

May 2022

11

# NALAS Newsletter

Key 2022  
achievements

Interviews with  
the current and  
the upcoming  
President of  
NALAS

Localisation of  
SDGs

Advancing gender  
equality at local  
level

Improvement  
of water and  
sanitation  
services

Teaching and  
learning 2.0

Use of data in  
policy-making

Local government  
developments  
throughout SEE



Network of Associations of Local  
Authorities of South-East Europe  
Réseau des Associations de Pouvoirs  
Locaux de l'Europe du Sud-Est



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# Editorial



Dear reader,

In light of the upcoming, 17th NALAS General Assembly, to be held on 12 and 13 May 2022 in Belgrade, Serbia, I have the pleasure to present to you the new edition of NALAS Newsletter. This General Assembly is the crown of my four years as part of NALAS Presidency, out of which three years as a Vice-President and the last year as the first female President of NALAS.

Half of this journey took place in very difficult times, when we faced multiple crises, at the global and European level. Even though this was challenging and demanding period of time, I am happy that we managed to demonstrate and to reaffirm the highest efficiency and important role local governments are playing in the society, in good and in bad times.

We also reconfirmed that South-East Europe local governments are unified by a unique, strong and important Network, NALAS, that is always here to support Local Government Associations and their members with exceptional know-how, comparative analysis, good practices, and advocacy at European level.

In this newsletter you will get to know some of NALAS' results and achievements in the past year. Also, you will be reading about the important topics our Network is tackling – from provision of high-quality local services, social inclusion, gender equality, to capacity development, advocating for the role of local governments, and much more.

You will also read some good practices from NALAS' members that might be replicated throughout the region. If any of these inspire you and make you want to know more, feel free to contact NALAS Secretariat and they will be happy to follow-up.

Finally, it has been a pleasure working with all of you in the past four years. We have together developed NALAS in the key advocate for the position of local governments in South-East Europe. We still have a long way to go to ensure full, functional decentralisation that enables our local governments meet the needs of all their citizens. I am confident that by being united, having one voice, working hard and committed, learning from and exchanging with each other, we are on the good way to achieve what we are striving for. Looking forward to many new successes.

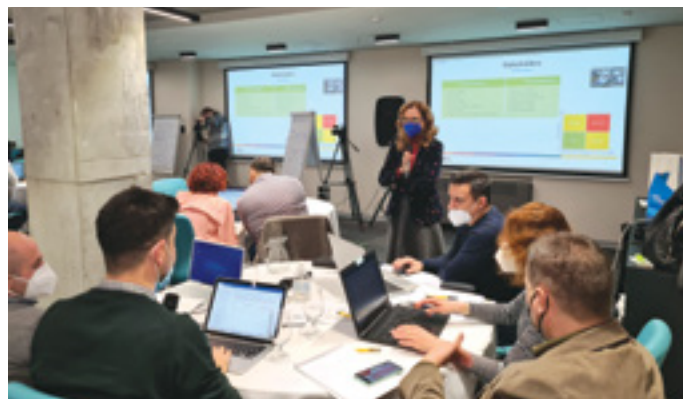
Enjoy reading!

**Ms. Tatiana Badan**  
President of NALAS  
Mayor of Selemet, Republic of Moldova

# NALAS KEY 2021 ACHIEVEMENTS: A YEAR OF SUCCESSES AND GROWTH

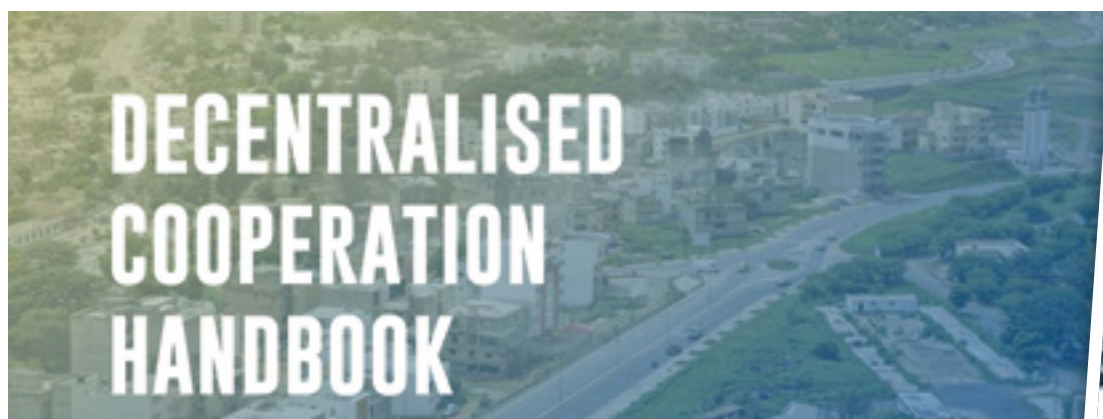
Despite the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, for NALAS 2021 was a year of successes and growth. Effectively adjusting to the new circumstances, NALAS managed to **do more and reach to many more beneficiaries**. In 2021, NALAS implemented 15 different projects, 4 more compared to 2020, organised 79 different capacity development events (30% more compared to 2020) and increased its reach to final beneficiaries for 41%.

All of these ensured successful implementation of the NALAS Strategic Plan 2021 objectives, but is also setting the basis for long-term sustainability and independence of the Network.



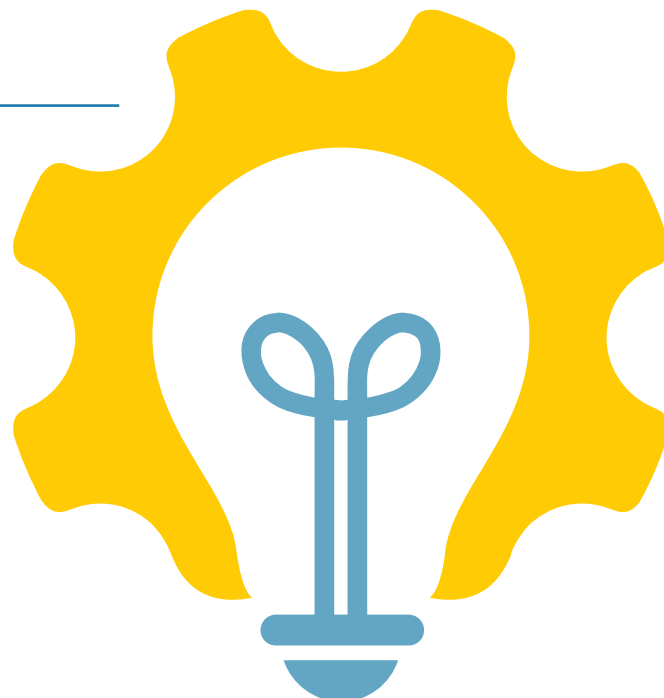
## 2021 at a glance

- **15 different projects** have been implemented by the Network and contributed to the achievement of its strategic objectives
- Launched **EU for Municipalities Project in Albania**, that will provide up to 1.75 million € in investment grants for Albanian municipalities and started **four other projects** contributing to local democracy and development.
- Established **NALAS Decentralisation Observatory**, the data and information hub on local government issues in South-East Europe
- More than **2,900 mayors, experts and practitioners** developed their capacities during **79 NALAS conferences, workshops and webinars**
- **5 new e-learning courses** were made available to South-East Europe local government employees
- Published **3 studies and 15 research papers**

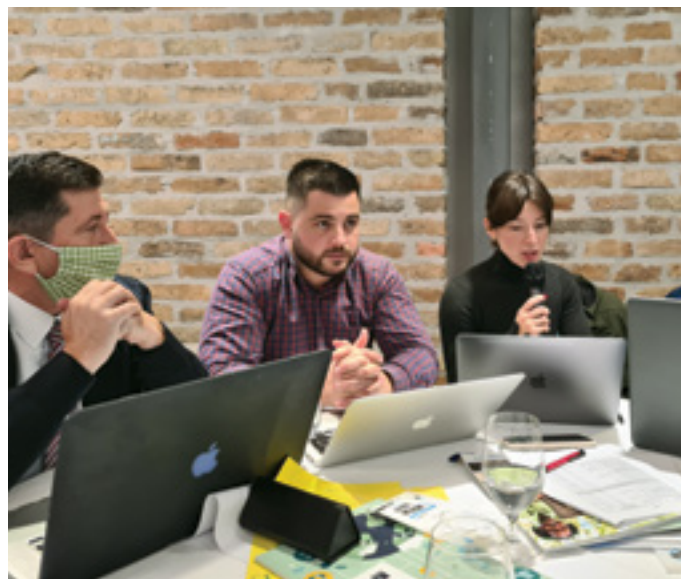




By Jelena Janevska



- Supported municipalities to **localise SDGs** and implement **2030 Agenda**, via social mapping, aligning municipal social protection policies with 2030 Agenda's Leave-No-One-Behind principle and implementing concrete measures for vulnerable groups
- Developed and piloted **methodology for gender-sensitive solid waste management**
- NALAS **Quick Response** service supported **14 national advocacy and lobbying activities**
- **33 Digests** and **COVID-19 Updates** provided a **coordination and knowledge exchange** for local governments and their Associations



For all the details of our work in 2021, please visit NALAS website and download the full 2021 report. We, at the NALAS Secretariat remain open for all your ideas for new activities and collaborations in 2022 and beyond.



# WHERE EXPERIENCE AND VISION MEET

By Jelena Janevska

## Ms. Tatiana Badan



**Ms. Tatiana Badan** is the first female President of NALAS, serving in the term 2021-2022. She is the Mayor of Selemet Municipality, Republic of Moldova and President of the Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova (CALM). Ms. Badan is an inspiring woman. She has over 29 years of experience in local public administration, serves as a mayor for more than 19 years, in 5 mandates, and each time she was elected with more than 80% of the votes.

With this interview we round up a year of successes and challenges that Ms. Badan, local governments and NALAS faced during her Presidency. The future is uncertain, but the vision is there, we read in the lines below.

**JJ: What has been your experience in serving as NALAS President in the past year?**

**TB:** First of all, I would like to mention that my experience with NALAS is having a long, continuous history after CALM

became a member of NALAS. We really appreciate NALAS' support at the beginning of our organisation, NALAS' technical expertise and human support was extremely essential in building our organisation. I became a President of NALAS and was holding this position at the most difficult times, when multiple crises broke up at the global and European level. Under these conditions, the work and operations of local governments acquired totally new dimensions, responsibilities have grown essentially, while financial resources at our disposal have on the contrary decreased, sometimes drastically. Local authorities were at the forefront of dealing with all these crises and this certainly did put additional complexity on all NALAS activities as well. One of our important roles was to help local authorities in our countries to deal with these crises, to bring their needs, problems and challenges to the attention of national and European decision makers. But also, to be thoroughly documented, informed and to discuss the common challenges in order to bring them forward to European decision making. Even though this was





In all of these crises the role of local governments was essential, we literally were in the front lines often substituting central authorities and providing basic needs to the people beyond our capacities and financial possibilities.



a challenging and demanding period of time, I am happy that we managed to manifest and to reaffirm the highest efficiency and important role local governments are playing in society, moreover in times of severe crises.

**JJ: What are the key challenges of Moldovan local governments in 2022?**

**TB:** Moldovan local governments as well as Moldovan people and the country overall in 2022 are experiencing enormous challenges coming from multiple consolidating crises. First it was only the pandemic crisis. Then came the most severe gas crisis with gas prices accelerating enormously making huge numbers of people in Moldova vulnerable overnight. Now we have the refugee crisis caused by the military actions in Ukraine. Of course, all those lead to economic and financial crisis as well as to rising poverty. In all of these crises the role of local governments was essential, we literally were in the front lines often substituting central authorities and providing basic needs to the people beyond our capacities and financial possibilities. In the case military actions in Ukraine come closer to Moldovan borders we will face refugee crisis of unseen proportions for such a small and poor country. In order to come with support to its members, CALM established a Refugee Crisis Response and Coordination Unit.

At the same time, despite commitments and declarations, local governments from Moldova did not see any reforms during the last years. Financial position of local authorities, situation with fiscal decentralisation remain extremely complicated worsened significantly by all mentioned crises. Property delimitation, registration and evaluation are other key challenges, which are not being resolved regardless of several attempts of both national authorities and of our international partners. Contradictory imperfect legislation is a big issue, creating massive impediments for local governments' activities.



**JJ: What can be done at regional level, through NALAS, to help Moldovan local governments better meet some of these challenges?**

**TB:** The main issue for Moldovan local authorities internationally is advocacy at the European Union level, where NALAS is perfectly placed. For us of key importance are the two dimensions – advocacy for reforms and advocacy for funding for local governments. Advocacy for reforms with international partners is the imperative since in majority of cases our national governments are following the recommendations of international partners, often excessively or blindly without drawing proper attention to national realities. Therefore, promotion of particular important national reforms with international partners, together with elimination of potential centralisation attempts are vital.



NALAS' technical expertise and human support was extremely essential in building our organisation.



Advocacy for funding is also extremely important especially on the background of the multiplying crises and lack of financial resources for infrastructure. Essential dimensions for us in funding advocacy are consolidation of the share and physical volumes of infrastructure investments projects (including on account of soft interventions and technical assistance) as well as proportional and equally spread funding for all local governments in the country (not merely few gigantic projects for several isolated communities which often is a quite predominant approach). Cannot underestimate the existing positive experience when CALM and NALAS continuously participate jointly in advocacy within Council of European municipalities and regions CEMR, at the European Commission Policy Forum on Development, with Council of Europe and under umbrella of many other international platforms and organizations





➤ **JJ:** How do you see the Network in the next 5 years? What should be in its focus?

**TB:** In our view, the main advantage of NALAS is its advocacy potential. Moreover now, this potential is being significantly consolidating in the aftermath of multiple European and national crises including the last one - military actions in Ukraine – when many new possibilities for the region are being tabled, opened and discussed. European integration, while often even amalgamation processes, might speed up on the background of the new challenges. On the other hand, all multiple crises have exhibited the highest potential and efficiency of local governments in dealing with those crises and in supporting the people. At the same time, they showed a rather debateable

” For us of key importance are the two dimensions – advocacy for reforms and advocacy for funding for local governments. “

crisis management performance on behalf of the central governments raising lots of criticism in many countries. Under these conditions, it is no surprise to expect bigger role for local authorities in European decision making. Associations need to play a crucial role here in order to build on the results and successes of local governments’ involvement in crises management and to assure proper place of local governance in European architecture, thus applying European Charter not only at the level of national states, but also at the supranational European Union level.

*We thank Ms. Badan for her exceptional leadership of NALAS in the past year and we wish her many outstanding professional successes in her future work.*





### Mr. Goran Cvetanovic

“ For me, as a Mayor of the City of Leskovac, NALAS represents a platform for exchange of knowledge and experience with my fellow colleagues from local governments in SEE, for learning new concepts and ideas and finding solutions for common, everyday problems that I face. ”



As of the 17<sup>th</sup> NALAS General Assembly, to be held in May 2022, in Belgrade, Serbia, NALAS will be led by **Mr. Goran Cvetanović**, the Mayor of City of Leskovac in Serbia and President of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities of Serbia (SCTM).

Mr. Cvetanovic is a medical doctor specialised in internal medicine, holding a PhD in Medicine. The love for his mother country and fight for justice motivated him to enter the political scene of Serbia in 1996. He served as a Minister, Member of the National Parliament, President of the Local Parliament and the first Mayor of the City of Leskovac. In June 2020, he was elected Mayor for the fourth time in his career. Mr. Cvetanovic is dedicated to making Leskovac a modern and economically powerful city. The local budget is managed conscientiously, attention is equally paid to every single social category and tremendous effort is made to satisfy various social needs.

In the inspiring interview below, you will read more about Mr. Cvetanovic's vision about NALAS, Serbian local governments and his city, Leskovac.

**JJ: What does NALAS mean to you as a President of SCTM and a Mayor?**

**GC:** NALAS has political and technical role in strengthening decentralisation, local governments, and their associations in

order to enhance lives of citizens in South-East Europe (SEE). For me, as a Mayor of the City of Leskovac, NALAS represents a platform for exchange of knowledge and experience with my fellow colleagues from local governments in SEE, for learning new concepts and ideas and finding solutions for common, everyday problems that I face.

On the other hand, Local Government Associations are building their common positions through NALAS Platform and are in this way articulating better and influencing more the cause of local governments from SEE vis-à-vis the European institutions and national level institutions. For me, as a SCTM President, it provides an opportunity for us to create common regional positions, to share good practices within the region, and to emphasise the importance of our region within the European and broader international scene, with its uniqueness. It also serves as a promoter of stability, peace, dialogue, and creation of multipotent developing area, aspiring to be part of the EU.

**JJ: What are the key challenges of Serbian local governments in 2022?**

**GC:** I hope that this year we will face less challenging than in the previous two in which we had a very intense pandemic crisis. Unfortunately, the new crisis and the war conflict in Ukraine and its consequences, primarily on the supply of energy and the economy as a whole, can cause significant problems in



▶ performing certain functions of local self-government. In this sense, we expect that, in full cooperation with national institutions, we will find solutions to prevent the realisation of these challenges in practice. Our local authorities now need to make new efforts to overcome the consequences of the crisis we have been hit by for several years, especially in terms of strengthening the position and rights of the most vulnerable groups, strengthening the local economy and local government services to citizens and the economy.

Our country has set certain strategic and program directions for local self-government reform and the steps we need to take in order to get closer to membership in the European Union. We expect that after the formation of the new Government, the planned reforms will be intensively continued and the SCTM and all of us from cities and municipalities will be active participants in that process.

Also, problems must be overcome not only through cooperation between national and local authorities, but also through regional cooperation, cooperation between cities and municipalities from different countries, because we are directed to each other and share similar or the same problems and we aim to improve quality of life in our local communities. Everything that awaits

” In the upcoming years, we have to be very swift in supporting digitalisation of local public services and supporting municipalities to implement the smart city concept. “

us in this and the coming years is a challenge for us, especially in times of external crises over which we have no influence, but it should be seen as a challenge that further motivates us to overcome them and to create better local government and better society for all our citizens.

**JJ: What can be done at regional level, through NALAS, to help Serbian local governments better meet some of these challenges?**

**GC:** Developed communities are based on the full cooperation of all their members. This is the case with NALAS, too. It is important for us to have full cooperation and exchange of experiences between local government associations. By learning from each other, we strengthen our own capacities





and find the best solutions to specific problems in practice. I am sure that NALAS in that sense is an important link in strengthening cooperation between associations in our part of Europe, in creating concrete cooperation projects and the overall development of local self-government in our region. In this regard, we expect support from NALAS, primarily through networking, exchange of knowledge, experiences and good practices and through the realisation of concrete forms of project cooperation between associations that would be supported by NALAS.

In addition to already existing NALAS tools, regional initiatives and exchange of practice and providing expertise can help Serbian LSGs in meeting challenges ahead, meaning building capacities for implementing EU standards, assessment of the process of decentralisation, improvement of decarbonisation, strengthening digitalisation and better understanding of the concept of smart cities, as well as resilience.

One of the possible ideas which could help Serbian LSGs is networking and exchange of experience in the field of developing EU officers as a new position in LSG units, having in mind different stages of development in NALAS members. It would be good to have these EU offices to network at regional level, discuss and exchange on important topics of improving knowledge and implementation of EU standards, and creating partnerships for preparation of projects for applying to EU funding.

**JJ: What will be some of your priorities while leading the Network in the upcoming year?**

**GC:** Each and every city and municipality in our region can benefit from NALAS' knowledge, experience and expertise. The strength of the network comes from its members, strong and committed local government associations with their

valuable members. During my presidency, I will be working on expanding NALAS' coverage, so that it includes the whole geographical South-East Europe.

During this year, NALAS will develop its new strategy for the next five years. I would commit myself to lead a participative process, that will ensure that the new strategy reflects the emerging and development needs and priorities of all NALAS' members.

As the current NALAS' strategy is still very relevant, I would keep the focus on sustainable local development and resilience of local governments. In the upcoming years, we have to be very swift in supporting digitalisation of local public services and supporting municipalities to implement the smart city concept. Finally, all these development processes have to make sure that no-one and no territory is left behind.

**JJ: You have been serving as a Mayor of Leskovac for over a decade. What is the achievement that you are especially proud of?**

**GC:** This is my fourth term as the Mayor of Leskovac, while I served two times as the President of the Parliament of the City of Leskovac. In one term I served as a Minister without Portfolio in the Federal Government and in the period between 2002 and 2012 and I was a member of the National Parliament in four terms. On that long path, much was accomplished, and I cannot single out separate projects or accomplishments because a city is a mosaic consisting of numerous parts that fit into a whole. In case one small part is missing or does not fit, the whole mosaic fails. Consequently, my team and I are equally focused on all segments of the society – starting from education, I am obliged to point out that we have invested more than 255 million dinars in the improvement and reconstruction of school buildings, in addition to sport which inevitably led to fantastic results of a





➔ number of local teams, agriculture and tourism, cherishing tradition, but also prioritising modern needs and necessities of our citizens. Tremendous effort, energy and resources have been invested in the overall improvement of infrastructure in Leskovac, since 2013, when I was elected Mayor of Leskovac more than two billion dinars have been invested in the reconstruction and construction of roads; we completed two components of the complex project on waste water management i.e. waste water treatment plant and city sewage collector, while we will be working on the third component - construction of sewage network in 16 inhabited settlements.

Allow me to notice, that we succeeded in decreasing the unemployment rate by opening a number of foreign and domestic companies, resulting in more than 9,300 people finding a job in the City of Leskovac, which is even more significant if we bear in mind that a high unemployment rate on the territory of Leskovac was the biggest problem back in 2013. Owing to the clear and consistent policies of the Government and the President of the Republic of Serbia, private sector and direct foreign investments became imperative, consequently,

“ Each and every city and municipality in our region can benefit from NALAS’ knowledge, experience and expertise. ”

we started developing a greenfield zone with the construction of Aptiv’s factory in 2019 where 5,200 people are employed, while at the moment a Turkish investor Erenli and local company Statovac are building factories on the location. Economic development is also evidenced with NALED’s BFC certificate for a city with a business-friendly environment, with 96,33% of strict criteria fulfilled.

The fact that the whole system is functioning makes me proud, what is more, the majority of the citizens of Leskovac are satisfied with the life standard, visible and concrete results so that they do not hesitate to share their comments, ideas, suggestions, praises with me, because they are aware that my team is giving its best for the benefit of the whole society.

*We congratulate Mr. Cvetanovic for his new role as President of NALAS. We are looking forward to a great collaboration, wishing for many new successes and reaching new heights for NALAS, local governments of South-East Europe and their associations.*



# Sustainable development

starts in our neighbourhood:

## LOCALISATION OF SDGS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

By Joachim Roth



Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe



## PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF "LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND" PRINCIPLE



The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>1</sup>, known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the UN in 2015 as part of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. They are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

The 17 Goals are built on the successes of the Millennium Development Goals<sup>2</sup>; their ultimate purpose is: to eradicate poverty and to improve the quality of life of the world's

<sup>1</sup> What are the Sustainable Development Goals, WHO, [https://www.who.int/health-topics/sustainable-development-goals#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/sustainable-development-goals#tab=tab_1)

<sup>2</sup> The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eight goals with measurable targets and clear deadlines for improving the lives of the world's poorest people. To meet these goals and eradicate poverty, leaders of 189 countries signed the historic millennium declaration at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000 and were set with a target achievement date of 2015.

population; with the consequent need for action in each and every one of the different areas of public management. The goals are interconnected, often the key to success on one will involve tackling issues more commonly associated with another.

### Localising SDGs: the bottom-up approach

Localising is the process of taking into account subnational contexts in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, from the setting of goals and targets, to determining the means of implementation and using indicators to measure and monitor progress.

Localisation relates both to: (i) how local and regional governments can support the achievement of the SDGs at national level through action from the bottom up and (ii) how the SDGs can provide a framework for local development policy. ➡

▶▶ The local level plays a pivotal role in implementing the SDGs since all of the SDGs have targets directly related to the responsibilities of local and regional governments, particularly to their role in delivering basic services.<sup>3</sup> The UN Secretary General's synthesis Report on the post-2015 Agenda states clearly that "Many of the investments to achieve the sustainable development goals will take place at the subnational level and be led by local authorities".



The World Organisation of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) stressed the crucial factor LGAs and LGs are as implementers of the 2030 Agenda's SDGs by highlighting that the subnational governments are policy makers, catalysts of change and the level of government best-placed to link the global goals with local communities.

### Development that leaves no-one and no territory behind

The SDGs being universal, inclusive and transformative, follow the common principle to "Leave no-one behind - LNOB". In this context, GIZ together with NALAS as its regional strategic partner, understand the LNOB principle to include the territorial aspect of "leaving no-one and no territory behind" in the sense of promoting social, economic and cultural rights of vulnerable groups in a given territory.

Since 2017 GIZ and NALAS work together by implementing activities under the umbrella of successive phases of the "Social Rights for Vulnerable Groups - SoRi" project. In general terms, the project works via its different components with local governments of the region, their Associations and other relevant stakeholders to enhance their capacities and enable implementation of successful approaches that will contribute to creating appropriate conditions for guaranteeing equal economic, social and cultural human rights in line with the overarching LNOB principle.



### Project components and results

#### SoRi 1 (2017-2019)

Regional Conference on approaches to social inclusion and (re-) integration of vulnerable groups with special focus on returnees at local level

Development of ToT manual and preparation of ToT training module for municipal professionals on awareness raising tools for localising SDGs and Agenda 2030

**Outputs:** (i) Development and dissemination of ToT manual and preparation of ToT training module for municipal professionals on awareness raising tools for localising SDGs and Agenda 2030

<sup>3</sup> 21% of the SDGs 169 targets can only be implemented with local actors; 24% should be implemented with local actors and a further 20% should have a much clearer orientation towards local urban stakeholders but current SDG wording does not suggest this. [Source:](#) Misselwitz, P, Salcedo Villanueva, J: 2016: The urban dimension of the SDGs: Implications for the New Urban Agenda, p.7

and (ii) Preparation and delivery of ToT workshop "Awareness Raising tools for SDGs and localisation of SDGs and 2030 Agenda"

#### SoRi 2 (2019-2022)

Project "**Enhancing local capacities to implement the 2030 Agenda and the "Leave No One Behind" Principle**", Duration: 30 months, 10 December 2019 to 10 June 2022

#### Results:

502 local practitioners from 5 project economies of the Western Balkans have increased their knowledge through 3 webinars on how to develop social local policies tailored to vulnerable groups via Social Dialogue Forums, how to provide services through Mobile Outreach Teams and how to protect vulnerable groups in the emergency through Inclusive Disaster Risk Management.







Localisation relates both to: (i) how local and regional governments can support the achievement of the SDGs at national level through action from the bottom up and (ii) how the SDGs can provide a framework for local development policy.

Declarations on how to improve Kosovo's roadmap towards successful implementation of 2030 Agenda and its SDGs.

69 representatives of 3 municipal administrations, councils and civil society organizations in North Macedonia informed about key findings and recommendations from the Social Mapping Report. (26 in Veles / 21 in Bitola and 22 in Stip).

Social protection policy aligned with 2030 Agenda's Leave-No-One-Behind (LNOV) principle in municipalities of Štip (North Macedonia) and Hani I Elizit (Kosovo).

Project "**Promotion and scaling up of models for inclusion of minorities and other vulnerable groups in the Western Balkans**", Duration: 8,5 months, 15 April to 31 December 2021

**Results:**

100 representatives from local governments (out of 130 registered) from 5 Western Balkan countries (Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, BiH and Serbia) participated in the online Minority Commissioner Web Seminar on 6 July 2021.

6 local governments from 4 Western Balkans countries decided to elaborate concepts for one of the Minority Inclusion Model social approaches.

3 Municipalities were able to implement the concept and carry out their respective activities to support the social approach within their operational structure.

**References:**

What are the Sustainable Development Goals, WHO, [https://www.who.int/health-topics/sustainable-development-goals#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/sustainable-development-goals#tab=tab_1)

"The role of LGAs in the Localisation of SDGs 11 and 13: Make Cities and Human Settlements sustainable", Red Espanola de Ciudades por el Clima, FEMP, OECC, New York, May 2017

UN Secretary General Synthesis Report on Post-2015 Agenda, (A/69/700, para 94), <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=30022&nr=270&menu=3170>

144 children from 9 local governments will be able to attend online classes with the IT devices provided in the frame of the second round of socio-economic recovery measures in times of COVID-19. 41 young people with special needs will be provided with proper learning conditions within the vocational training centre in Prijedor municipality, while around 150 children with special needs from 3 local governments will get better services and conditions in the frame of the municipal Day-care Centres.

25 local governments from the Western Balkans developed concepts for application of respective social approaches through 5 Learning Clusters established by the host Local Government Associations as regional peer-to-peer exchange models.

10 local governments will use standardised LNOB methodology and instruments for conducting social mapping of vulnerable groups and to learn from each other in the frame of the Learning Cluster on Social Mapping.

Project "**Regional Learning for the Implementation of the Agenda 2030 in South East Europe** (with focus on North Macedonia and Kosovo)<sup>4</sup>", Duration: 18 months, July 2020 to December 2021

**Results:**

Over 60 representatives of local self-governments of North Macedonia and 27 municipalities from Kosovo participated in trainings enhancing their capacities to integrate/mainstream SDGs and the "LNOB" principle in local policies

75 participants of the High-Level Forum/National Workshop from central and local government entities, CSOs, media and international donor community elaborated & signed Joint

<sup>4</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

By Semra Amet

Urbanisation, digitalisation and globalisation have brought unique waves of novelty and complexity in the world that we are living in. In 2022, these changes are still being shaped and accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This means we all need to learn fast and keep learning.

One of the biggest changes brought by digitalisation has been witnessed in teaching and learning. In this digital age, education and digital tools are intertwined.

Furthermore, the economic disruptions of the pandemic have shined a spotlight on the urgent need for worker reskilling and upskilling, which has become a top policy priority for cities, states and governments.

The forced shift to online alternatives from traditional teaching has sparked many discussions, however for adult learning and continuing education the digital move towards blended learning and asynchronous learning has provided an incredible opportunity.

New methods of learning like this are designed to fit in with the changing needs of businesses, organisations and employers in the 21st century and will become an increasingly popular option with learners looking for flexible ways of fitting education into their lives.

Looking ahead, this are some of the trends we can anticipate when it comes to teaching and learning:

## 1. Adaptive learning

“Adaptive learning” means highly personalised courses that adapt to the learner’s wants and needs as they progress. Using predictive analytics, theories of education and artificial

intelligence, it is possible to create something almost “tailor-made” for each student.

## 2. Artificial intelligence

It is no wonder that artificial intelligence (AI) technologies have been listed as upcoming trends for several industries: the past few years have introduced highly advanced AI tools to help humans achieve their highest potential with a very narrow margin of error. On the educational front, using AI means more personalised learning and easier engagement with classroom content through chatbots, for example.

## 3. Gamification

Some techniques that work for children can also work for adults. Gamification – or turning learning outcomes into games – can enhance student participation, as the lessons start to feel less like burdensome tasks. For adults who spend most of their week at work, this can also be a fun way to “change gears”.

” Online learning, when done right, can make education more diverse, inclusive, and accessible than ever before. “

## 4. Microlearning

This may not be a tool for everyone, but it can be an effective one for those educators working with adult learners who lack time. Microlearning is essentially using the building blocks of learning and dividing them into small units or shorter activities. There are many ways to approach microlearning, and many apps already use this technique by incorporating text, videos, games and quick quizzes as their “building blocks”.

There are many advantages to this method, including its flexibility, affordability and overall engagement with a learners used to fast access to information.

## 5. Online / remote learning

Online learning is the most popular educational trend for 2022 – albeit one born out of necessity in 2020. Of course, with developments in edtech, this is now becoming possible on a large scale.

Online learning is not only flexible and cost-effective, it is also accessible to a wider range of learners as it removes the concept of ‘location’. Therefore, it can be seen as breaking down barriers in education and opening up the door to a wider pool of people.







Online learning, when done right, can make education more diverse, inclusive, and accessible than ever before.

But the future of online learning is about even more than providing adult learners with scheduling flexibility and on-demand, remote access. It is also making it possible for busy working professionals to develop new skills and hone existing ones.

**NALAS**, aiming to always be on par with the most recent developments and bring trends closer to local governments of South East Europe has long been an advocate of online learning.

As of 2015, through its e-Academy, NALAS offers wide range of courses that contribute to modernisation of local public services, thus improving the quality of services provided and increasing the level of professionalism of local government administration throughout SEE.

To this day, over 2,000 local elected officials, municipal and local government association's staff have been trained on many relevant topics, including: gender mainstreaming at local level,

municipal finances, disaster risk management, social services at local level, asset management and many more.

NALAS continuously updates and enriches its course catalogue with tailor-made content incorporating the contemporary methods outlined above.

To learn about the courses offered at NALAS e-Academy, please take a look here: <http://nalas.eu/services/E-academy>

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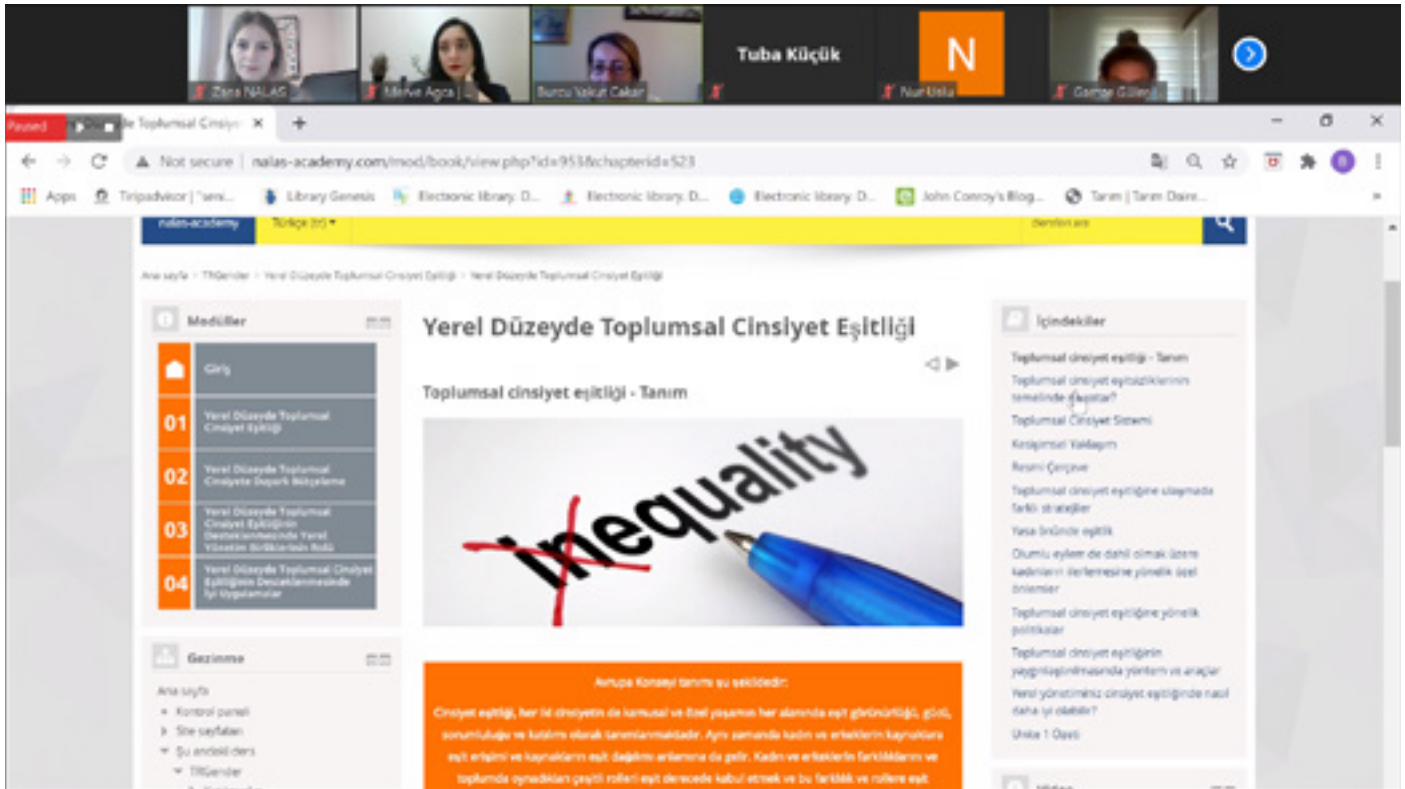
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# Advancing gender equality at local level:

# A TASK FOR ALL

By Zana Shehi and Boran Ivanoski



**G**ender issues are relevant for every individual in a society. Each of us has a gender identity in the core of his or her personality. It influences our opportunities, as well as the obstacles we face in a society regardless if we are aware of it or not. Society sculpts different roles and norms to men and women, boys and girls, and later on this results in different inequalities in most spheres of life. In contrast, gender equality represents equal visibility, empowerment, responsibility and participation of both sexes in all spheres of public and private life. It also grants an equal access to, and distribution of resources between women and men.

## Why is gender equality important for local governments?

Equality between women and men is a basic principle of human rights. As the local level of governance is the level closest to citizens, gender equality in the municipalities means ensuring equal opportunities for women and men to contribute to cultural, political, economic and social progress. The introduction and promotion of gender equality in local communities require major changes in the governance that must be focused on people and the results.

The European Charter on the Equality of Women and Men in Local life represents a platform for local self-governments

from the region of SEE on the implementation of gender equality policy. In addition, the national strategic and legal framework ensures conditions for all state bodies and local self-government, public institutions, public enterprises, and other legal entities in the creation and promotion of gender equality policies. The establishment of institutional mechanisms for gender equality at the local level are necessary for conducting analysis of the state of gender equality, giving opinions on the normative acts of the local authorities, receiving and processing complaints concerning violations of the national laws on gender equality, and the promotion of gender equality.

Gender equality is even more important in the context of urbanisation as a global phenomenon that will result in

» The introduction and promotion of gender equality in local communities require major changes in the governance that must be focused on people and the results. «



more than 75% of the world's population living in cities by 2030. Urbanisation provides new opportunities for human development for many citizens and the potential for new forms of social inclusion, including greater gender equality. However, rapid urbanisation creates a range of opportunities and barriers for women to achieve economic growth and prosperity. For women in particular, accessing the increased social, economic, and political opportunities apparently available to them in cities can be, in reality, incredibly difficult to take advantage of.

Women's empowerment and gender equality have become priorities for sustainable development that lift up the well-being of all global inhabitants. Achieving such far-reaching, sustainable change is depending upon the establishment of local good governance – governance that is accountable, transparent, and which necessarily includes women as stakeholders in decision-making processes. The incorporation of women's voices in local policy and planning would contribute to the building of cities that allow all urban inhabitants to prosper equally.

### Where are we now and where we want to be?

Although political commitment and legislation have contributed to the advancement of gender equality in the past decades, many challenges still remain. Women's perspectives and voices are significantly under-represented in urban leadership, as worldwide, women make up less than 5% of mayors, in the EU member states women make up 15,4% of mayors, while in the region of South-East Europe in accordance with the latest NALAS survey (2021), only 8,35% of mayors are women.

On the initiative of the Slovenian and Serbian Associations of local authorities, the NALAS Forum of Women Mayors in South-East Europe was established in Sombor, Serbia in December 2019. The main aim of the Forum is to facilitate networking opportunities and strengthen cooperation and synergies among women mayors and local elected officials in the region of SEE. The Forum also intends to enable women to have a substantive voice and leadership in decision-making at the local level, as well as, to build a coalition for enhanced gender mainstreaming in local policy and gender-responsive budgeting. The Forum strengthens the role of the local governments in women's empowerment and gender equality by benefiting from regional cooperation and support of national associations of local authorities.

The Sombor Forum brought together over 50 women local elected officials from the SEE region who exchanged good practices on gender equality. The vivid discussions resulted in the development of regional policy recommendations



and initiatives for gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting at the local level in the region of SEE.

The policy recommendations were adopted at the NALAS XVI General Assembly in 2021 and represent the essential document of the Forum for paving the path for the application of gender-responsive budgeting at a local level. This process requires lengthy, dedicated work and a systematic approach, which will lead to continued progress toward achieving gender equality. Gender Responsive Budgeting aims at integrating gender perspectives into the budgeting process. It should be viewed as an influential element of managerial activities related to the development of budgets of different levels, which provides important information to specialists from different municipal competencies in making decisions about the allocation of budget funds. Developing gender-sensitive budgets makes it possible to see how the budget revenues and expenditures impact the socioeconomic status and opportunities of women and men as well as the aspects of equality between women and men in the local governments. The gender-based analysis considers not only the disaggregated data on women and men, it attempts to include other relevant social categories, such as age, socioeconomic background, location, educational level, and others as long as data is available.





Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the second Forum of Women Mayors was organised in an online format in the frame of the NALAS General Assembly in 2021, focusing on Inclusive Local Economic Development. The third edition of the Forum was delivered as part of the Marmara Urban Forum - MARUF 2021 in the frame of the virtual session under the title of “Woman-up for urban challenges: Forum of Women Mayors”.

In order for the policy recommendations to be operationalised, women mayors and LGA Gender Focal Points from 7 economies discussed the format and topics of the next sessions of the Forum during the Consultation Meeting held in Bar, Montenegro on 6 April 2022. Ensuring enabling legal environment, advocacy actions towards central government institutions on gender equality and GRB, increasing the women’s activity in local life, and redefining public spaces in cities and villages that respond to women and men were among the priority topics of discussion.

### Learning about and practicing gender equality at local level

Since 2016, NALAS is helping local governments advance their capacities through the e-learning course on Introduction to Gender Mainstreaming at Local Level. In 2020 the course was upgraded and translated in four local languages: Macedonian, Albanian, Serbian and Turkish. In this way, we created an enabling environment for participants to be comfortable in attending this course in their local languages.

The course is organised in four modules:

1. **Gender Equality as Local Level** - It explains why and in which way gender issues are relevant for everyone involved in policies at local level. In this module the international framework is presented and the transition from global, to European, national and local level is explained.
2. **Gender Responsive Budgeting at Local Level** - This module thoroughly explains the gender responsive

budgeting methodology. It will respond to following questions: What is a Gender Responsive Budget (GRB)? What is the rationale behind GRB? What steps/stages are needed towards a Gender Responsive Budget at local level, with practical examples, showcases and best practice examples.

3. **Local Government Associations as Promoters of Gender Equality at Local Level** - This module deals with the role of Local Government Associations, and the potential support these organisations could provide to their members. Here is where the experiences of CEMR, NALAS, CALM, SCTM and SALAR are presented.
4. **Best Practices in Promoting Gender Equality at Local Level**

The main objectives of this e-course are that the participants understand that the gender is institutional and structural issue and it should be considered in local policies. Participants are trained to recognise different strategies and approaches for overcoming gender inequality and they will be introduced with the basic tools and methods for avoiding gender blind policy making, implementation and evaluation. Having in mind that the budget is the most important policy created and implemented at any level, it is important for the participants to understand that if it is created and allocated in gender responsive manner the budget can contribute to a more gender equal society. By the end of the course, participants from Local Government





Associations become aware of their potential to promote and contribute to achieving the goals of gender equality.

In 2020 and 2021 three cycles of the English and Serbian course and two cycles of the Albanian, Macedonian and Turkish were delivered. More than 170 participants took part, and some 70 from more than 40 municipalities from South East Europe successfully completed the course.

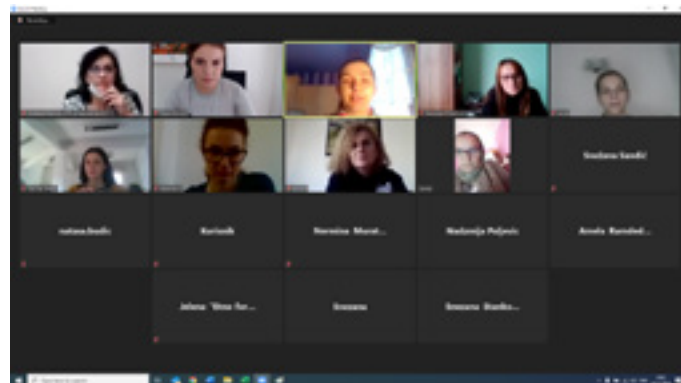
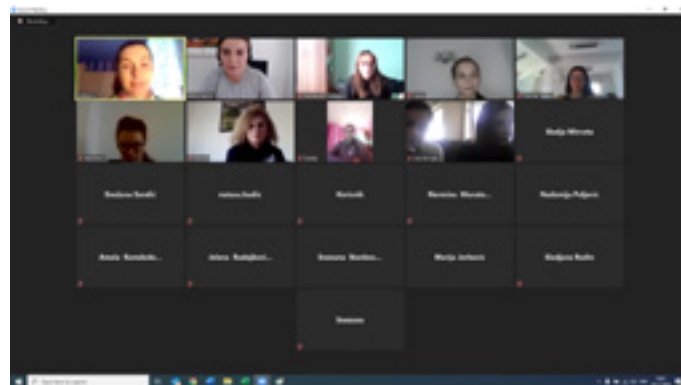
All participants stated that they liked the course, have found it beneficial and would recommend it to their colleagues.

### Below is what participants say about the course:

*“Pandemics changed our world. Despite its global impact, this is period has also deeply affected our own inner worlds where we noticed the importance of solidarity in both material and spiritual dimensions. In this period, ever since the beginning, I feel that I have been able to hold on by the means of online training programmes and activities. In this respect, this course on gender has been one of the biggest sources of energy for myself. Whenever I was overwhelmed with the chaos of my workload and needed a productive break for myself, the course was my happy shelter. Even though it was fully online and it was the first time for me in encountering gender issues from budget perspective, I really learnt a lot. Indeed, I look forward to having an extended face-to-face version of this course with more focus on hands-on applications and case studies. This would be a very exciting opportunity enabling us – as participants – to develop for a more focused and practical approach with the guidance of our instructors. Actually, before the course, I was not expecting such effectiveness from such e-learning experience especially in times where we are fully online. However, the course provided very much above and beyond! I fully appreciate both the knowledge, expertise and warm approach of the instructors. Many thanks.” - Ms. Burcu Aylin Kaya, Kartal Municipality*

*“It was an extremely good experience, participating and exchanging ideas with other participants from different countries in the course “Introduction to Gender Mainstreaming at Local Level”, organised by NALAS e-Academy. The course modules have a good connection with each other and obviously I will try to implement these experiences in our institutions. Gender equality and integration can only be done together by both genders, starting with our family, otherwise not” – Mr. Avni GASHI, Municipality of Peja, Kosovo*

*“The course was a good opportunity to better understand, within local government and local policies, gender issues, with a valuable focus on local or national practices that improve gender relations, but also tend to reach European and global standards in this field. One of the most interesting skills offered by the course was the drafting a gender responsive budget, thus benefiting from ways, tools and methods to use the budget, within the local government, in improving the situation*



*of women and men, towards more equal society, aimed at reducing gender, social, class and cultural inequalities” – Ms. Irena Nikaj, Municipality of Korce, Albania*

*“The knowledge gained through the course “Gender Mainstreaming at Local Level”, is very necessary for the performance of my duty as Gender Officer in Municipality of Tirana. Issues and concepts were addressed through a well-organised program, with 4 modules, naturally intertwined between theory and practice. The teaching methods, the lecturer and the course facilitator were at a high level, making it a valuable experience and support in the daily work of achieving a society of equal opportunities” – Ms. Anjeza Bojaxhiu, Municipality of Tirana*

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# Regional Capacity Development Network Water and Sanitation Services (RCDN):

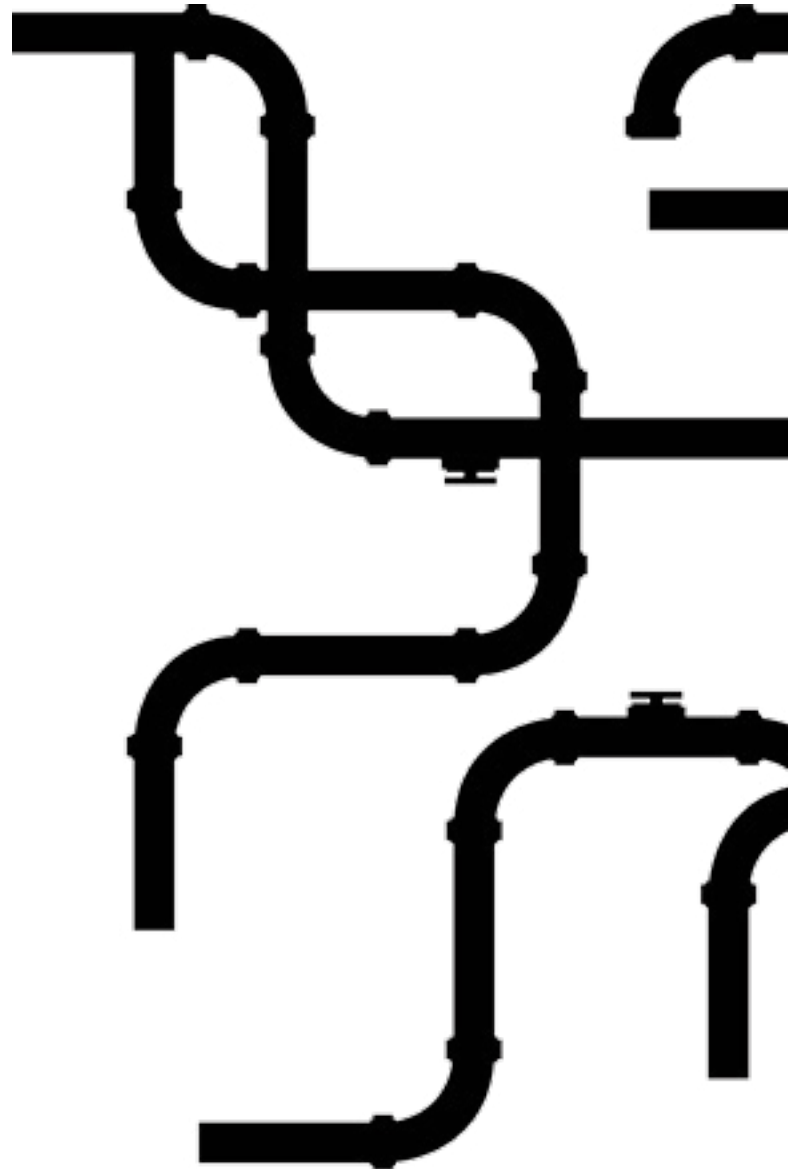
## Capacity development for provision of high-quality services

By Miodrag Kolic

Over the past five years within the project Regional Capacity Development Network for Water and Sanitation Services (RCDN), 16 partner associations, the Associations of Public Utility Company (APUCs) and Local Government Associations (LGAs), have been enabled to facilitate and coordinate capacity development initiatives and to deliver capacity development measures to water utilities and municipalities in the Western Balkans.

RCDN has been strongly focused on supporting the joint collaborative capacity development delivery by LGAs and APUCs, ensuring highest quality standards, with overall aim for increasing effectiveness and efficiency of the water utilities and contributing to better water and sanitation service provision in Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. More than 1,200 representatives of local governments and water utility companies benefited from the capacity development measures organised by LGAs and jointly delivered together with respective APUCs in the last two years.

RCDN supported the implementation of a comprehensive Association Development Programme with more than 40 different organisational development measures for enhancing the organisational capacities of LGAs, based on conducted Association Needs Assessment. This includes measures for establishment of the training centres within the associations and strengthening their training systems such as procurement of equipment, development of strategic documents, rulebooks, procedures, adoption of quality standards, etc., but also variety of measures for improving the associations' services, for example: development of





public relations and communication strategies, catalogues of services, introduction of client management systems, preparation of studies for income generating activities and financial sustainability of the associations, and others. A very important support requested by the partner associations during the COVID-19 restriction was procurement of online collaboration tools that helped the associations in transferring their service from traditional face-to-face to online mode of delivery.

Within RCDN, NALAS is responsible for designing and implementing the organisational development measures for the associations. Among other meas-



More than 1,200 representatives of local governments and water utility companies benefited from the capacity development measures.

Associations in Region of Southeast Europe. The strategy and the policy recommendations will be presented for adoption at the NALAS General Assembly in May 2022 and will serve as a common policy and capacity development platform.

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RCDN aims to increase effectiveness and efficiency of the water utilities in the Western Balkans, contributing to better service provision with larger numbers of population groups getting access to drinking water and sanitation services and meeting the European Union (EU) environmental Acquis Communautaire. To achieve this, RCDN has three key components: 1) Association Development, 2) Capacity Development Offer and Delivery and 3) Partnership and enabling Capacity Development Environment.

RCDN works with LGAs and APUCs in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, while the final beneficiaries are the top and middle managers from municipal and regional utility companies and officers in charge in municipalities. The project is managed by GIZ, on behalf of SECO and BMZ, and is implemented by a Project Implementation Team consisted of IAWD, Aquasan and NALAS.

ures delivered, we can mention some, such as: Generic Trainings of Trainers, Trainings in Training Management Cycle, regional networking meetings and exchange events, and es-

tablishment of the RCDN Pool of Trainers, Moderators and Advisors with over 130 members nominated by LGAs and APUCs.

The partner associations in Albania, Montenegro, Republic of Srpska in BiH and Kosovo have developed Joint Advocacy Strategies for improving the Water Supply and Sanitation (WSS) issues. LGAs to-

gether with APUCs have started with implementation of the advocacy and lobbying activities and development and dissemination of policy position papers and recommendations for improving the legal, administrative or institutional frameworks for capacity development in WSS sector.

NALAS through the Task Force on Solid Waste and Water Management, the Group on Water Management, is working on development of Regional Strategy for WSS Sector and Policy Recommendations for the Local Government

# NALAS Decentralisation Observatory:

## good data and information helps develop better policies and deliver better services

By Elton Stafa

### Good data is needed, but is it there?

In today's world, it is expected that policymakers use the best available evidence to make informed decisions and maximise policy impact while better managing resources. However, as sensible as informed policymaking sounds, the practice remains rather challenging as several factors and barriers impact the ability of governments to make effective use of data and information in policy decisions. Two of the main factors that challenge evidence-based policymaking is the fact there is not enough or 'good' enough data to address the complex questions facing policymakers and secondly, while high quality data/information may exist, it is not accessible to those in need and that could use it to make policy decisions.

### The solution

To bridge this gap, for more than a decade [NALAS](#) has been publishing comparative studies on fiscal decentralisation and local government services in South-East Europe to support the advocacy efforts of member local government associations and their members for improved policies and services at local level.

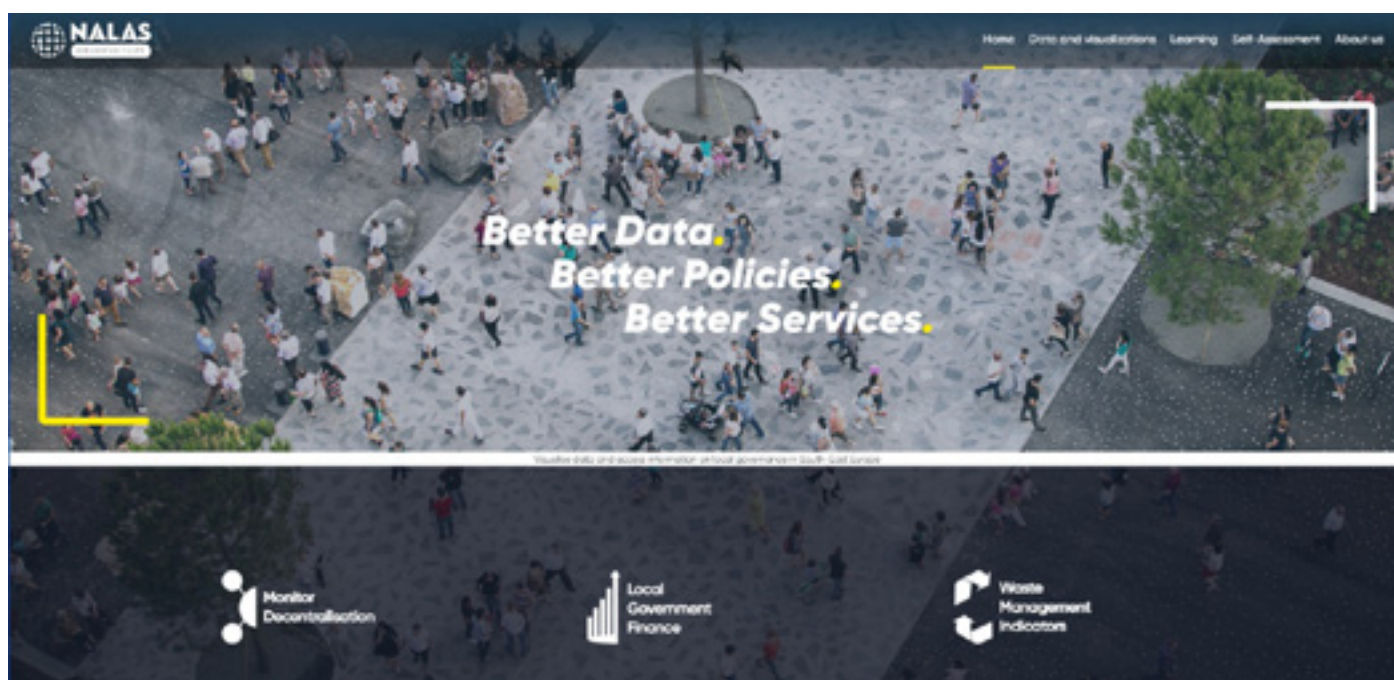
Recently, NALAS and [KDZ](#) - Centre for Public Administration Research, within the BACID Program, partnered to develop the NALAS Decentralisation Observatory for South-East

Europe [www.nalas-observatory.eu](http://www.nalas-observatory.eu). The Observatory facilitates access to and utilisation of timely, accurate, reliable and comparable data and information on local government finance and services as well as decentralization progress in South-East Europe (SEE).

The overall aim is to help inform the policy advocacy efforts of NALAS member Local Government Associations, as stewards of local democracy and local governance in South-East Europe, but also support policymakers, experts, practitioners and researchers in their quest to improving local government policies and services.

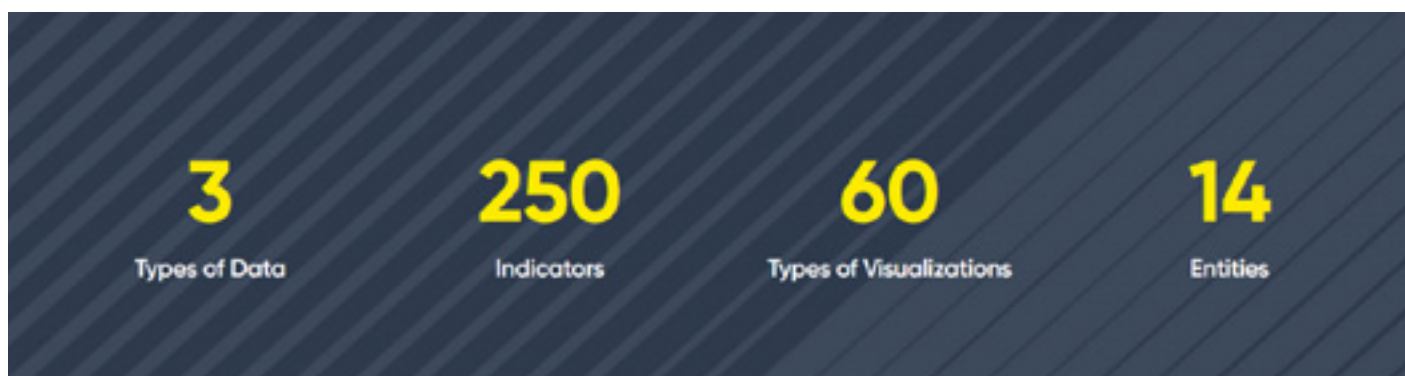
### The objectives

- Support policy advocacy efforts of NALAS member Local Government Associations, as stewards of local democracy and local governance in SEE;
- Help policymakers, experts, practitioners and researchers in their quest to improving local government policies and services;
- Support local government budget transparency;
- Serve as a model for national platforms to support evidence-based policymaking and local budget transparency.





## What do I get from the Observatory?



NALAS Decentralisation Observatory provides for a tailor-made **user friendly and dynamic visualisation of complex data and information**. It allows a thorough analysis of the current status and developments of local government finance for 12 SEE economies, including **regional comparisons** across economies and indicators that can be customised, downloaded and reutilised depending on users' needs and preferences.

It also serves as a **knowledge hub** on local governments in SEE, by publishing state-of-the-art research on local government finance, waste management and the overall progress of decentralisation in South-East Europe.

### Monitoring local government finance policies in South-East Europe

The observatory shows that there are [wide differences and disparities across countries](#) in SEE in terms of revenues they provide for local government (LG) services, regardless of similarities in service responsibilities. For example, LGs in the Western Balkans receive about three times less per capita revenue (€274) than their counterparts from neighbouring SEE countries that are now EU members (€874), despite providing a similar and -sometimes even more - services. These disparities are also particularly visible in the level of local capital investments, a key component for promoting local economic development.

## What do we do?



Facilitate visualisation of complex data in a user friendly manner



Facilitate regional comparison of key indicators of local government in South-East Europe



Serve as a unique knowledge hub to learn about the progress of decentralisation in South-East Europe



The observatory confirms that [local \(fiscal\) autonomy](#) remains a key challenge for the entire region, as local governments overall, remain largely underfunded and do not receive a fair share of the fiscal pie at the national level. The COVID-19 exacerbates this vicious cycle of low revenues and stagnation of fiscal decentralisation reforms that result in a decline in the autonomy of LGs.

# How is the EU supporting the development of local communities in Albania?

By Elton Stafa

## The challenges of Albanian municipalities in providing quality local public services

The quality of life experienced by each and every citizen in urban as well as rural areas is largely determined by the quality of public services, public infrastructure and public space created and managed by the municipalities.

In recent years, the Government of Albania enacted a major decentralisation program, involving several parallel reform processes including territorial-administrative consolidation and functional and fiscal decentralisation. The aim of these efforts was to establish modern and functional local self-governments that will have a new role in economic life, in public service delivery and local economic development.

As a result of these efforts, currently local governments in Albania can rely on higher levels of financing for the local responsibilities they perform. The new law on local self-government finance adopted in 2017, the development of which was also informed by NALAS members' regional best practices, increased municipal revenues from general state transfers by as much as 20% relative to the period



2010-2016.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, a survey shows that compared to 2016, there has been some improvement in the areas of effectiveness and efficiency and transparency and rule of

law at local level, although there continue to be strong differences in terms of availability and access of public services in the urban vs rural areas across Albania.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See NALAS, *Fiscal Decentralization Report for South-East Europe*, Eighth Edition (2019) & *Statistical Brief: Local Government Finance Indicators in South-East Europe*, Second Edition (2020).

<sup>2</sup> See UNDP Albania, 'Governance Perception in a Reforming Albania: Nationwide Local Governance Mapping in Albania 2020' (2020)





Promoting and fostering sustainable and inclusive local economic development



Rehabilitation and modernization of local infrastructure and upgrading the quality of local public services



Environmental protection And climate change mitigation at local level



Promoting youth, Culture and sports in local communities

” Municipalities are expected to take on an increasingly active role towards building territorial cohesion and establishing an enabling environment that promotes local economic growth and meets the real needs of citizens.

development of local communities and improve citizens' quality of life. In this new context, municipalities are expected to take on an increasingly active role towards building territorial cohesion and establishing an enabling environment that promotes local economic growth and meets the real needs of citizens.

The key challenges at local level in Albania include shortcomings in necessary public infrastructure as well as financial, administrative and management capacities, that have a direct impact on the quality of and access to public services and local economic potential, with rural areas being proportionally much more affected than urban ones.

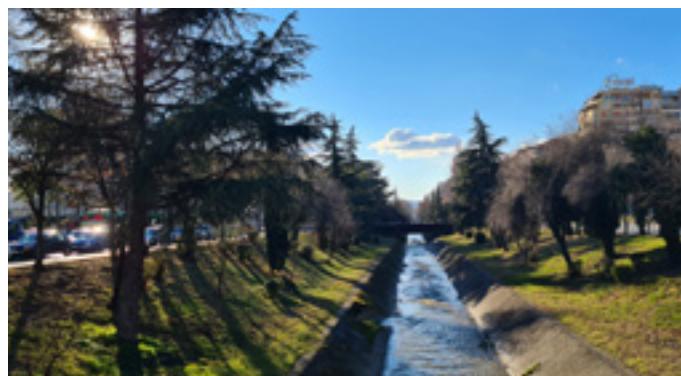
### Bridging the gap with EU support

Despite these important achievements in creating a more favourable context for local government operations, additional efforts are needed to support the sustainable

The European Union is assisting Albanian municipalities more and more, both because they are the closest to



“ For the first time, the EU has created a grant scheme “EU for Municipalities” to support municipalities with grants for investments in local public infrastructure and services. ”



citizens' needs but also in the context of the EU integration process, where they play a key role, with more than 70% of the Acquis being implemented at the local level. Today the EU essentially supports all the four pillars of the decentralisation strategy. Next to technical assistance, specifically on the pillar of socio-economic development, the EU has introduced concrete support via the instrument of grants.

For the first time, the EU has created a grant scheme “EU for Municipalities” to support municipalities with grants for investments in local public infrastructure and services. The EU for Municipalities (EU4M) Grant Scheme is implemented by NALAS, together with the member LGAs from Albania and two other local partners.

The project aims at fostering municipalities' development potential and improving the socio-economic and environmental conditions of local communities in Albania. The project has two main components:

1. Supporting municipalities in implementing their strategic development objectives and plans; and
2. Supporting municipalities build EU funding absorption and management capacity.

Through two calls for proposals open for all Albanian municipalities, the EU4M investment grants will tackle the fields of local public infrastructure and services, local economic development, innovation, job creation, environmental protection and youth empowerment. All these dimensions are crucial for the future of Albanians and the EU integration process. The project will provide two types of grants ranging from EUR 100,000-200,000 and EUR 20,000-50,000. In total one third of Albanian municipalities will benefit from such grants.

From this perspective, the EU funded “EU for Municipalities” Project is a pioneering project by the EU delegation in Albania as direct assistance to municipalities, creating opportunities for them to already benefit from the

EU support through pre-accession funds, the same way local governments in EU members benefit from the EU structural funds. This allows citizens of our region to start already feeling EU standards coming to their communities, even before accession, ultimately creating better life opportunities in our communities.

For NALAS, the EU4M is a model of a joint endeavour between the EU and the Local Government Associations to rapidly engage in renewing the public infrastructure and bring the EU standards close to citizens to experience them in their daily lives. Local Governments all across the European Union have been the engines to modernise the public service delivery and bring economic growth in their communities smartly using the EU funding support. There is a reason why this EU support is so much needed and timely in Albania.

### The future is bright only if you invest in it

To benefit from such assistance, local governments must strengthen their EU funding absorption and managing capacities. The experience from local governments from NALAS members in the region (Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia) teaches us that even after accession, it takes years to build local government capacities to manage EU funding. Local Government Associations (LGAs) play a fundamental and irreplicable role in this direction. Once technical assistance projects are completed, LGAs only can ensure the continued development of municipal capacities. From this perspective there is significant room for improvement in terms of partnership between the EU delegations in the region and LGAs.

Within the EU for Municipalities Project in Albania, and in partnership with AAM and ALAA, NALAS has started a process of regional exchange to share good practices from the NALAS members on the preparations and contribution of municipalities for the EU integration process and at the same time on instruments to support local governments improve EU funding absorption and management capacities.



## Union of Municipalities of Montenegro celebrates its first 50 years

By Refik Bojadžić



Refik Bojadžić, Secretary General



UNION OF MUNICIPALITIES OF MONTENEGRO

Recognising the need and importance of the associated joint action of municipalities on solving problems of the common interest in their work and functioning, taught by the experience of local government associations in other republics of common states of SFR Yugoslavia and the results of those associations achieved in the field of municipal development, a number of presidents of municipal assemblies have launched the Initiative for the establishment of the Union of Municipalities for the territory of SR Montenegro. The Initiative Committee consisting of presidents of municipal assemblies of Podgorica – Mr. Branko Lazovic, Niksic – Mr. Bato Grujicic, Cetinje – Mr. Petar Tomanovic, Kotor – Mr. Ilija Nikolic and Pljevlja – Mr. Drago Drobnjak adopted the Decision on undertaking joint activities for establishment local government association under the name of “the Union of Municipalities of Montenegro” in February 1972. The consultations on establishment of the association were made with the President of the Parliament of SR Montenegro Mr. Vidoje Zarkovic and the Vice-President of the Parliament’s Executive Committee Mr. Mijat Sukovic, phd, who supported the establishment of the local government association.

Until July 1972 all municipalities adopted the decisions for joining/establishing the Union of Municipalities, that happened on 17 July 1972 at the Union’s Constitutional Assembly. In 2017, the Union of Municipalities decided to celebrate this date as the Union of Municipalities of Montenegro Day.

Today, the Union of Municipalities has 25 members. All local government units in Montenegro are members of the

Union. This attitude of the municipalities towards the Union is the result of the beliefs and trust that the municipalities have in the Union while it represents their needs and interests before central authorities and international organisations, as well as the results which all municipalities achieve through joint efforts.

Unity, equality, respect for diversity, solidarity, professionalism, unpolitical character and dedication are values which are constant throughout the period of existence and work of the Union of Municipalities.

The Union of Municipalities is recognised as a resource centre, which facilitates communication, both among local self-governments, as well as with institutions at the national level and international institutions with which it cooperates directly or jointly with its members.

In the recent decades, the Union of Municipalities and the local governments in Montenegro have increased their participation in the international cooperation and thus contributed to the development of local government capacity and strengthening the key role that local governments play in economic and social development.

The Union of Municipalities is one of the founders of the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of the Southeast Europe (NALAS) and was the first chair of the Network since its formal establishment in 2005.

The Union of Municipalities is member with full participation in the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE); the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA); Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and its Twinning Network; Joint Consultative Committee between the EU Committee of Regions and the Union of Municipalities of Montenegro...





▶▶ The Union of Municipalities has been working for years on promotion of European values and standards at the local level, establishing mechanisms that aim to exchange information, experiences and good practices, as well as organisation of trainings aimed at building the capacity of local governments through the implementation of projects and better use of the EU funds for the development of local communities.



*Tarzan Milosevic, President of the Governing Board of the Union of Municipalities 2003-2008*

*“Together we understood and accepted that without strong local government there is no strong and stable democracy, without a strong local government there is no EU integration. The Union of Municipalities is an institutional response to two fundamental needs of a democratic society: that it is a political counterweight to central government authority, on the one hand, and that it is a special organisation for regular performance of the tasks to meet the local needs, on the other hand.*”



*Zoran Jankovic, President of the Union of Municipalities 2000-2001*

*“I would put the emphasis on the first serious steps in the field of the international cooperation. Although the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro became a full member of the Council of Europe in 2003, the Union of Municipalities of Montenegro had gained the observer status in the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe 3 years earlier and, after a short time, the full membership.”*

*The Union of Municipalities has become a bridge of cooperation between municipalities in exchange of good practices, mutual experiences, realisation of common projects, joint actions of local authorities and also improved and dynamized the work of state institutions. Through consultations over new laws, improving existing ones, bringing opportunities on decision-making directly to authorities closer to citizens, the Union of Municipalities made the system more functional and much more responsible.”*





*Veselin Bakic, President of the Union's Assembly 2008-2012*

*"Above all, the Union of Municipalities should be a strong platform for providing services to all members in order to improve their work, through exchange of experiences and multiplication of best practices as well as by improving legal and material position of the municipalities.*

*It is especially important that the Union of Municipalities represents and stands for the common interests of all members before central authorities and state and other bodies."*



*Dusan Raicevic, President of the Union's Governing Board 2022-*

*"Democratisation and adoption of European standards in countries of democratic consolidation implies strengthening the role of local communities in a society, a greater degree of local self-government autonomy and decentralisation responsibilities from the centre to the citizens.*

*The Union of Municipalities of Montenegro as a national association of local authorities has given an immeasurable contribution to that goal, clearly following its mission to represent the interests of local governments in relation to national and international authorities, and developing their competencies and efficiency in facing everyday challenges and in the best interest of citizens.*

*Looking back on our work in the recent years, I believe we can be proud of everything we have provided to the society.*

*We weren't only form, we have already filled that form with content and shown that such a broad organisation, which makes a diverse structure with different levels, however, can accumulate all the needs and provide common inputs and agreed solutions both nationally, but also at the international level. We sent a message that we are ready for the society of advanced and democratic states of the Europe and we preserved the reformist and European thread in the country."*



*Kelmend Zajazi, NALAS Executive Director*

*"The Union of Municipalities of Montenegro has been at the centre of my involvement in NALAS since the beginnings back in 2007. I was hired in the position of Executive Director of NALAS under the leadership of Mr. Tarzan Milosevic and the Union of Municipalities. I have experienced first-hand the powerful guidance and inspiration an executive gets from the political leadership in a membership organisation. The UoM elected representatives have been backed up by a strong professional administration. This is always the best recipe for success - inspiring leadership with clear priorities and guidance on one side, capable and knowledgeable administrative staff on the other and the exercise of good governance in between.*

*Not only the start-up of NALAS, but also its entire development and evolution to date is marked with the footprint of the Union of Municipalities of Montenegro in everything we do and offer to our members today. The professional approach in supporting local governments, the passion for decentralisation and democratisation of our societies, has been the engine of continuous growth of NALAS into the dynamic knowledge hub we are today, connecting national associations in South-East Europe. Union of Municipalities' relationship with NALAS is a role model of a local government contribution to peace and stability through regional cooperation."*

# National economic reform program “EUROPE NOW” reduced municipal revenues

By Žana Djukić



Montenegro welcomed 2022 in a changed economic environment. The Government of Montenegro proposed, and the Parliament of Montenegro adopted a set of tax laws for the implementation of **the Economic Reform Program “Europe Now”**. The main program goals are: to increase citizens' living standards, to increase employment, to reduce “grey economy” in labour market, and to improve business and investment environment. The implementation of the Program has led to an increased minimum wage, reduction of costs for employers through a lower tax burden on labour, and introduction of progressive taxation as a more efficient model of taxation.

The implementation of the Program has **extremely negative impact on the revenues of all municipalities**, which the municipalities and the Union of Municipalities pointed out to the Ministry of Finance and Social Welfare, the Government of Montenegro, the Committee on Economy, Finance and Budget of the Parliament of Montenegro and to all Parliament Members.

The adoption of the Amending Law on Personal Income Tax, as one of the sets of laws implementing the Europe Now Program, due to the introduction of non-taxable income in the amount of gross salary up to € 700, has a very negative impact on municipal revenues, through:

- Reduction of municipal revenues on the basis of **personal income tax**, which is one of the main municipal revenues;

- Significant reduction of municipal revenues on the basis of **surtax on personal income tax**, the basis for which calculation is the personal income tax; and
- Significantly lower revenues in the **Equalisation Fund**, which will have a direct negative impact on the reduction of grants to municipalities that are beneficiaries of these resources, which is very bad considering that 2/3 of municipalities are its beneficiaries.

In the preparation of the “Europe Now” Program and draft laws that have a direct negative impact on municipal revenues, local self-government units were in **no way included nor consulted**, thus grossly violating the provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Article 4 item 6 and Article 9), the Law on Local Self-Government and the Council of Europe Recommendation (2005) no. 21 which states: **“Generally, when higher-level authorities make decisions that reduce the tax base of local authorities, compensation should be provided”**.

Given the magnitude of the problem, the **Executive Board of the Union of Municipalities** has worked very intensively to ensure that measures are identified to compensate lost municipal revenues due to the implementation of the Program. In that sense, several sessions of the Executive Board were held. Also, at the invitation of **the Committee on Economy, Finance and Budget of the Parliament of Montenegro**, representatives of the Union of Municipalities participated in the thematic session of



this Committee on topic **“Financing local self-governments in respect to the Bill Law on the Budget of Montenegro for 2022”**.

The current situation in the local self-governments financing system was discussed at the session. Special attention was dedicated to the impact of the “Europe Now” Program on municipal revenues. The Committee adopted conclusions **recommending the Ministry of Finance and Social Welfare and the Union of Municipalities** to harmonise solutions based on the discussion at the Committee session and to inform the Committee on **the real fiscal effect** on the Bill Law on Budget of Montenegro for 2022 and, among other things, on the compensatory measures that will replace lost municipal revenues due to the implementation of the “Europe Now” Program.

Based on the conclusions of the Committee, the Ministry of Finance and the Union of Municipalities held three meetings and agreed on following:

- The Ministry of Finance to amend the Law on Local Self-Government Financing in terms of increasing the percentage of shared part of personal income tax revenues for 100% for municipalities of the Northern region and to 20% for municipalities in the Central and Coastal regions;
- To opt for an additional 10% real estate transfer tax for the Equalisation Fund;
- The Ministry of Finance, through amending the Bill Law on Budget of Montenegro for 2022, to allocate additional funds at the item of **current budget reserve** for monthly transfers to municipalities in the name of compensation for lower revenues compared to revenues generated in 2021 based on taxes on personal income, surtax on income tax and the Equalisation Fund due to the impact of measures from the “Europe Now” Program.

However, instead of acting to implement the reached agreement, the Government **withdrew the Bill Amending Law on Local Self-Government Financing from the parliamentary procedure**, and thus failed to implement the reached agreement.

Due to the severity of the problem and the need for its urgent solution, the Union of Municipalities in December 2021 addressed the members of the Parliament of Montenegro to adopt the prepared **Bill Amending Law on Local Self-Government Financing**, in order to compensate lost municipal revenues due to the implementation of the “Europe Now” Program. The Union of Municipalities also requested from the Chairperson of the Parliament of Montenegro to convene a special session of the Parliament under **the urgent procedure** in order to enact the Bill Law. Still, the Bill Law has not yet been discussed at the Parliament plenary session.

In the meantime, only one measure from the reached agreement is implemented. **The Law on Budget of Montenegro for 2022**, in the item **“current budget reserve”** planned 15 million € to compensate for lost municipal revenues due to the implementation of the “Europe Now” Program.



The implementation of the “Europe Now” Program began on 1 January 2022. In order to determine objective indicators on the real impact of the Program, i.e., amendments to the Law on Personal Income Tax on municipal revenues, the Union of Municipalities recommended to all municipalities to provide regular monitoring of revenues from personal income tax, surtax on income tax and the Equalisation Fund by months for 2022 compared to the same months in 2021.

Based on municipal data, the Union of Municipalities has prepared the **Analysis** that shows that municipal revenues from personal income tax, surtax on personal income tax and the Equalisation Fund have been significantly reduced since the beginning of the implementation of the “Europe Now” Program. Data from municipalities, especially for **February and March 2022**, clearly show the negative impact of the Program on municipal revenues, with a tendency that in the upcoming months the revenues will decline even more.

The Executive Board of the Union of Municipalities discussed the Analysis of the Impact of the Program on Municipal Revenues, and took a unified position that, in order to ensure the sustainability of local public finances and fulfil the statutory competencies and responsibilities of municipalities, it is necessary that the **Government of Montenegro** and the **Ministry of Finance**:

- As soon as possible transfer funds to municipalities from the item of **current budget reserve**, planned by the Law on Budget of Montenegro for 2022 - to compensate municipalities for less collected revenues for the past period due to the impact of the “Europe Now” Program;
- In the future, to transfer the funds to municipalities on **a monthly basis** according to the data on less collected revenues of municipalities on the indicated bases, **no later than the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month for the previous month**.

Also, in order to resolve this issue in a systematic way – through the law, the **Executive Board of the Union of Municipalities** appealed the **Parliament of Montenegro** to **urgently** put the **Bill Amending Law on Local Self-Government Financing** on the Parliament agenda previously submitted to Parliament by a group of Parliament members.

Having in mind the severity of the problem, an adequate reaction of the competent state bodies is expected in the direction of creating legal preconditions that municipalities, as the level of government closest to the citizens, can exercise the competencies determined by law.

# Celebrating thirty years of GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

By Team SOS

## 30 Skupnost občin Slovenije *Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia* LET

30 years ago, on 14 February 1992, it was a beautiful winter day in Maribor, Slovenia. Ms. Magdalena Tovornik, the President of Maribor Municipal Assembly, hosted colleagues from 32 municipalities in her city. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia proposed the establishment of an Association of municipalities, which would connect local and regional authorities of Slovenia with the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe as an institutional framework. All participating municipalities supported the proposal and the Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia was formed, with eight initial member municipalities.



In a few years, the founding municipalities were joined by almost hundred others, as the association matured, gained recognition and significance in advocacy for local governments. Despite the emergence of two related organisations, the growth of membership continued till the present day.



Investing in the professional development of municipal staff and elected officials, development of joint solutions for all types of municipalities, following modern trends and European development policies, perseverance, effort, and good negotiating arguments with the national level to ensure development-oriented financing of municipalities, convinced many more municipalities and towns that the Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia is the organisation they need to be a part of and participate in it actively.







European organisations. First cooperation agreements with partner organisations were signed within a few years of the association's operation and the first meetings with then yet informal network, which is today the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe, were conducted. These growing close cooperation, active participation in its task forces and networks, and the knowledge management assistants' program, often brought additional knowledge and viable ideas for further professional work to members municipalities and the association secretariat. Upon joining the European Union, the association gained additional legitimacy and international visibility by actively participating in the European Committee of the Regions.

Once a formation of 8 enthusiastic municipalities has grown after 30 years into the largest representative organisation of municipalities in Slovenia with 179 active members, where 400 municipal experts meet regularly in 15 commissions and 5 working groups. In this way, municipalities have contributed their experience and expertise to the development of their own association, which today is a reliable partner at the national level as well as in many international institutions. After all, there are not many institutions in independent Slovenia that can stress one's achievements in such a venerable period and report increasing involvement of municipalities and towns in the operation and development of the association. To achieve this, it has been a venture of joined effort, strength, wise leadership and, above all, well-coordinated solutions within the association's membership.

The Association sincerely thanks all the partners who have stood by its side and contributed to its development and growth over the last 30 years.



By Mario Zulicek



The Association of Cities has started the system of awarding Croatian cities in the field of youth policies. This certification system is, above all, a tool for estimating the quality and quantity level of youth policies in their local community.

With this tool, cities can very easily spot their space for improvement and define clear and measurable goals for the future. The tool can also be used by civil society organisations and youth councils to get a clear picture of what they want to advocate for and what policies they want in their city.

The City for Youth certification system has been recognised internationally, so it was presented in Slovakia and Ukraine in 2021. At the end of May this year, it will be presented at the European Academy of Youth Work.

The Commission for the implementation of the process has nine members, and relevant organisations and institutions in the field of youth work have their representatives in the Commission, i.e., all partner organisations in this project. These are:

- Central State Office on Demography and Youth
- Institute for Social Research in Zagreb
- Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes
- Croatian Youth Network
- Alliance of Societies Our Children
- Association of Cities in the Republic of Croatia



The Commission adopted a Decision on the quality standards of local policies aimed at young people and the award of the City for Youth certificate, as well as a Decision on the publication of a public call for proposals for the award of the City for Youth certificate.

A total of eight thematic areas have been defined:

- Participation
- Demographic incentives and measures
- Employment
- Mobility
- Health and sports
- Youth work and culture
- Education
- Informing

The criteria are defined based on an analysis of existing certification models in Europe, a total of seven.

The English version of the criteria and rules can be found on <https://www.udruga-gradova.hr/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/City-for-Youth-version2022.pdf>.

All other information and all documentation related to the Certificate can be found at [www.udruga-gradova.hr/grad-za-mlade](http://www.udruga-gradova.hr/grad-za-mlade). Additional information can be obtained at [grad-za-mlade@udruga-gradova.hr](mailto:grad-za-mlade@udruga-gradova.hr).

Within the first call (in 2021), a total of 32 cities applied, and in the end, nine cities won the title of City for Youth. In 2022, 15 cities applied, and three cities received the Certificate.



# Knowledge and Experience

## SHARING PROGRAM

### for local governments in Turkey launched by MMU

**M**armara Municipalities Union (MMU) has launched the “Knowledge and Experience Sharing Program” to support inter-municipal cooperation, develop capacities of municipalities and increase competencies of the municipal employees. The program was initiated in July 2020 during the pandemic due to the need to establish a common and permanent platform for the municipal experts from different municipalities to exchange their experiences. It aims at matching municipalities to exchange on a specific subject or expertise area. The exchange could be simply an exchange of knowledge, experience, good practice, expertise, or staff depending on the need.

Members of MMU differ from each other in terms of their size, human resources, budget, level of institutionalisation and capacity. The Knowledge and Experience Sharing Program provides municipalities with an opportunity to learn from the experiences of others within their own limits of financial and human resources. The municipal staff who need an expertise in a particular topic match with the staff from another municipality that is already experienced on that area. The program covers all working areas of municipalities. It basically connects municipalities experienced in different focus areas such as planning, transportation, disaster management, financial affairs, migration, environmental management, localisation of SDGs, institutional procedures, human resources and so on.

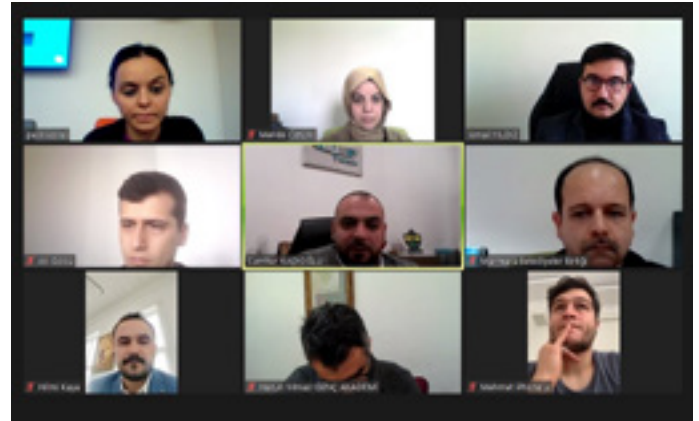
Having started among member municipalities of MMU, the program has now expanded to a global scale. Members of MMU can match with their counterparts from Turkey and abroad within the scope of the program. As such, the program does not only strengthen cooperation at the national level, but it also serves to support municipalities for collaboration with international partners.

The mayors and the human resources and training departments of municipalities are playing a key role in the sustainability of the program. Besides formally requesting or providing the relevant staff for a particular subject, they also encourage their staff to take part in the exchanges. On the other hand, the program allows municipal experts to share their knowledge and experiences with others on a voluntary basis. In this respect, it puts forward a very efficient way of dissemination of knowledge, good practices and experiences.

MMU acts as a coordinator of the program and organises the exchanges. A template of request form and a template for expertise form have been prepared by MMU and communicated to all member municipalities. Upon the application of municipalities, MMU matches the municipalities



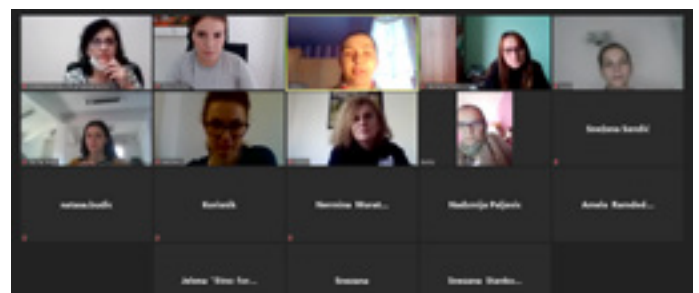
By Burcuhan Şener



who need expertise on a specific topic with those that are experienced in the field. Once a successful match is set up, face-to-face or online exchange meetings are arranged by MMU. Following the first meetings, municipalities could either keep up the communication on their own or they could ask MMU to maintain its coordinating role for the next steps. The municipalities can also demand staff exchange from their counterparts if needed. MMU's Human Resources Department and other relevant departments accompany the exchange meetings and process. The information collected from municipalities through these request forms has been stored in a database. The experts that have been involved in the program or that have filled in the expert forms are being integrated into a pool of experts and consulted when needed.

The program contributes primarily to the SDG 11 “Sustainable Cities and Communities” by empowering the local governments to build more sustainable cities through increasing the capacities of their staff, and the SDG 17 “Partnerships for the Goals” by encouraging exchange of knowledge and experience as well as cooperation between local governments.

For more information on the program, please contact: Burcuhan Sener, MMU International Cooperation Coordinator, burcuhan.sener@mbb.gov.tr





# Urban refugees of Marmara: process management of municipalities

By Merve Ağca

The research report titled “Urban Refugees of Marmara: Process Management of Municipalities” has been published. The research was conducted in the Marmara Region of Turkey as a continuation of the report titled “Urban Refugees From “Detachment” to “Harmonisation” – Syrian Refugees and Process Management of Municipalities: The Case of Istanbul” which was prepared in 2017 by Marmara Municipalities Union Migration Policy Center (MPC).

The research was carried out through interviews in 94 municipalities including metropolitan, provincial, and district municipalities in 13 provinces, namely Istanbul, Bursa, Kocaeli, Sakarya, Balıkesir, Çanakkale, Kırklareli, Bilecik, Bolu, Bursa, Düzce, Edirne, Tekirdağ and Yalova. The interviews were principally conducted with a deputy mayor, a director, and an expert responsible for the migration-related policies and services in each municipality. A total of 268 interviews were conducted with 88 deputy mayors, 78 directors, and 102 experts. The research basically aims to reveal the services provided by municipalities to refugees, the institutional capacities of municipalities, how the forced migration is perceived by the local leaders, and the attitudes of staff of local governments towards refugees. This report, titled “Urban Refugees of Marmara: Process Management of Municipalities”, has been the most comprehensive research report on local governments and migration governance in Turkey.

## Turkey hosts the highest number of refugees in the world

According to the data by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), nearly 6,7 million people have been forced to leave Syria, while 6,6 million have been internally displaced. The number of Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey has exceeded 3,7 million by 2022 while those in the Marmara Region make up 22% of the total number of Syrians in Turkey. The Syrians staying in camps constitute only 1,4% of all Syrians under temporary protection. In other words, Syrians are living across Turkey mostly in urban areas together with the Turkish society. The fact that Syrians had settled across Turkey without any central planning creates significant difficulties for the local governments of places where they live densely as well as leading to a sociological context where ghettoization emerges as an imminent prospect in many urban settings.

There are uncertainties and limitations regarding the legal and administrative authorities, areas of responsibility, budgetary arrangements, and institutionalisation practices that municipalities need in order to carry out their activities towards migrants and refugees. Municipalities need personnel with certain qualifications for different needs in the provision of services to migrants and refugees. One of the most important problems faced by municipalities in the process management is

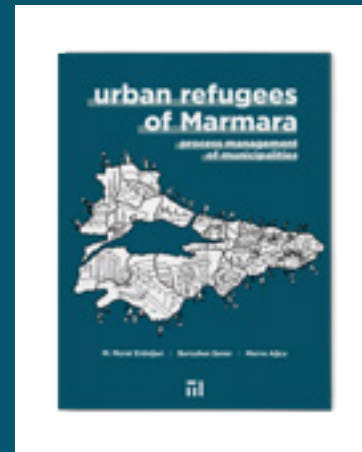
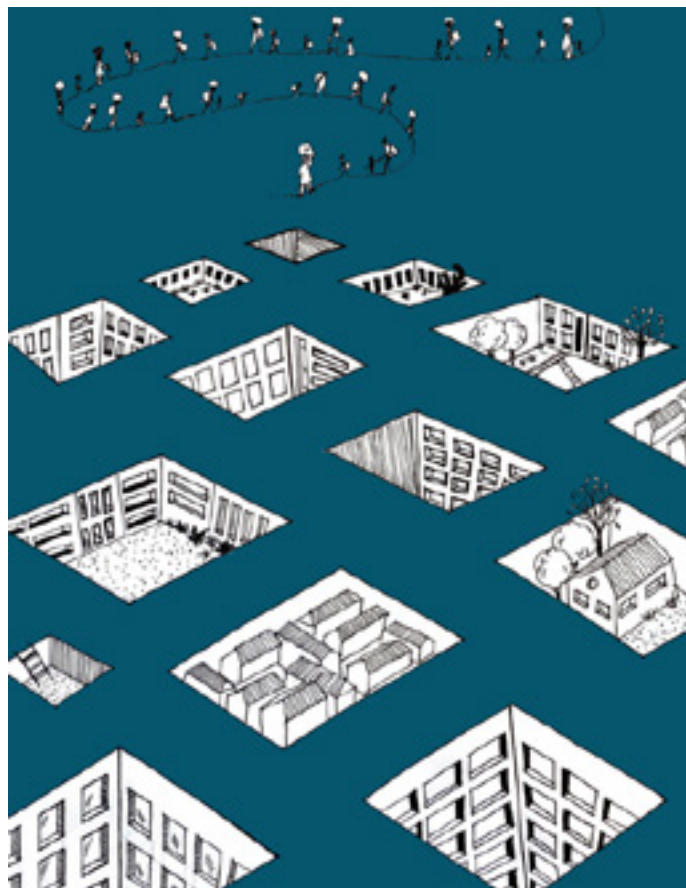


to reach healthy and up-to-date official data and municipalities are required to make a special effort to gain the support of local people and to ensure mutual social harmony in the provision of services to immigrants and refugees. The services and capacities of metropolitan, provincial, and district municipalities with respect to the migration field are analysed in the report under eight sub-headings given below:

1. Cash and in-kind aids
2. Social service programs
3. Collaborations and stakeholders
4. Financing and personnel support
5. Institutional structuring
6. Management and tracking of data
7. Syrians without a temporary protection ID and refugees from other nations
8. Municipal services during the COVID-19 period towards refugees

## According to the results of the survey

- Municipalities generally shape the services they provide to refugees within the framework of social assistance for those in need. 75 out of 94 municipalities stated that everyone within the borders of the municipality can benefit from the services provided by the municipality, regardless of their citizenship status.
- 60 (64%) of the 94 interviewed municipalities stated that they provide social services for the needs of Syrian refugees residing in their districts.
- 78% of municipalities stated that Syrian refugees residing within the borders of the municipality could also benefit from the services they prioritised during the pandemic.
- 48 (51%) of 94 municipalities stated that they covered the social services they provided to refugees from the existing budget of the municipality and that they did not receive any additional financing or personnel support from outside.
- Poverty, employment as unqualified and cheap labour, and accommodation are the main problems expressed by Syrian refugees.
- The services that Syrian refugees mostly demand from the municipalities are in-kind and cash assistance, employment, and shelter support.
- 64% of the deputy mayors think that there should be a special migration unit established in municipalities.



## Sustainable and inclusive migration governance

Local governments are among the actors that play the most significant roles in the migration management process, as they have direct contact with migrants, refugees, and the host communities. To create a multi-faceted and sustainable social cohesion environment covering all social segments, it is significant at the local level to establish social, economic, administrative-legal structures and policies that will provide a basis for refugees to stand on their own feet, rather than an understanding of social assistance. It is extremely important that all relevant institutions, especially municipalities, adopt a discourse based on fundamental rights and freedoms, and accurately inform both the local people and refugees about the rights and responsibilities of refugees and the services of municipalities and other service-providing institutions, and prevent the spread of misinformation at the social level. Local governments have important duties in providing a multicultural and inclusive social cohesion environment which allows diversity in the cities and services that are provided by the local governments for urban refugees are vitally important for the realization of global goals, particularly the SDG10 Reduced Inequalities and SDG11 Sustainable Cities and Communities.

The full report is available on the following link: <https://mbbkulturyayinlari.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/urban-refugees-of-Marmara-report.pdf>.

# Who we are?

NALAS is the unique local government network of South-East Europe (SEE). It is made up of 13 local government associations, representing more than 5,000 local governments directly elected by around 80 million people.

NALAS actively supports the development of strong local self-government in South East Europe, creation of smart, sustainable, inclusive and resilient communities, based on innovative solutions, through a unique regional partnership, wide knowledge base and strong policy-making influence, thereby contributing to democracy, stability and prosperity in the region.

NALAS Knowledge Centre is the main knowledge platform of local government affairs in SEE. The strength and the focus of the Knowledge Centre is the content – or the knowledge – itself. Of special importance is the knowledge found in cross-border analysis, comparisons and best practices. NALAS prepares policy positions and recommendations that articulate the voice of member LGAs and SEE local governments on different contemporary issues of importance for local governments and are used in the process of advocacy and lobbying at national and regional level.

Through the years, NALAS Knowledge Centre has been growing and today it uses a set of sophisticated knowledge management tools and mechanisms, such as: online platforms (Regional Decentralisation Observatory, e-Academy, website, Intranet, online meeting and webinar platforms, communities of practice), services (Quick Response, Shadowing Program, Peer Review), communication tools (Digest, Newsletter, social media), as well as network of topic experts (Task Forces, Advisory Concilium) and network of knowledge management assistants in all member LGAs.

# NALAS members

- Association of Cities in the Republic of Croatia
- Association of Communes of Romania
- Association of Municipalities and Cities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Croatia
- Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia
- Association of Kosovo Municipalities
- Association of Towns and Municipalities in the Republic of Srpska
- Association of the Units of Local Self-Government of the Republic of North Macedonia
- Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova
- National Association of Municipalities from the Republic of Bulgaria
- Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities
- Marmara Municipalities Union
- Union of Municipalities of Montenegro

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and Cooperation SDC

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