of the Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia had an extraordinary session in Gornja Radgona, where the Minister for local self-government presented the proposal of above mentioned Law. He warned about some novelties in Law and emphasised that financial independence of local communities from state may increase. Minister also expressed a possibility of losing small indefinite amount of financial resources towards municipalities especially for those with self-financing system, and again the others will gain on state's hand. Members of the chairmanship agreed that the aim of solutions in proposal is correct. However, *Financing of Municipalities Act* will not change the municipalities' financial situation, because they will not obtain any more financial resources – the Law will only deal with transfers of resources. They also stressed out that financial resources for local authorities must be planed for long-term, to encourage the development of the municipalities. Participans believe that the Law needs to be treated only upon prepared calculations of consequences, which should be prepared by the Government office for local self-government and regional policy. In the near future the Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia together with Government office for local self-government and regional policy will organize a wider debate on this subject.

- *“Euro Reviewer”*

Many activities and processes are taking place at the European union level which are important also for Slovene municipalities. Due to this reason secretariat of Association of municipalities and towns of Slovenia decided to inform our member municipalities about EU regularly. The “Euro Reviewer”, which we introduced at the beginning of September, will mostly be exploited for adopted documents more or less directly referred to regional and local authorities. It will be published twice per month, municipalities should be expecting it every other Monday.

For Euro Reviewer, the third gatherer of important information for municipalities in Slovenia (Weekly news, Reviewer), our hope is to fulfill the needs and expectations of the municipalities.

- *Workshop Town twinning*



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

Together with Austrian association of municipalities (Österreichischer Städtebund – Landesgruppe Steiermark) we prepared practical workshops – about Town twinning programs - for those who are engaged in international cooperations, town twinnings and providing of European financial resources for support of these activities. One of the workshops has been organized in Austria (Ferlach) on 4th September, the second with the equal content took place in Slovenia, in Ptuj on 20th September. Participants on workshop filled the application form for co-financing. Their work was later reviewed by one of the Brussels's official valuers of Town twinning programme.

3. ALVRS activities (www.alvrs.org)

- The announcement of the Associations and Municipalities and Towns of Republic of Srpska regarding the organization of the Congress of local-self government

„By following its mission that means strengthening of local self-government by representation, protection and supporting of its members and their interests, Association of municipalities and towns of Republika Srpska has got priority to provide support in the light of good governance at the local level in order to achieved citizens needs and expectations.

Association Presidency on its session, recognized organization of event named *Congress of local self-government, 18-20 of October 2006. Teslić, Republika Srpska, BiH*, as crucial event for its members when all of them, both representatives of executive and legislative authority in LSG units, gathered on one place, will have opportunity to discuss different issues, to exchange experiences and to propose solutions based on themes which will be discussed within Congress. Main topic of Congress will be **"Relations between executive and legislative authority in LSG units, in order words, relations between Mayor/City Mayor and Municipal/City Assembly as LSG unit bodies."**

Presidency put emphasis this topic from the reason that previous practice related to implementation of Law on local self-government showed that this relation is not standardized on adequate way. With other words, problem becomes when Mayor/City mayor does not have Municipal/City Assembly support on adoption of key decisions important for citizen life. Based on this, its become to the work obstruction of Municipal or City bodies but there is no mechanism for solving this problem.

By consulting of key stakeholders in regard of theme proposals which will be discussed on *Congress of local self-government*, as picture of local community reality , we will contribute to the overall actualization of this very important event.

We invited relevant experts – potential speakers to propose Congress themes and sub themes in order to have crucial discussion for LSG functioning in Republika Srpska.

International experts are more than welcome in order to share good examples of local practice.

We really hope that You will find this event interested in order to participate in it.

Secretary General

Brano Jovičić”

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

- Kosovo Municipalities send delegation to the USA - an opportunity to share experiences between the local authorities of Kosovo and their counter-parts in United States of America



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

Under the US Office organization in Pristina, a delegation from Association of Kosovo Municipalities, recently spent 3 weeks in the United States. The delegation consisted of the Executive Director of AKM and various Vice Presidents from select Municipalities. The group traveled to a number of States where they met and discussed topics of common interests with the civic leaders of a number of cities in those states. The delegation attended a number of meetings and treated to presentations crafted to give the group insights into how U.S. municipalities are organized and function and what they determine to be measures of their success. "We had several meetings with Associations and lobbying groups organized to protect and advance the local interests, at Washington DC, The visits were enlightening and the experience indispensable for continuing the work that still needs to be done in Kosovo" – said Mr. Sazan Ibrahim, the Executive Director of AKM.

The delegation's agenda included a visit to the U.S. State Department where it met with a number of officials who voiced their commitment for advancing a solution beneficial to all parties concerned with the future status of Kosovo.

The agenda included visits to Portland, Oregon, a major U.S. city situated in the northwest U.S. where they met with different community representatives, and local authorities, where frank and open discussions addressing the issue of crime prevention topped the agenda. Also included in the trip agenda were visits to Kansas City, Kansas and South Carolina.

A smaller group split from the main body of delegates and traveled to the District of Columbia where they received a key to the city to signify a continuing and fruitful relationship between that city and the municipalities of Kosovo. The delegation moved north to the state of Massachusetts, where they met with the local authorities of Massachusetts where further discussions focused on organization and procedures were the prime topics for discussion. The delegation concluded its trip by visiting New York City before returning to Kosovo.

In general, the delegation voiced the consensus that this visit was thought to have been the most successful study tour to date for the participants. "We noted two significant circumstances during our trip, the first was the consistent and ever present role of the citizen in the decision-making process and the other and that local administration of U.S. cities were very limited in advancing political agendas and highly focused on the delivery of services to their constituencies" – declared Mr. Sazan Ibrahim Executive Director of AKM.

In the USA, the impact of civic organizations is huge when it comes down to the way their cities conduct themselves. The local authorities are almost obliged to consult first the people who elect them before making any crucial decision. Noteworthy is the positive relationship that exists between law enforcement and community residents. City administration is deeply involved with youth development as well.

The delegation was extremely impressed when a major representative of one city traveled to a resident's home to discuss issues and problems that the person wanted to discuss. This is truly a sound way to establish a solid and productive relationship between the Municipality and its residents", stated Mr. Ibrahim.

- Representatives from the Association of Kosovo Municipalities attend a GTZ conference in Tirana

GTZ sponsored a conference in Albania recently that involved GTZ office employees in Kosovo, the GTZ office in Serbia, representative from the Association of Kosovo Municipalities and other representatives from Municipal Council of Albania.



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

The conference focus was GTZ projects and the successes and shortcomings to date for project planning and execution in the two countries. The conference allowed for frank and open discussion regarding project execution problems and viable solutions. Included in the discussions was the matter of project supervision and the various methods used that contributed to the successes of past projects.

Included in the agenda were discussions on subjects of mutual one of the most important being local government consolidation initiatives and methodologies.

- The Association of Kosovo Municipalities joins LOGIN Project

Officially launched on 15 June 2006, the AKM is hard at work collecting and preparing its contribution to the LOGIN Project. AKM to date has uploaded a sizeable amount of information as it applies to local governance in Kosovo. The documents are being collected and archived into seven specific categories within the LOGIN database.

Twelve countries from Central and Eastern Europe are participating in LOGIN through their perspective local government associations. UNDP is financing the project and the AKM is responsible for implementing and maintaining Kosovo's participation in it.

Kosovo's entry into the project was through a formal Memorandum of Agreement executed by the President of AKM, Mr. Ismet Beqiri and Mr. Frode Muring from UNDP.

The archiving is being integrated the AKMA web page (www.komunat-ks.net).

The LOGIN project, as already mentioned, lists seven categories of information that include a Municipality Library section, Current Legislation, European Integration, News and Announcement information, Contributors, Trainings Information and links to other web sites.

The latest information will be loaded to each category. The Library now contains 43 documents.

The Legislation section has 37 documents loaded and Training has 14 documents uploaded. To date there are now 94 documents available to all participants of the project. Uploading of relevant documents will continue until all sections are current after which AKM will have the responsibility for keeping the database information updated.

- Senator Anne Maria Lizin from the Belgium Senate meets with the Presidents of Municipalities

Senator, Anne-Marie Lizin paid a visit to the Prishtina Municipal Assembly, where she met with Mr. Ismet Beqiri the current President of Association of Kosovo Municipalities. Also in attendance were the Presidents of Kosovo Municipalities.

"Belgium has been most interested in arranging for a program that would have the Association of Kosovo Municipalities and the Association of Belgium Cities working in collaboration for sometime now", Mrs Lizin, remarked. Mrs. Lizin added that such a program would involve the sharing of ideas as well as other information of mutual interest for both groups. She indicated that financial support and investments for Kosovo could result from such a venture.

Mr. Ismet Beqiri, the current President of AKM said that the AKM would welcome and is keenly interested for collaborating with Belgique municipal leadership and expects the relationship to prove rewarding and informative for all parties concerned.

- Prishtina hosts a conference the topic: Opportunities for Integration of Western Balkan Local Government into the European Process



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

A two-day conference hosted by the Ministry of Local Government Administration met with the agenda set on discussing opportunities for continued financial support from the European Union for Western Balkan Local Government development to include Kosovo.

The event included progress reviews, discussions on priorities and circumstances currently affecting continued improvements in going about business in Kosovo Municipalities and the region at large. Participants had a chance to learn more about the European Union and its work in the Western Balkans to bring its governance programs more in line with those of the EU.

The objective of the conference was to find the efficient and effective methods for a clearly articulating a municipality requirements in its requesting and maximizing financial and professional assistance from European Union.

The participatory countries in conference were Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Macedonia. They had brought their experiences regarding the EU fund profits at local level.

- AKM and GTZ meet with pre-qualified Municipalities for projects grants under the Modernization of Municipal Utilities Project

Seven municipalities are currently waiting for grants through GTZ project targeting the strengthening of municipal utilities operations management.

AKM and GTZ recently had a meeting with pre-qualified Municipalities, regarding the continuance of the project. There was a presentation detailing information for select projects considered finalist for assistance in the next qualification and award phase.

Mr. Ismet Beqiri states that an agreement was reached between the AKM and GTZ that will result in financial support being provided for municipal low-level projects aimed at improving municipal utilities management at improving energy consumption efficiency. The list of projects include the renovation of public buildings, the improvements in central heating, road renovation to include roadway illumination, reduction of energy expenses for water distribution, energy regeneration from raw materials, utilization of renewable energy resources, etc.).

President Mr. Beqiri added that although GTZ supports AKM in improvements and capacity building but does so through the commission for public utilities that acts within the oversight and control of the AKM. In the near future, the commission together with GTZ and other public utilities bodies will cooperate to draft a Strategic Plan for all municipal utilities after the Kosovo Trust Agency ends its mission in Kosovo.

Most of the Municipalities have applied for the grants from GTZ through AKM. Based on pre-determined criteria GTZ and AKM arrived at the following short-list of projects under consideration for funding and additional assistance:

- Istog/Istok Municipality; the renovation of the Municipality building.
- Drenas Municipality; the rehabilitation and maintenance of public lightning in Drenas.
- Dragash/Dragas Municipality: Renovation of the central heating system in the Family Healthcare Center.
- Gjakova/Djakovica Municipality: The installation of central heating in the Municipal Assembly Building.
- Gjilan/Gnjilane Municipality: The thermo isolation of outside walls and external façade of primary school building.
- Podujevë/Podujevo Municipality: The renovation of the Municipal Assembly building in City Park.



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

- Novobërdë/Novobrdo Municipality: The installation of central heating in the healthcare building”.

- Presidents and Executive Directors met with representatives from Government of Kosovo

The Council of Presidents and Executive Directors that acts within the Association of Kosovo Municipalities, held a meeting at the “GRAND” hotel. In this meeting, attended by Mr. Lutfi Haziri, Deputy-Prime Minister of Kosovo and Mr. Haki Shatri, Minister of Ministry of Economy and Finance, were discussed the interrelated issues on Local Government and Central Government of Kosovo, such as: Reduction of municipal staff, Budget allocation, Decentralization process, Public Utilities and Regionalization of Public Utilities etc.