

NALAS Celebrates Fifth Anniversary

Ministries, Embassies and relevant international and national organizations in Macedonia learned more about the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe on the occasion of the 5th anniversary of the network.

The event took place at the Secretariat in Skopje, Macedonia on 27 May 2009, marking the date when the Executive Directors of local government associations of SEE signed the statute which laid the foundation of the Network.

“Our network is becoming stronger and more successful every year”, said Tarzan Milosevic, president of NALAS and mayor of Bijelo Polje (Montenegro). “It is obvious that local governments in the Balkans are facing similar problems; furthermore they share similar systems of governance and public administration, which facilitates replication of good practices within the region. The vision we had 5 years ago is gradually being implemented, NALAS is on the way to becoming the main knowledge center for local governments in the region”.

The guests were also addressed by the Macedonian Minister of local self-government, Mr Musa Xhaferi, the ambassador of Montenegro, Mr Dusko Lalicevic, the ambassador of the United States in Macedonia, H.E. Philip Reeker, as well as other representatives of organizations which cooperate with NALAS.

NALAS acknowledged the dedication of several individuals to the process of decentralization in the region. Gratitude was expressed to Mr Goran Angelov, the first president of NALAS in the period 2004 and 2005, to Mr Romain Darbellay from SDC and to Mr Jeremy Smith, the General Secretary of CEMR for their personal contribution in enhancing the NALAS network.

“We at CEMR have followed NALAS’s growth over these last 5 years. From the beginning, it was obvious that we had found a natural partner, a friend, not only because most of NALAS’ members are also members of CEMR, but above all because this partnership is based on mutual respect: CEMR needs NALAS in order to reach and address the concerns of local governments in the Balkans, and I imagine NALAS needs CEMR to give those local governments a stronger voice across Europe.

Five years is not much in the life of an association, yet it is enough to stop and reflect: have the original aims been reached? Should they be re-assessed? It is for NALAS and for NALAS only to imagine what its next 5 or 10 years should consist of, but one thing is sure: CEMR will be there, by your side, in future”.

NALAS Executive Director Kelmend Zajazi stressed that NALAS has achieved much progress in the past 5 years: “however, the following 5 years will be crucial. We must provide the services our members expect from NALAS, mainly in the field of fiscal decentralization, in order to ensure the quality delivery of public services to citizens in the region, especially now that local authorities face a global economic and financial crisis. European integration is also becoming an increasingly important issue for local authorities and NALAS”.