

NALAS

Newsletter

1- April 2026



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

In this issue, NALAS showcases key initiatives and partnerships supporting sustainable development, inclusive governance, and regional cooperation across South-East Europe. Together with our member Associations, European institutions, local authorities, and civil society partners, we continue to strengthen the role of local governments in addressing shared regional challenges.

NALAS partners in the WATERVILL project to strengthen rural water resilience

NALAS is happy to be a partner in WATERVILL, an Interreg Euro-MED Programme-funded project. **WATERVILL – Innovative solutions for enhancing village water supply and addressing water scarcity for resilient rural and mountain areas** – focuses on modernising small, independent water-supply systems through smart technologies, nature-based solutions and community-led governance.

Implemented by a transnational consortium of **12 partners and two associated partners**, WATERVILL brings together municipalities, universities, associations of local authorities and water associations. In its role as a project partner, **NALAS** coordinates the **sharing of knowledge and best practices**, helps **develop common strategies** and ensures that tested solutions are replicated across the region. Its expertise in local governance and regional cooperation helps strengthen the project's wide impact and reach.

Until May 2029, WATERVILL will work towards the **following main objectives**:

- Optimise and modernise rural water supply systems to detect leaks, monitor water consumption and improve water quality;
- Promote nature-based solutions to safeguard water resources;
- Share knowledge and build capacity among representatives of local authorities and water management professionals for the replication of project solutions;
- Strengthen cooperation between local communities and neighbouring regions;
- Raise awareness among local communities to drive behavioural change for more sustainable water use.



The project will deliver:

- **Better planning tools:** creation of a decision support system as a digital platform for improved water management strategies;
- **Real-life testing:** smart solutions and nature-based methods will be tested in four rural areas: Žabljak (Montenegro), Bitola (North Macedonia), Ilirska Bistrica (Slovenia), Teslić (Bosnia and Herzegovina) to identify what works best;
- **Knowledge transfer and capacity-building:** best practices and training will be shared regionally and beyond through e-learning and a network of practitioners.



Consortium partners had a field visit to the HydroStation monitoring system in Lazina, near Zagreb, developed by the company GEOLUX. The Lazina station is a solar-powered, fully autonomous hydrological station delivering real-time data. The visit provided practical insight into innovative water monitoring technologies in operation, illustrating the type of smart, data-driven water management solutions WATERVILL aims to develop.

The Project's Kick-off meeting took place on **4-5 February 2026** in Zagreb, Croatia, hosted by the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture (FSB).



Tandem cooperation in action: Connecting municipalities across Europe and Ukraine

A new chapter in European municipal cooperation is underway. Through the Tandem approach, 20 municipalities from EU Member States and candidate countries are partnering with Ukrainian counterparts to foster mutual learning, strengthen resilience, and support Ukraine's path toward European integration.

The initiative brings together 12 municipalities from EU Member States—Bulgaria, Croatia, and Romania—and 8 from candidate countries including Albania, Moldova, and Montenegro. Each is paired with a Ukrainian partner, forming collaborative tandems designed to exchange knowledge, share best practices, and build long-term institutional relationships.



So far, **20 tandem partner meetings** have been successfully completed, marking the official launch of these cooperation journeys. Between 17–20 February 2026, six new meetings connected municipalities from Croatia and Moldova. These followed earlier exchanges held in January 2026 with Bulgarian and Romanian partners, and in December 2025 with municipalities from Albania and Montenegro.

These initial online meetings laid the groundwork for meaningful collaboration. They provided a platform for partners to align expectations around the upcoming Shadowing Programme—a four-day, in-person peer-to-peer exchange hosted by participating municipalities. Discussions also focused on identifying shared priorities, exploring EU funding opportunities, and preparing for the first shadowing visits, set to begin in April 2026.

The Tandem activities are part of the 18-month project Pathways of Partnership, which supports Ukraine's local recovery and advances its EU integration efforts by strengthening structured cooperation with municipalities across the EU and the Western Balkans.

Regional Dialogue at the ROOT WB Kick-Off Conference



NALAS, as a project partner in the EU-funded initiative “Regional Ownership of Our Tomorrow: Citizens and Civil Society Growing EU Values in the Western Balkans ([ROOT WB](#))”, took part in the project’s Kick-off conference held in Mostar on 12 March 2026. The event marked the official launch of a regional effort to strengthen democratic participation, civic engagement, and the promotion of European Union values across the Western Balkans. Hosted by Local Democracy Agency Mostar, the conference convened representatives of civil society organisations, local authorities, and regional partners. Discussions focused on enhancing cooperation mechanisms and reinforcing the role of local governance in supporting democratic processes.

Participation from NALAS member associations included representatives from the **Association of Municipalities and Cities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina**, the **Association of Municipalities and Towns of Republika Srpska**, and the **Union of Municipalities of Montenegro**. Their presence underscored the importance of cross-border collaboration among local governments in addressing shared regional challenges.

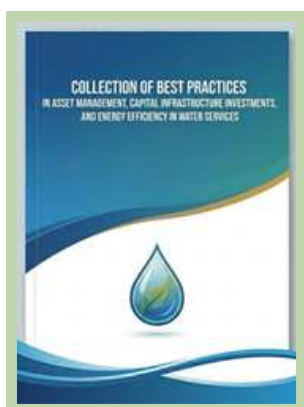
A key highlight of the conference was the panel discussion titled “**Facing the challenges of regional cooperation in the Western Balkans.**” During the session, Milica Radojičić, Deputy Secretary General for international cooperation and EU integration at the Union of Municipalities of Montenegro, emphasised the critical role of local authorities in advancing regional cooperation. She pointed to the need for continued capacity-building and stronger inter-municipal connections as essential components for sustainable development and integration within the European framework.



Best Practices for Sustainable Water Management in South East Europe

The NALAS Working Group on Water Management introduced its latest publication: **Collection of Best Practices in Asset Management, Capital Infrastructure Investments, and Energy Efficiency in Water Services**. This resource serves as a foundation for strengthening the capacity of local stakeholders to achieve a water-secure and more resilient future of the sector in South East Europe.

Local governments and utilities in our region face the dual pressures of aging infrastructure and limited financial resources. By sharing documented successes and established methodologies, we can avoid “reinventing the wheel” and prevent costly mistakes.



This collection highlights three critical segments for improving service quality and financial sustainability:

asset management, capital investment projects (CIP) and energy efficiency & climate impact.

The document presents successful projects across the region, offering feasible options for sustainable management of the water services.

New E-Learning Course Helps Moldovan local authorities put “Leave No One Behind” into practice



Local authorities across Moldova now have access to a new digital tool designed to strengthen inclusive policymaking at the community level. As part of the project “Promoting multilevel dialogue, open government and human rights at local level in the Republic of Moldova,” the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe has supported the adaptation and digitalisation of the **e-learning course “Leave No One Behind: Social Mapping and Evidence-Based Policy Making.”**

Originally created by the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS), the course has been fully adapted to the Moldovan context in partnership with the Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova (CALM). The Romanian-language version is now available on CALM’s e-learning platform, offering local officials a practical guide to understanding and applying the “Leave No One Behind” (LNOB) principle.

The course provides hands-on tools—including survey templates, methodological guidance, and reporting formats—designed to help local practitioners systematically identify vulnerable groups and develop policies grounded in real community data.

To support its rollout, the project is launching a facilitated training programme that blends self-paced online study with expert-led discussions and a formal opening workshop. During the introductory session on Module 1, participants explored core concepts such as diversity management, social inclusion, and the LNOB principle. Delivered in an interactive format, the session also guided learners through the structure of the course and demonstrated how each of the four modules builds toward practical application in evidence-based local policymaking.



LORAI officially launched to strengthen local authorities’ role in EU reform processes in the Western Balkans

The European Union and the Council of Europe have launched the joint programme **LORAI – Local Observatory on Reform Agendas Implementation**, in partnership with NALAS, CEMR, and seven NALAS member associations.



The launch event was held at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg on 1 April, during the 50th Session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and gathered representatives from project partners.

As part of the EU’s Reform and Growth Facility, a financial instrument supporting the region’s progress towards EU accession, LORAI aims to strengthen the role of local authorities in the implementation and monitoring of Reform Agendas, supporting progress towards EU accession in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

Structured around two pillars - Monitoring and evidence gathering, and Engagement and advocacy - the programme aims to enhance transparency, inclusiveness, and multilevel governance in reform processes.

Seven NALAS member associations from the beneficiary countries are involved in LORAI:

- Association of Municipalities and Cities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Association of Municipalities and Towns of the Republic of Srpska;
- Association of Kosovo Municipalities;
- Union of Municipalities of Montenegro;
- Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, Serbia;
- National Association of Municipalities of Albania;
- Association of the Units of Local Self-Government of the Republic of North Macedonia.

As a key partner, NALAS will act as the regional anchor, supporting Local Government Associations and contributing to the development of the LORAI monitoring framework and open-access dashboard.



We thank our members and partners for their continued collaboration and commitment. Together, we will keep working towards stronger, more resilient and inclusive local communities across South-East Europe.

For more information, visit www.nalas.eu or follow us on our social media channels: [LinkedIn](#) and [X](#)

