

Meeting of the Secretaries General and Directors of CEMR's members

23.09.2010

Murat Daoudov's speech on behalf of NALAS

Dear Representatives of the Host Association and of the Government of Ukraine,

Dear Colleagues from CEMR,

I have the pleasure to address you on behalf of NALAS Executive Director Mr Kelmend Zajazi. To introduce myself, I'm Director of European and International Relations at the Union of Municipalities of Marmara, the Turkish member of NALAS Network. In my presentation I would like to focus on the cooperation opportunities that exist between NALAS and CEMR.

- The cooperation between NALAS and CEMR has evolved very fast in the past three years. The two institutions have institutionalized their cooperation through granting mutually a membership status. In autumn 2008 we were also able to organize a joint event in Vienna where we discussed challenges of local government in the path to EU accession. We also published a joint publication of Brima Gallup survey results for SEE. Only few months ago, we signed a joint declaration calling for extension of Covenant of Mayors to Western Balkans.
- NALAS partnership with CEMR is indeed creating a good platform for the local government of SEE to increase their presence at the European level and strengthening the role of Associations in EU integration processes.
- As you are already aware of: NALAS gathers associations of both EU and non-EU countries: 3 EU members – associations of Slovenia, Romania and Bulgaria, 3 EU candidates: Macedonia, Croatia and Turkey, while the other members are from potential candidates and a close EU neighbor, Moldova. This gives unique value to the network, and offers an excellent opportunity for exchange of experiences and joint regional activities at the very border of the EU.
- In general, municipalities and their associations in our region have a very weak position and access to information related to EU-issues.
- It is clear that local authorities are the level at which the impacts of accession to European Union will be most directly felt. The local authorities are not directly involved in the EU-decision making processes and the membership negotiations lie in the responsibilities of

the national governments. The level of indirect involvement in the process varies from country to country, associations trying to make their voice heard by governments.

- National governments face many urgent problems to solve, and some of our countries are still politically instable. Therefore, decentralization and capacity strengthening of local governments is going down in the priority list.
- In those circumstances, the role of national associations of local authorities is becoming increasingly important in this process of preparation of local level for EU accession, and in supporting introduction of principles of good governance and democracy at local level.
- The question for us to discuss today is how to capitalize this good cooperation between NALAS and CEMR and support association from SEE to strengthen their role in EU integration processes.
- I would put on the table today several possibilities for future activities in which CEMR and also CEMR member associations as well can be directly involved:
 1. First possibility is to give support to the expert level, namely through NALAS Task Forces: to introduce the specific EU local issues to the agenda of NALAS Task Forces and propose solutions in line with the current needs and the status quo of municipalities and LGAs in the region. NALAS manages several networks of experts which work on concrete projects in the fields of waste management, water, energy efficiency, urban planning, and fiscal decentralization.
 2. Support to for NALAS member associations to create opportunities to become more present at EU scene and to have wide access to EU institutions. CEMR is traditionally well equipped in this matter as it is based in Brussels.
 3. Support to local political level: to prepare local political level for participation in EU integration processes and negotiations, through creation of common platform for the engagement and also through jointly involving in the work of the Joint Consultative Committees (JCC) of the Committee of the Regions.
 4. Support and backstop the national associations in their negotiations with their governments, helping them both with know-how and extending the strong political support to associations when they meet their governments.
 5. To increase cooperation between two organizations in the interaction with major local government institutions such as the EU Committee of the Regions and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. Both NALAS and CEMR are observers at those organs, so we can join our forces. We already interact with the CoR and have proposed to them to bring together the four JCCs which focus on our regions (JCCs on Croatia and Macedonia and Working Groups on Turkey and Western Balkans). This will allow a better coordination and mutual enrichment for those four commissions and the NALAS. Here we have room for cooperation with CEMR too.
 6. Increased cooperation in interaction with other regions that face similar transition processes and problems, such as Black Sea and Caucasus regions. Here I would like to mention a meeting between the associations of local authorities of the six Black Sea countries that gathered in 2009 in Istanbul at the occasion of the GA of the Union of Municipalities of Marmara and adopted a joint declaration that called for the creation of network similar to NALAS. We can also increase our cooperation in representing

the SEE on the international level, in structures such as UCLG in which CEMR is active.

7. Joining forces and supporting national associations in their interaction with donor organizations. Donor organizations, who have invested a lot in building capacities of associations in the past dozen of years in Balkans, are now starting to decrease their support in form of subsidies, as they are phasing out their overall bilateral support to countries of the Western Balkans. While in fact the needs of the region did not decrease and instead have increased due the financial and economic crisis. Thus, joining efforts in lobbying the governments of donor countries can be of important support to the associations of the regions and their members.
- Finally, I would like to draw your attention to a very important upcoming event in South East Europe: a regional Municipal Fair called NEXPO 2011 will take place in Sarajevo on 10-11 March 2011. The local governments will gather to present, share, discuss, network and show their achievements, learn from each other and explore new technologies. The NEXPO 2011 is titled “Innovative communities open for all” and it includes an exhibition show, conference on social inclusion and other tailored workshops devoted to innovative municipal practices as well as a Mayors’ Café for establishing contacts. We will be delighted to see CEMR and its member associations to join us in Sarajevo and take an active role in activities or by organizing side events within the NEXPO.